Sue Kranz



Sue Kranz came down to the Coop one recent evening from her home on Windy Hill in East Charlemont, to explain how knitting has been the thread that binds her life together. Sue makes knit and felt hats and headbands using a stranded color work technique sometimes referred to as Fair Isle knitting. She is also known in the local music scene as a singer/songwriter playing the flute and guitar, performing most recently as Sue Kranz and Friends, and singing with the Greenfield Harmony Choir.

Like many SAC artists, Sue Kranz 's artistic passions only comprise a percentage of her income stream. Her bread and butter job has been in education, working as a Spanish teacher and Librarian at the Rowe Elementary School for the past 10 years. However, she has taken this academic year off from Rowe and is finding her way through new doors of opportunity as they appear.



Making a new commitment to SAC has been one recent change. Sue's work sold well at SAC since she first introduced it back in 2007. But after three years, she found keeping up with inventory too

overwhelming while raising her two daughters and teaching full time, so she left for several years. Finding time and energy to recommit to the craft has meant a new beginning with the group, which she cherishes as a great source of inspiration and friendship.
Creating her unique hats and selling them has helped her to explore new designs and techniques. She uses multiple colors of yarn in various patterns and creates forms that are felted, or “fulled” for added texture and warmth. These processes are done in the washing machine by shrinking the yarns with hot water, soap and agitation. The felted hats are knit on large needles and look like great loose bags before they are shrunk down. She simply pulls out the pieces to check on them for size.



Sue moved from Cambridge, MA to a sheep farm in Conway in 2006 with her family. With so much fleece around, she naturally turned to spinning. “It was incredible to see the process through from sheep to vest: shearing and washing the fleece, spinning it, and designing and knitting it. It takes a very long time, but it is just so satisfying! She also knits and felts coasters and uses needle felting to decorate them.



Sue Kranz’s “year off” started to sound busier and busier the longer we talked, with multiple opportunities presenting themselves which she has embraced enthusiastically. For example, Sue is studying to be a Spanish Medical Interpreter, and is about to start a new job with REACH Early Intervention, working with children ages 0 through 3.

Sue also teaches knitting at the Buckley Nursing Home. “I am working right now with 80 to 90 year olds once a week, and it is the most meaningful and enjoyable thing I have every done. There is a woman who just turned 100, who taught at the Hawlemont School years ago, and has lost her eye sight since she last knit at age 95. She was devastated.
" My job was to encourage her to trust that she could knit without seeing, and that her fingers would know what to do. She is still a lean, mean knitting machine!"
Sue's grandmother taught her to knit when she was ten, and Sue found it a good way to focus her attention and be less fidgety. "it’s always been a way for me to put energy and love into something wearable and share it with people.



My friends used to buy me wool and I would make them a sweater. I have probably made about 75 sweaters in my life.” Knitting is also a universal language, and when Sue traveled for a year around the world, her needles and yarn opened doors to connect with women in other cultures, even when there was no common language. "Whenever I saw someone knitting, I would go over, sit down, and start a conversation with them. Even if we didn’t speak the same language, we could knit together happily and share our work.” Sue is happiest when she can share her gifts with the world. Spreading her wings in the new freedom of a year off from teaching, she finds that “somehow it is all fitting together; maybe because I got out of my own way!”