

Hoxie woman in stitches over work

By Jan Katz Ackerman
Colby Free Press

Skills learned as a child in 4-H have allowed a Hoxie woman to become her own boss and open a quilting studio called In Stitches.

"I was a garment seamstress in 4-H and learned to sew from my mom," Lea Herl said.

Building on her childhood skills, Herl learned to quilt some 20 years ago.

"When my kids were little and the Trip around the World quilt came out I did that and then put it away," Herl said.

Calling herself a "jack of all trades," Herl has spent time driving a truck, managing the local swimming pool and serving as deputy county clerk in Sheridan County. Behind all these trades, Herl has always wanted to own her own business. That desire deepened two years ago while traveling in California.

"I quilt with Molly Bretz, Jenny Niblock and Chris Niblock and we decided to take a gal's trip to California," Herl said. "We went to San Diego and went into what we thought was a quilt shop and it was a place where they sold these machines."

The machine, which Herl now owns, is a long-armed Gammill

Statler Stitcher computerized quilting machine.

"When I saw it, I thought, 'I can do that,'" she said.

After pondering on that thought for about a year, Herl made the decision to further investigate machine quilting. She again traveled to California and took classes to familiarize herself with the process.

"I decided it was better to spend the money to take the classes than to buy a machine and then decide that wasn't what I wanted to do," she said.

Herl then jumped in with both feet and opened her own quilt studio in downtown Hoxie, located at 925 Royal Ave.

"The most challenging part of this is that I'm still learning," she said. "I'm learning the computer

and figuring out the software."

Herl said she wants her customers to have a variety of options. For instance, after accepting a customer's quilt top, Herl can furnish the batting and backing or customers can provide both.

Customers also have a variety of stitching options from which to choose.

"I have more than 400 patterns in the computer right now, and have the capability to add more," she said.

Since opening in September, Herl already has a stack of quilts waiting for her machine to tackle. And she said she's excited she made the decision to open In Stitches.

"This is something I love to do," she said.



JAN KATZ ACKERMAN/Colby Free Press

Lea Herl of Hoxie talked about the long-arm computerized quilting machine as she used it to apply stitches to a quilt which will be donated to a charity fundraiser by another Hoxie woman. Herl has opened her own quilt studio, In Stitches, located at 925 Royal Ave. in Hoxie.

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