

Knitting yarns

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February 19: Mini Workshops

February brings the return of our annual Skills Exchange Mini Workshops. You'll have the opportunity to learn a number of useful new techniques in short 15-minute sessions. It will be a fun and social evening, with many valuable skills being shared by our volunteer teachers.

We recommend that you bring a kit of basic knitting equipment, plus any other items as suggested by our teachers. The following topics will be offered:

- ▶ **I-Cord Edging:** Marilyn Brady
Integral I-cords can add polish and style to a knit edge.
Please bring: garter stitch swatch, 20 stitches of a worsted weight yarn, with 6-8 rows done.
- ▶ **Joining Yarn by Braiding:** Mary Pat McDonald
This is an ingenious, spit-free way to avoid ends when you run out and need to join a new ball of yarn.
Please bring: Two short lengths of plied yarn (2-ply minimum: won't work with singles).
- ▶ **Crochet Cast-on for Knitters:** Patrick Madden
Patrick will demonstrate how to work the Crochet Cast On using a crochet hook and knitting needle. This is the quickest method for working both a secure, durable closed edge Cast On and a temporary "Provisional Cast On" edge.
- ▶ **Stretchy Cast-on for Socks:** Suzie Larouche
How to cast on for top-down socks that will never, ever feel tight at the top.

Upcoming Meeting Dates

Wednesday, February 19, 2014

Wednesday, March 19, 2014

Wednesday, April 16, 2014

Location

Innis Town Hall, 2 Sussex Ave.

NW corner of St. George St.

and Sussex Ave.

on the University of Toronto campus.

TTC Access

Five-minute walk south from

St. George subway station.

Parking available at several nearby locations.

Meeting Time: 7:30 p.m.

Doors Open: 6:45 p.m.

Admission

\$8.00 for guests

Free to Members

(please show card at door)



All Downtown Knit Collective meetings, functions and events are governed by the Rules of Conduct as determined by the Executive. To read a copy of the Rules, please visit www.downtownknitcollective.ca/dkc_conduct.html

Highlights of the January Meeting *by Heather Brady*

A large and appreciative crowd was on hand to hear from Jonathon Leonard of the legendary yarn store Romni Wools.

Announcements

By a show of hands, almost everyone in the audience experienced power failure over the holidays. We assume all used woolens to stay warm.

Candace Eisner Strick has been confirmed as this year's keynote instructor at the Frolic. Workshop signups will be available soon. She is a super friendly and talented knitter and teacher, and we're very excited to have her.

Raffle

A shawl pin from Cynthia Blanton Studio was won by Susan Shone. A Hugs & Kisses hat kit from Waterloo Wools was won by Rhoda Hill. Flo Flory picked up a Pearl Clutch kit from Westminster Fibres.

Show & Tell

Mary Pat showed off a Beer Mitt— essentially a cupholder for your hand. She says it's not a great work of art, but very popular. She's made a dozen of them so far, and the pattern is free on Ravelry. The audience absolutely loved it.

As promised, soon-to-be grandmother Trish D showed off some more baby stuff. This time it was a bright red bunting bag with buttons down the sides and a hood. She also showed highlights from a bag of baby sweaters she made about 15 years ago and forgot all about. What a fortuitous find.

Guest Speaker Jonathon Leonard

Every Toronto knitter has a story or two about an experience at Romni Wools. Having grown up in the store, and now as the manager, Jonathon has hundreds of them.

Romni is by far the largest knitting

store in Toronto, and well-known across Canada. Jonathon has been working full-time in the store for the past 12 years.

Jonathon remembers his dad installing drywall in Romni's first incarnation at King and Parliament in the 70s. They started out by selling yarn off large cones, from chiefly English and Scottish suppliers.

After a year, the store moved to King and John. They still chiefly sold cone yarn, but had expanded to include Rowan and some Kafe Fassett kits. They also started stocking spinning wheels and fibre direct from the mill. Jonathon says that some of his earliest memories include helping his dad pack an Econoline van full of yarn and spinning wheels and heading out to conventions and shows. He was forced to warp looms at an early age, and was paid in Happy Meals. It did him good.

In the mid-80s the store moved again, this time to Queen and Spadina. Yarn lines were expanding, and Romni was stocking more designer yarns and balls as opposed to cones. Mills were becoming more attuned to the needs of hand knitters, using more exotic fibres. The use of knitting machines was also on the rise (though they cost almost \$5000 at the time). Jonathon distinctly remembers one of the first fun-fur novelty yarns, Nutria by Katia. He says they sold bucketloads of it. Regia self-patterning sock yarn was another ground-breaking product that emerged in the 80s.

In 1991 the store moved to its current home at Queen and Bathurst. With each move the store got bigger. If you can believe it, Jonathon said at first there were just shelves around the perimeter of the room with a small table in the middle. As everyone knows, it's now packed to the rafters and

beyond. Funny how yarn does that. For all the yarn that is on display, they have at least three times that much in storage. Despite this vast stock, he keeps in touch with local yarn stores to ensure there isn't too much duplication. He likes to keep things friendly.

Having seen every yarn under the sun, Jonathon had some tips for the audience:

- Gauge is fleeting, but yardage never lies. Trying to figure out patterns is one of the most complicated parts of the business. He calls it "fun— a challenge with a certain aspect of danger".
- He likes square needles and finds they really equalize tension and prevent hand fatigue. But watch out... the gauge is different and you will likely need to go up a size.
- Variegated yarns can look fine— until you start your decreases. Suddenly the colour changes are all bunched together. Jonathon hates that!
- Customer demand plays a big part in what Romni stocks. Mention it to him, and he will do his best to get it.
- Know and love Ravelry. With four million+ users, there's nowhere to go but up. They are working on a new website and getting a computer in the store for customer pattern downloads. It's the future.
- Don't be afraid of chenille. He likes Tencel (rayon) the best. Throw it in the washer and dryer— once the fabric is stabilized, it will wear like iron.

What does Jonathon love about owning a yarn store? Everything! If he had become a doctor or a lawyer, his parents would have been very disappointed.

Charity Knitting

As knitters, we truly have the power to make a difference in our community and abroad. Here are just a few of the organizations that can use our skills:

Casting off the Cold Knitting/Crocheting for Charity
Contact: Sally Karamath
castingoffthecold@gmail.com
www.castingoffthecold.ca

Casting Off the Cold is a 100% volunteer non-profit organization whose members devote their knitting and crocheting skills to making winter apparel for the less fortunate in York Region and in the Greater Toronto Area.

Established in 2007 by Unionville artist and knitter Sally Karamath, the group knits or crochets hats, mitts, scarves, sweaters, blankets and socks which they donate to shelters such as the Yellow Brick House and other community organizations that help the unfortunate, especially during the harsh winter months.

Warm clothing is a winter necessity that many people in our own and neighbouring communities may not be able to afford because of extenuating circumstances, says Founder Sally Karamath. Our volunteers put their needles together to knit warmth for someone who may otherwise go without.

Earlier, knitters also started to craft blankets that are given to seriously ill and traumatized children, ages of 0 to 18 through the auspices of Project Linus.

And for those who might have excess yarn in storage at home, Casting Off the Cold will gladly accept donations of yarn to distribute to volunteer knitters.

Contributions from anyone, beginners to expert knitters, are most welcome.

Project Linus Canada
Contact: Rona Kleiman
ronklei@rogers.com
plcanada.cjb.net

Project Linus is a 100% volunteer non-profit organization. It is their mission to provide love, a sense of security, warmth and comfort to children who are seriously ill, traumatized or otherwise in need through the gifts of new, homemade, washable blankets and afghans, lovingly crafted by volunteer blanketeers.

The website gives a list of Canadian chapters and an explanation of their mission.

They are in need of hand made blankets, any color and any pattern, sized about 40 by 60 inches. Donations can be made to the address on the website. They are a registered charity and can offer tax receipts. The blankets MUST be hand made and washable.

Teddies for Tragedies
teddiesfortragedies.org

In 1998, the Teddies for Tragedies website was created. Today they have volunteers all over the world knitting 10" teddy bears for children traumatized because of war, natural disasters, or poverty.

Their volunteers knit teddies as a hobby. There is no quota to fill. This is an ongoing project and teddies are collected throughout the year. In the fall they are taken to a distribution centre for packaging into shoeboxes.

The main distribution center is in Kitchener, Ontario. They even receive packages from the U.K. filled with wonderful knitted teddies. On average per year they have more than 5000

bears donated and processed.

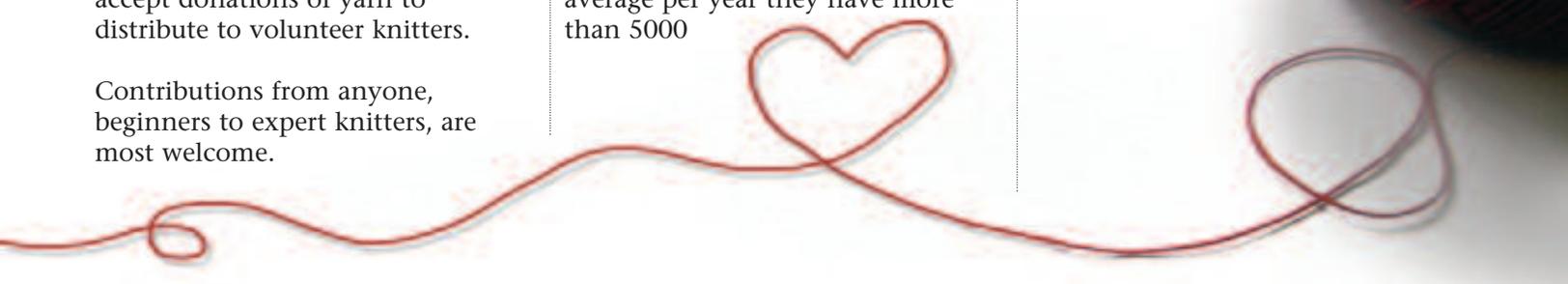
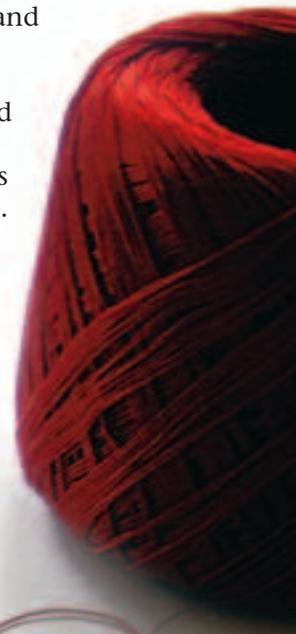
There are some pictures on the website showing children receiving these teddies all over the world. The "Thank You" pages list some of the volunteers who donated their teddies and/or supplies to the cause. They are grateful for the wonderful people who care about those children who have suffered trauma and make them feel better.

All the teddies are knitted (some crocheted) in a very simple pattern. The choice of coloured yarn is what makes each teddy the same, yet different. Teddies need to be the same size and pattern because some of these shoeboxes are delivered to a village with dozens of children and each teddy has to "look" the same, except for the colours.

Cotton bags to fit each teddy are made for the teddies. It is often as important as the teddy itself. Some children call the bag "teddy's home". Some children even take the teddy to school, where available, for moral support.

They do accept teddies, bags, donated wool and cotton material.

Patterns, samples and directions can be found on the Teddies for Tragedies website.





Countdown to the Frollic: Workshops, Workshops, Workshops!

We are very fortunate in Toronto to have so many wonderful fibre arts instructors. The following two instructors are members of our own guild.



Introducing Kim Hume

You may remember Kim as a commentator at our December Fashion Show, Work of Our Hands. Kim came to crochet from a curiosity about crochet flowers and experimenting with different stitches. Kim will be offering two Crochet Workshops. Sign up quickly, last year's workshop sold out!

▶ Crochet Crash Course

Knitters, learn to crochet! For absolute beginners— no previous crochet or knitting experience required. Crochet is quick, easy and can add lovely embellishments and edgings to your knitting projects. In a 3-hour class, learn the basics of crochet including chain stitch, single crochet and double crochet, and put the stitches together to make a cell-phone cozy. Learn to read a pattern and a crochet chart.

▶ Crocheted Flowers

Put a flower on it! Take crochet to the next level and learn to make sweet flowers with crochet. Add a pop of handmade texture and colour to your coat, hat, hairstyle, or handbag. Working through three separate flower patterns, students will learn how to read a pattern, how to read charts, how to crochet in the round, how to combine stitches for shaping and how to add layers for three-dimensions.



Introducing Barbara Aikman

Barb is a multi-talented gal. She is not only a knitter, she is an accomplished spinner, having obtained her OHS Spinning Certificate. Barb was a member of the Toronto Spiders, three time World Champions in the International Back to Back Wool Challenge.

▶ Introduction to Spinning on a Wheel

Students will learn the basics of spinning yarn on a spinning wheel. We'll discuss the different types of wheels and fibre choices available for spinners. You'll learn how to card and prepare your fibre, the different drafting techniques, controlling twist, plying and finishing techniques. No need to bring your own wheel; the \$10.00 material fee covers the cost of fleece/roving and use of a spinning wheel.

▶ Spindle Spinning

Learn the ancient art of spinning on a spindle. You'll cover all the necessary steps to produce your own handspun yarn. This workshop will go over the different fibres used, fibre preparation, drawing out the fibre, putting twist into your yarn, plying and finishing techniques. A \$25.00 Materials Fee covers the cost of a spindle and roving.

UPCOMING EVENTS

YarnOver SleepOver Retreat

Last year's retreat was so much fun, we've decided to do it again. It's a weekend of crafty fun with 9 teachers and 13 classes, plus a fashion show and marketplace. It runs from April 11-13 at Fern Resort, near Orillia. Visit the website for all the details: yarnoversleepover.com

16th Annual Knitter's Frollic

This year's Frollic is coming up fast! It's the weekend of April 26-27. As always, the event will feature workshops, food, fibre and fun. Our keynote instructor this year will be author and knitwear designer **Candace Eisner Strick**.

• Marketplace:

Saturday 9:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

• Workshops:

Saturday 9:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Sunday 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

• Location:

Japanese Canadian Cultural Centre
6 Garamond Court, Toronto

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Stitch of the Month by Diane Martin

Stitch with No Name

Pattern side shown is reverse stocking stitch

Multiple of 6 plus 3 border stitches at beginning and end of pattern rows. Rows 3 and 6 are pattern rows.

Long stitch : on purl rows: purl into stitch 2 rows below next stitch on left hand needle

Rows 1 and 5 : Purl

Rows 2 and 4 : Knit

Row 3 : Purl 3, *purl 1 long stitch, purl 5; repeat from *; end with 1 long stitch, purl 3.

Row 6 : Knit 3, *knit 1 long stitch, knit 5; repeat from *; end with 1 long stitch, knit 3.

