

Origination of the What The Knit! Guild

In 2007, when I was starting to see the light at the end of the tunnel and knew that I would be retiring in a few years, I became concerned with how I would use my retirement time. I had always been a workaholic and enjoyed my work, but at the same time was really looking forward to "not working". I took a self inventory and decided that I should increase the amount of time and energy that I spent on my hobby - knitting. So I enrolled in the TKGA (The Knitting Guild Association) Master Hand Knitting (MHK) Program. I set my retirement target date for sometime in 2013.

At the same time, I started looking for other knitters, since I knew none. I went to the three yarn stores in town and asked if they knew of any organized groups of knitters. They did not know of any. So I made up flyers and took them to the yarn stores with my phone number attached to little tear off tabs on the bottom. No one called. I really wanted to start a knitting guild.

About the same time, I found Ravelry and asked to join. At that time it was still in Beta and you were put on a waiting list until they invited you. I was on the waiting list for about 6 weeks.

Once I got in, I looked for groups in Bakersfield but there were none at that time. I did find a group for Central California and joined it and posted a thread asking if there were any knitters from Bakersfield. No one replied.

I waited about three weeks and posted again. This time a lady from Porterville responded - April McLaughlin. She said that if I named a date and place, she would meet with me. I picked Jan 10th 2008, 10:00 at Dagney's.

April was much more savvy on Ravelry and knew how to look up people by location. She found several other people in Bakersfield and invited them to the meet up.

I was very surprised by how many people showed up. Ruth Rockidge was the first one there. She and I both just about broke out in tears meeting each other. April was there as well as Christina Hildebrand, Joyce (?) plus a couple other ladies.

We had so much fun sharing our knitting. We decided to meet again in a month. And that turned into weekly meetings.

We met at the coffee shop in the Doubletree Inn for about a year, then moved to a variety of other places including Borders, Barnes and Noble, Starbucks and Panera's. There were times when we met at my house as well.

From time to time, I would bring up the idea of creating a knitting guild. But no one was interested in having a formal group at that time.

I completed the Master Hand Knitting Program in 2010, was invited to be on the MHK Review Committee and then became a Co-Chair responsible for the final reviews and letters written to the MHK students. (I served on that committee for 6 years and became friends with the most amazingly talented knitters.)

Somehow, I found a knitting guild in Fresno - Sheeper Than Therapy - and became a member. I wanted to see how a guild functioned. I learned bunches from them and am still a member and especially enjoy their fall retreats.

I started having educational meetings at my house. We studied garment construction, socks, general knitting, a variety of stitch patterns, etc. I also started teaching classes at the Knit and Crochet Shows held in various places around the country, and published a variety of articles and patterns in Cast On Magazine.

Then in the fall of 2012, on a field trip down to the Los Angeles area, in a car of 8 knitters, Cookie (who was driving) asked me if I had ever thought of starting a guild. That was the match that lit the fire. I finally had collected enough people that were interested in starting a formal guild.

We had an organizational meeting in October of 2012, and our first official meeting in November.

The initial list of officers included Cindy McBride, Ruth Rockidge, Christina Hildebrand and me. We sat around my dining room table and composed our first set of Bylaws and Policies & Procedures. We used the framework supplied by TKGGA along with a copy of the Sheeper Than Therapy bylaws. The Fresno guild had been very supportive in my drive to create a guild in Bakersfield and generously shared their learning experiences with us.

We have been meeting ever since with a membership that grows monthly.

I am strongly compelled to share my knowledge of and love for knitting with the rest of the guild members and other knitters through ongoing educational activities and fun.

I am also the instructor for two correspondence courses offered through TKGGA: Mosaic Knitting and the Knitting Judges Certification Course. And I teach knitting classes at Bakersfield College through the Levan Institute of Lifelong Learning.

Our guild obtained official non-profit status as of April 2016 through the generous efforts of Laura Huntington and her mother along with the rest of the board.

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TKGGA Master Hand Knitter