



VOLUME 32

January 2012

A MONTHLY PUBLICATION OF THE MADISON KNITTERS' GUILD

January 9 Meeting: Anne Alessi, Steel Wool Studios

Bishop O'Connor Center
702 S. High Point Road
5:00 pm Doors Open

- **Registration**
- **Sign-up for Show-N-Tell**
- **Drop off charity donations**
- **Library**
- **Knit Aid**
- **Vendors**
Distraction
The Dragonfly Yarn Shop
Steel Wool Studio

6:30 pm

- **Meeting & Program**
- **Show-N-Tell**



Steel Wool Studio

We offer longarm quilting, hand painted fabrics & yarns, fiber dyeing classes, handknit painted sweaters and silk scarves, and metal garden art. Check the website for pictures, open house dates & times, or call for an appointment.

Annie Alessi & Don Esser
608-850-4155
Alessistudio@tds.net
www.steelwoolstudio.com

Anne Alessi is our speaker at the next Madison Knitters' Guild meeting. We spoke with her recently and here's what she had to say...

I started my fiber artist journey as a quilter, then expanded to silk painting and finally to knitting. No matter what medium I worked in, however, color was always the main focus and where my creative passion originated.

Since I make a living from fiber creations, I have to think in terms of "what will sell?" Knitting allows me to use color to create items that other people want to own. I primarily knit women's clothing and dye all the yarn that I use in my creations. My first knitted item used silk fabric that I had dyed, cut into ½ inch strips and then knitted. Now I use wool, linen, and some cotton that I hand dye after knitting.

One of the reasons that I am a fiber artist is that I like a challenge. In many places the fiber arts are not considered "true art" and are thought of as being second rate. While this is a hassle, I don't let this perception stand in my way. I hope my work shows that knitting is not a second-rate endeavor.

My husband and I own and operate Steel Wool Studio in Waunakee. The name comes from the fact that my husband works with steel and I work with wool. We live on an old dairy farm. What was once the dairy barn is now our gallery space and where my studio is located. We travel all over the country to various arts and crafts shows including Madison's Art Fair on the Square.

I've been participating in arts and crafts shows since 1987. Most of them are highly juried which limits the number of artists that are permitted to have a booth. Over the years I've won many art show awards including two Best of Show awards, one of which was extra special to me as I was the first fiber artist to ever receive that award.

My most memorable show, however, is a show I did in Maryland a number of years ago. I grew up outside of Philadelphia, got my degree from the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, and had always lived in the eastern US, so the Maryland show was close to home.

—see ALESSI Page 2

Happy New Year, Knitters!

May this year be everything you wish it to be and filled with lots of knitting!

BOARD CHANGES: Because of work and family commitments Jaala Spiro has stepped down as MKG president. Instead, she (with Jen Mack assisting) will take on membership duties while I have agreed to take over the duties of president. See page 6 for an updated list of the current board members and committee chairs.

UFO RETREAT JANUARY 20-22, 2012 — REMINDER: In order to get an idea of the number of people planning to attend, we are asking everyone to pre-register. This can be done at the registration table during the January 9, 2012, meeting or on the MKG website www.madisonknittersguild.org

There's still time to make your hotel reservation at the Chalet Landhaus in New Glarus. Remember to ask for the MKG room discount. Staying at the hotel isn't required to attend the retreat but is a nice little something you can do for yourself (in addition to the retreat!)

Attendance at the UFO Retreat is free for members, and non-members are asked to pay \$5. You're encouraged to bring a snack to share with everyone throughout the weekend. Coffee and hot water will be provided.

KNIT-IN MARCH 10, 2012 — REMINDER: This year's Knit-In at the Bishop O'Connor Center is going to be exciting. Our main speaker is Kate Gilbert from [Twist Collective](http://www.twistcollective.com). Watch the website and next month's newsletter for class details, vendor information, and registration form.

BOARD MEMBER, ANYONE? While it still seems a long way off, the May 14 board elections will soon be upon us. Three board members will be ending their terms, so their spots will be up for grabs. Please consider running for one of these positions. Details regarding the duties and expectations will be included in an upcoming newsletter. Let a board member know if you're interested.

JUNE MEETING: That's right. We have a meeting in June this year. Arne and Carlos, authors of *55 Christmas Balls to Knit: Colorful Festive Ornaments--Tree Decorations, Centerpieces, Wreaths, Window Dressings* will be the speakers. Watch for date and meeting details.

Mary Jo Harris, President
Madison Knitters' Guild



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—ALESSI (cont. from Page 1)

Little did I know that I would meet my husband at this show and move to the Madison area to be with him. I love him and love the Madison area. Moving here was a good fit for me.

I've been asked if Don and I ever collaborate on creations and the short answer to that is 'no'. However, I have done some metal work on occasion and he has worked with fiber. And who knows what we'll decide to do in the future?

— Mae Knowles contributed to this story

Meet Our January Vendors

Dragonfly Yarn Shop is a warm, inviting place at 1327 North Wright Road, Suite 5A in Janesville, with yarn, roving and tools for knitters, crocheters and other fiber artists. They carry items from Cascade, Malabrigo, Universal, Bergere de France, Claudia, Jade Sapphire, Misti Alpaca, Angel's Kiss, Crystal Palace, Skacel Collection, Opal, Mountain Colors, and Interweave Press. New items include Moonlight from Jade Sapphire—50% cashmere/50% combed mink—and Dreamz multicolor birch knitting needles from Knitter's Pride; and Madelinetosh is coming soon. Owner Kerri Shank offers lessons by the hour and upcoming classes: January 16, 23 and 30—Loopy Socks, February 6, 13 and 20—Felted Clogs. Open knitting is held at The Dragonfly every Thursday from 1:00-4:00 p.m. free of charge. Visit their website at <http://www.dragonflyyarnshop.com/>, their Etsy site at <http://www.etsy.com/shop/TheDragonflyYarnShop>, or call 608-757-9228.

Distraction (formerly La Bella Vita) offers a wide variety of yarns from local farms and far beyond as well as related supplies, a diverse collection of antique and vintage fripperies, and a treasure trove of architectural salvage. Distraction will remain open in Mineral Point until January 14, when they will close to move to their new location. They will have an opening at their new site at W61 N505 Washington Avenue in Cedarburg on the weekend of February 4–5, just in time for the Winter Festival. Visit their website at <http://www.my-distraction.com/> or call 608-609-0038 to learn more. They will bring us a combination of local and fair-trade yarns, rovings, and handcrafted accessories made by local artisans. They will continue to honor a 15% discount for any Madison Knitters' Guild member at any time!

Steel Wool Studios will also have products for sale. For more information, visit their web site at www.steelwoolstudio.com.

Thanks to all of our vendors for joining us! Whether you come to the meeting or not, please consider visiting their stores.

– Marilyn Huset


The Dragonfly Yarn Shop



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What started out as an obsession to find interesting and quality fibres & fripperies, has turned into an inspirational retreat for the connoisseur of the unique.



JANUARY COMMUNITY PROJECT

Madison High Schools Hats, Scarves & Mittens for Youth Aged 14–18

Free headband patterns on the MKG Web site: <http://www.madisonknittersguild.com/pat>.
Or try the Jenny Hat by Jaala Spiro: <http://www.knitcircus.com/pdfs/jennyhat.pdf>

THANK YOU to everyone who donated to the December Second Chance for Second Harvest project. In addition to donations of food supplies, we will donate \$800. That's 2,400 meals! Knitters are truly generous people.

Please send pictures of your knitting donations to mkgnewsletter@gmail.com!

ONGOING COMMUNITY PROJECTS

Donations and charity yarn are located in the same room as the library. Place your donations in the area marked for the charity you would like to support.

Yarn for Charity: Donate yarn to be used by other knitters. *Remember*—this yarn is free if used to make community projects. Please donate \$1 per ball or skein if you take yarn for your own use.

Women's Prison: Donate yarn, crochet hooks, patterns and related supplies.

Handmade Especially for You: Guild member Lois Anderson collects completed scarves that are donated to women in domestic abuse shelters. Tags for your scarves are available at the guild meetings. Contact Lois at landerson@uwalumni.com or visit the web site: <http://handmadeespecially.org/>.

- Jennifer Golubiewski, Community Projects Chair

<p>Specializing in Local Yarns, Fibers, and Tools for Creative Minds. 205 E. Main St. Mt Horeb WI 53572 www.thecatandcrowonline.com 608.437.1771</p> <p>Open: Tuesday & Wednesday 10 AM to 9 PM Thursday & Friday 10 AM to 5 PM Saturday 9 AM to 5 PM Saturday workshops; find the most current schedule on our website!</p>	
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<h2>Needles 'n Pins Yarn Shoppe</h2> <p>Doreen L. Marquart, Owner W9034 County A (Richmond) Delavan, WI 53115 Phone: 608/883-9922 www.needlesnpinsyarnshoppe.com *****</p> <p>Hours: Mon, Wed, Fri & Sat 9:00a.m.—5:00p.m. Sun 1:00—5:00p.m. (Closed Tues & Thurs)</p> <p>*****</p> <p>Quality yarns, books and accessories at affordable prices. Largest shop in the area devoted exclusively to the needs of knitters/</p> 
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Knitting Volunteers Needed

Teach children how to knit at the Madison Children's Museum! This five-week program begins on Sunday, February 5, and runs through Sunday, March 4, 3–4:30 p.m. The class is advertised as "join experts from the Madison Knitters Guild and learn the basics of knitting." Each child will be accompanied by an adult. If you're interested, contact Jayne Coster at: jaynecoster@ameritech.net or 242-5657.

FEBRUARY COMMUNITY PROJECTS:

Bayview Center: Knit items for boys & girls, 8-11 years old

<http://www.bayviewfoundation.org/aboutbayview/communitycenter.html>

Hospice: Prayer shawls & lap blankets

<http://www.agracehospicecare.org/>

Your MKG Membership Card is Worth Gold!

Well, not exactly *gold*... but as a member of the Madison Knitters' Guild you will receive discounts at many local yarn shops. Show your MKG card at JoAnn's and receive a VIP card good for 10% off your entire purchase—on sale or not!

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Kate Findley – 2012 Knit-In Chair and
2012-13 Speaker Acquisitions
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What Suggestions Do You Have For Us?

What can be done to make the Madison Knitters' Guild better? Is there something about MKG that you've always wondered 'Why is this done this way'? Do you have any suggestions for speakers, programs, or events that you'd like to see? In general, what ideas do you have for us?

Your thoughts, comments, or suggestions can be passed on to any board member by contacting them directly, through our website (www.madisonknittersguild.org) or by leaving your comments at the hospitality table at any Guild meeting. We want your input!



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obsessive knitters reward: every completed card entitles bearer to \$20.00 in free merchandise (classes & sale items excluded)

Fiber Farmin'



We have 20 sheep (Shetland, Cormo and CVM-Romedale,) 9 alpacas, 25 Angora goats, and 2 Angora bunnies on our fiber farm. I swear there isn't a week that goes by that somebody isn't into something mischievous. If only we had a webcam in the barn to capture these antics in progress!

I came home from work Friday night to find that the Shetland ram had gotten inside the feeder. Now, mind you, I get home from work at about 5 p.m. and at this time of year, it's dark outside; so I went to the barn to do chores, flipped on the barnyard light to carry hay to the feeders, and there was Reisling (yes, I named "the babies" after wine one year) staring out at me! The feeder only opens at the end you're looking at; the other end was intact and the side slats were intact, so the only way he could have gotten in there was some sort of gymnastic feat!

But that begs the question of "WHY" he would choose to crawl inside the hay feeder... What WAS he thinking? DO sheep think?

It is breeding season (we breed late so babies are born in warmer weather since we have off-the-farm jobs and cannot be here for day birthing,) and he is the ram we are using on our Shetland ewes. Perhaps he was tired of the girls and wanted to hide. Or did the girls get sick of him and stuff him in the feeder?

The other feeders still had hay in them, so he wasn't looking for food. Presuming he had to go in head first, how did he get turned around? To no avail I tried to lift the other end of the feeder to dump him back out; the feeder is wooden, so it's quite heavy by itself without being full of Reisling!

It was then that I thought about getting a picture of him in that predicament, so I ran back to the house for a camera thinking he might get himself out in my absence.

When John came home 30 minutes later, Reisling was still stuck and "baa-ing" like he wanted to get out. We tried reaching in to grab one horn apiece to pull him out, but Reisling was into finger smashing. He was having no part of a "horn-pulling extraction!" These guys are called "rams" for a reason. Even in confined spaces they pack a lot of power!

— Cindy Ellenbecker

Bleating Heart Haven



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Cindy Ellenbecker & John Rezachek

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Wear natural fibers!

Fleeces, roving, yarn (natural and dyed), mohair socks and a variety of knitted, felted, woven clothing & accessories for sale; also limited breeding stock (Angora goats & Shetland sheep).

Gauge Determines Sweater Size!

Several years ago *Vogue Knitting* came out with a cable and seed stitch jacket that I loved the minute I saw it. Big problem though... the pattern only went up to a finished bust measurement of 40 inches, and my favorite sweater (which I always copy measurements from to get a good fit) has a finished bust measurement of 44 inches.

So I needed the front and back pieces of my sweater to measure 22 inches each, but the pattern is written to only measure 20 inches each. I needed to increase the pattern 2 inches on the front, and 2 inches on the back to get the fit I needed.

The pattern calls for casting on 107 stitches each for the front and back, and a gauge of 5-1/2 stitches to one inch. I could cast on 14 extra stitches for the front of the sweater, or for the back of the sweater ($121 \text{ stitches} \div 5.5 = 22 \text{ inches}$). But there was one complication to this method... figuring out how many stitches would be required for the neckline, shoulder, and sleeve shaping.

I came up with an alternative and easier solution—work to a different gauge! Here is how I did it:

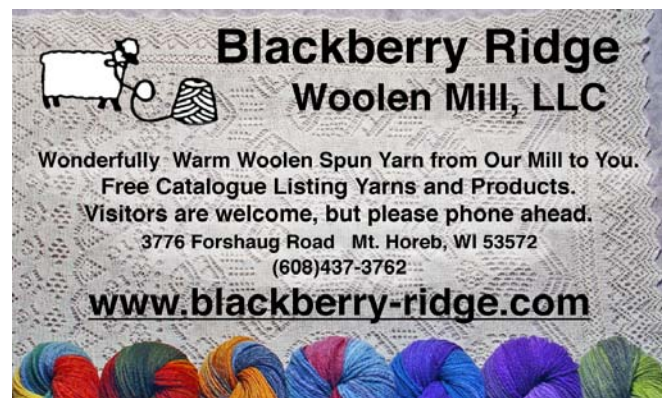
- Divide 107 stitches by 22" (the desired width)
- Gauge is now approximately 5 stitches per inch

The beauty of this method is that it will almost always also work out correctly for the neckline, shoulder and sleeve shaping without further mathematics.

Of course, you'll still want to test your gauge, making the standard 4-inch swatch. In this case:

- Cast on enough stitches to equal 4 inches (5 stitches per inch x 4 inches = 20 stitches)
- Work in the pattern stitch used in your pattern until the piece measures 4 inches in length.
- Loosely bind off the stitches, and lay the swatch flat. It will measure 4 inches in width if you have achieved your gauge. If it is larger, try again with smaller needles. If it's smaller than 4 inches, try larger needles. Keep doing this until it is right. You will love the results!

— Deborah Ross



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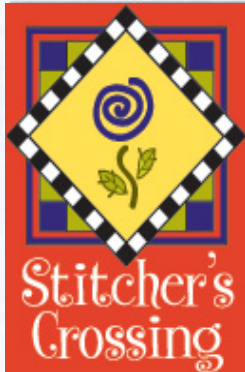
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I work for the Madison Metro School District at Hamilton Middle School. I am an 8th gr special ed and reading teacher. Prior to working for the school district, I helped Kristi Langhus get the Argyle Fiber Mill started. I left after 2 years...too much commuting.

I have done some translating (thanks to Carol Rhoades) of German knit and crochet books for both Interweave and Trafalgar Square Publishers. Carol and I just finished Stephanie van der Linden's "Socken rund ums Jahr" (Knit Socks for all Seasons.) It should be out in spring 2012. I am hanging up my translator's hat once the next book is done, "Creative Crochet with Granny Squares". If anyone is interested in some translating work (from German to English) let me know. I have already had to turn down a new project.

My favorite type of knitting is two-color. I would love to go to Scandinavia one of these days and visit all the textile/folk museums with knitting collections. It is no surprise that I love smooth yarns in lots of colors. I have always liked Cascade 220, good basic yarn, not too expensive. That said I also love almost any hand-dyed yarn, such as Koigu. I love color. Unfortunately I am not knitting much right now, but hope to change that in 2012. Must remember... **BALANCE!**

Thanks to a couple of long-time knitting friends, yesterday I dug out a sweater that I started last year (Blackwater Abbey yarn and pattern purchased at the Knit In) and we headed to the Sow's Ear. Five hours, one eggnog latte and a slice of butternut squash and onion quiche later, my sweater is back on track and with any luck I'll be able to wear it once or twice before warm weather returns.

I have a great husband, three kids ages 12-17, and a large kitchen garden behind my house. "Life is good."

— Mae Knowles contributed to this story

ED NOTE: Watch for bios about other Guild board members in upcoming newsletters. Consider serving on the board. Go to www.madisonknittersguild.org/committee-members for more information.



Elizabeth Wellenstein, Special Events

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Upcoming Fiber Events

- **Feb. 6:** Knit at Sequoia Library. Informal gathering for guild members & friends. Contact Jane Grogan for a seat: janegro@yahoo.com
- **Feb. 17–18:** Janesville Area Knitting Guild Knit In, <http://jakg.org/id18.html>
- **Feb. 24–26:** [Sheep in the City Getaway](#), Oak Creek, WI.
- **Mar. 10:** Knit-In, Bishop O'Connor Center, Madison
- **Apr. 14:** Stephenson County Fiber Art Fair, Cedarville, IL, <http://www.suzybeggin.com/FAF.htm>
- **June 9–17:** World Wide Knit In Public Day AND Week, www.wkipday.com
- **June 22–24:** Midwest Fiber & Folk Art Fair, Grays Lake, IL, <http://www.fiberandfolk.com/>
- **Oct. 25–Nov. 3:** Ireland and Dublin's Knit & Stitch Show featuring knitting workshop with Marie Duquette <http://beadventures.com>.

Send your events to newsletter@madisonknittersguild.org



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