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## Sewing : Woman makes love of fabric into a business

*Debra Mayeux The Daily Times*

FARMINGTON — At 6 years old **Alberta** Chappell knew how to wield a needle and thread. Her mother and grandmother taught her to sew.

"My grandmother would look at me and start chopping out a newspaper pattern and keep cutting until it fit," Chappell said.

She grew up, went to college and graduated with a master's degree in fashion design. Chappell knew how to make clothes and she loved to sew. This love led her in 2003 to become the franchise owner of Bernina Sewing Center at the age of 56.

"I knew how to sew. I didn't know how to use a cash register," she said.

Her desire was to "benefit the home sewer," and she was able to do just that by offering free lessons to anyone using her shop in the San Juan Plaza.

"In 2006, gas went up to \$3.50 a gallon. It created a hardship for all of us," she said. Chappell began offering the free lessons. "It was an incentive to keep women coming in."

The free lessons took off. Chappell had to find teachers and develop a calendar of times for people to meet and sew. On any given day there are sewers dropping in for assistance.

"I just walked in off the streets and said, Help," said Cathy Korzan, of Aztec.

Korzan is a lifelong sewer and quilter. "My mother passed sewing on to my sisters and I, and I've passed it on to one of my girls," she said on Wednesday morning.

When Korzan was in school 50 years ago, young girls who did not learn sewing from their mother learned in home economics. In 2008, most schools do not offer sewing education classes.

"You have to come to a shop," Korzan said.

Most shops offer classes, if you buy a machine. Chappell, however, provides a greater service by helping anyone learn to sew. She even assists people with other brands of machines.

"The women in Farmington were starved for this education," Chappell said.

Her shop has two classrooms, and there are loaner machines for use by students. The classes range from beginner sewing and quilting to advanced sewing and embroidery.

Vicki Ivy, of Bloomfield, is studying embroidery with a high-tech machine that can be hooked up to a computer.

"I bought the machine because of the support. I felt like I died and went to heaven," she said during a one-on-one session Wednesday with Sharleen O'Dell, an instructor at Bernina. "I'm a quilter, and I'll be able to embroider on my quilts."

There are three instructors covering a variety of topics. O'Dell teaches machine functions and hosts a sewing lab.

"I've sewn garments my entire life," she said. Many women do, but lifestyle changes, such as women working outside of the home, led to many women giving up sewing and simply shopping for clothes. O'Dell sees that pattern changing.

"There's more and more ladies wanting to learn how to sew garments," she said. That is what keeps her and Chappell busy at the Bernina Sewing Center.

Another big aspect of the business is quilting, and there are many quilters in the county. Through a special project called Quilt Pink, in cooperation with "Better Homes and Gardens American Patchwork Quilting Magazine," the ladies made a quilt to support the Susan G. Komen Foundation that combats breast cancer.

Some 10 ladies bought special material and made quilt squares. Those squares were made into a quilt at Bernina Sewing Center. That quilt will be auctioned on eBay, with the proceeds benefiting the foundation.

This project led to a quilting club, called Pink Ladies. They will meet each week at the sewing center to make quilts and head scarves for those undergoing cancer treatment in Farmington.

"We all have a sentimental reason," O'Dell said.

Chappell's mother is a cancer survivor, and some of the participating women are cancer survivors.

"We have several women who want to meet and make lap robes and quilts on Fridays," Chappell said. "We have plenty to do."

For information about the free sewing classes and clubs, call Chappell at (505) 327-9911.

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