



Weaving a niche in Felton

New shop aims to tap into customer creativity

By CAROLYN LEAL
SENTINEL CORRESPONDENT

FELTON — Threads run through the hand-painted wall mural in Alison Antone's shop in Felton and the threads are repeated on her business card.

They're a symbol for her month-old Luminous Threads boutique, which offers unique fabrics and quilting supplies, yarns and knitting materials, classes and workshops.

Alison Antone's Luminous Threads has been open for a month.

Dan Coyro/Sentinel

The Luminous Threads name is also significant.

"One's creativity is luminous," Antone said. "When you express yourself, you're letting your light shine."

Antone wants to help her customers tap into the threads of creativity in their own lives. She wants to help them learn to do something they've always wanted to do — to knit a pair of socks, make a baby's quilt or crochet a scarf.

Her high-ceiling shop is furnished in antique-reproductions, which seem a fitting

See **THREADS** on **PAGE D10**

D-10 SANTA CRUZ SENTINEL Sunday, July 17, 2005

Threads

Continued from Page D1

backdrop for the bolts of cotton cloth featuring vintage designs and the baskets of colorful yarn.

Antone, a tall brunette with a model's figure, makes clothing to order for customers in an on-site workshop.

Luminous Threads Boutique

WHERE: 6223 Highway 9, Felton.

OWNER: Alison Antone.

INFORMATION: 335-2621, www.luminousthreads.com.

HOURS: Tuesday through Saturday, 11 a.m. to 7 p.m.

make the dress," she said. "I have fun, hip fabrics and heirloom reproductions, different from what other fabric shops carry."

She also carries hand-spun wool by Sheepy Dreams, a Boulder Creek company, which harvests wool from its own sheep.

Antone is a person of many talents. She is a professional seamstress, as well as a mural artist, knitter, quilter and jewelry designer. She graduated from San Jose State University with a bachelor's degree in fine arts.

For her wedding a year ago to Dr. Thomas Antone, she made her wedding dress and the dresses for bridesmaids and flower girls, as well as the decorations, invitations and favors. Her husband, a chiropractor, specializes in age management with a practice in Los Gatos. It is his support that helped her open Luminous Threads.

"He has encouraged me to pursue my artistic talents," she said. "He has been my constant support." Some of her handiwork is on sale

'I have fun, hip fabrics and heirloom reproductions, different from what other fabric shops carry.'

ALISON ANTONE,
OWNER,
LUMINOUS THREADS BOUTIQUE

in the shop, including flannel-lined baby blankets, quilts, purses, T-shirts, baby outfits and custom jewelry. She also carries the work of other fiber artists.

"I wanted to create a store I'd want to shop in, with beautiful yarns and friendly service," she said.

She added two park benches in the front of the store because "I want people to walk in and feel they can stay."

She hopes the shop will become a resource for quilters, knitters and seamstresses. Toward that end, she offers a list of classes that teach how to knit and purl and how to make a pieced quilt from scratch. The classes are small, with individual instruction. Antone hopes to tap into the new enthusiasm for knitting, a resurgence of interest in an old craft.

"I'm happy to be a part of the return to sewing and knitting that is happening across the country," she said. "Knitting is really popular now. A lot of young girls are learning it."

She quotes a trade publication that says between 1998 and 2000, the number of knitters in the 20-35 age group jumped 400 percent. She thinks it's because people want to fulfill a creative urge and make, rather than buy, gifts for family and friends.

In recent years, the popularity of the age-old pastime has even drawn celebrities like Julia Roberts and Cameron Diaz, who tout it for its therapeutic benefits.

The Craft Yarn Council of America keeps no numbers on guys who knit. But it has suddenly become

Knitting Facts

■ One out of three women knows how to knit or crochet. The number of women who do these crafts increased from 34.7 million in 1994 to 38 million in 2000.

■ Two out of three yarn consumers say that relaxation is the No. 1 reason they knit.

■ Younger women are picking up the craft. Since 1998, there has been a 400 percent increase in the number of women under 35 years old who crochet and knit.

■ Knitters and crocheters in other age groups have also increased since 1998: from 35-44 years: 13 percent; from 45-54 years: 18 percent; from 55-64 years: 10 percent.

Source: Craft Yarn Council of America

hip as stars such as Russell Crowe, Laurence Fishburne and Bill Cosby go public with their hobby. Knitting clubs for boys have cropped up in shops and schools across the nation.

"We know that we have a significant number," said Mary Colucci, executive director of the Gastonia, N.C.-based Craft Yarn Council of America. "The council is in touch with retailers across the country. What we're seeing is a lot of younger guys are coming in as teenagers."

Knitting also offers a calmness, a centered feeling that is beneficial in stressful times, Antone said.

"It helps you focus and free your mind from busy thoughts," she said. "It's very therapeutic." Antone's shop has been warmly welcomed by other Felton merchants, she said.

"When I saw this store, it was perfect. I called, rented it and moved in in a couple of weeks," Antone said.

She has painted the shop in tones of butternut cream and robin's egg blue, tied together by her luminous threads mural.

"I've got lots of ideas for murals," she said. "I'm particularly interested in doing children's rooms."

Contact Carolyn Leal at jcopeland@santacruzsentinel.com.



ABOVE: Luminous Threads customer Susan Spencer shows off the sweater she's just knitted.



LEFT: Alison Antone, owner of Luminous Threads Boutique in Felton, makes clothing to order for customers in an on-site workshop. Especially popular are dresses for little girls, which feature old-time fabrics and handmade designs.

Dan Coyro/Sentinel photos