

Katy Quilters

Creating Memories in Every Stitch

*Dorothy cuddles up with
her granddaughter Emily
in the quilt she made for her*

Written by Melanie Saxton

Photos by Lisa Mangos

Quilting is a big deal in Katy. According to Nita Beard of the West Houston Quilter's Guild, half of its membership are from the Katy area. "The popularity of quilting is astounding. People have quilted forever," says Beard. "Some still prefer hand-quilting, but many of today's artists quilt by machine. It's an ancient craft that has evolved into a modern-day art form."

The WHQG was formed in 1993 with only 25 ladies and now boasts hundreds of diverse members including teens, new mothers, grandmothers, and even a few men. Every other year the WHQG hosts a quilt show, attracting thousands of onlookers, shoppers, and artists. Last year, guild members presented a check for \$3,000 to Katy Christian Ministries through proceeds from a raffled quilt. "Our 2009 show will be held in February at the Merrell Center, and the excitement is building!" says Beard.



Colorful thread adds to the visual appeal of quilts

Stitching Love into Each Piece

"Quilting is a family art project," says Dorothy Towns of Bellville, who drives to Quilt-n-Sew on S. Mason Rd. for quilting supplies. "I've made quilts for all of my children and grandchildren based on their bedroom themes, personalities, and even their pets. Safari, Crazy Daisy, Western - the choices are endless." Her family enjoys picking out fabrics and patterns. "Kids love to help design their own quilts. But it's also fun to surprise them at Christmas and on birthdays. I heirloom my love into quilts. They make gorgeous one-of-a-kind gifts."

Quilting Through the Years

Quilts sell for hundreds and even thousands of dollars. Some people collect quilts, which are more valuable when signed and dated by the artist. "Today, artists quilt because they want to, not because they have to," says Katy resident Anita Box. "My mother and grandmother used to recycle scraps of old clothing into quilts," says Box. "I also collected scraps from a local tailor. We pieced and hand-sewed year-round from a 6' solid oak quilting frame that hung from our ceiling. Neighbors would join in, and so would my grandfather. All that work kept us from freezing in the winter."



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Most modern-day quilters cut out squares from high-quality quilting fabric, follow specific patterns, and machine sew the squares together. Then they either hand quilt the top, or take it to a professional machine quilter. These quilts can cost hundreds of dollars to make, but can be passed down through families from generation to generation.



Snuggle up with Memories

Quilting has come a long way. Just ask Sharon Dixon of Katy T-Shirt Quilts. "Customers come to me with boxes of their children's school t-shirts, or Rock-n-Roll t-shirts, or any collection of t-shirts. And I sew them into the most beautiful memory quilts you can imagine! It means so much to snuggle with all of those memories," says Dixon. "Quilting is a unique way to share your love with future generations."

Dixon also has a long-arm quilting machine business. "People who don't stitch by hand come to me for specialized machine quilting. My quilting machine is on a big table and runs stitching through the entire quilt, based on a design my customer chooses."

Your Guide to Quilting in Katy

If you're interested in purchasing a quilt, taking lessons, or buying some supplies, be sure to visit each of these stores.

Quilt-N-Sew
829 S. Mason Rd.
281-398-0670
quiltnew.com



*JoAnn's Fabrics Manager
Cynthia Bauckman has
devoted a sixth of her
store to quilting supplies*

Bonnie Blue Quilts
bonniebluequilts.com

JoAnn Crafts and Fabrics
2401 N. Fry
281-578-8987
joann.com

Hobby Lobby
1787 N. Fry Rd.
281-578-7750
hobbylobby.com

Feathered Star
1002 Ave. A
281-371-2456
thefeatheredstar.info

Katy T-Shirt Quilts
3020 N. Saddlebrook Lane
281-395-3374
katyshirtquilts.com

West Houston Quilter's Guild
whqg.org

Gathering Supplies

Cynthia Bauckman, manager of JoAnn Crafts and Fabrics, devotes about 1/6th of her store space to quilting inventory. "A big portion of our business comes from quilters. We stock high quality fabric collections and quilter's flannels," says Bauckman. New quilters can pick out a simple pattern and are introduced to basic quilting supplies. "The store also has a section of quilting books, along with a quilt-block-of-the-month selection," says Bauckman. "Bed quilts, lap quilts, mantel quilts for the holidays, and lovely wall hangings are all popular projects."

Learning the Craft

Some quilters are self-taught, while others learn from family members. Most join a quilting guild or take lessons at a local quilt shop. Many young mothers are learning to quilt because of the design appeal - quilts give a custom look to a bedroom and are lovely on the wall of a nursery. Devoted quilters visit the International Quilt Festival every October at the George R. Brown Convention Center to learn the latest about quilting world-wide.

Whether you're a master quilter or you just appreciate the art form, there's no doubt that Katy has plenty to offer the quilt enthusiast. **KM**

MELANIE SAXTON is a local area writer and editor, community volunteer, and proud mom to daughter, Emily.

*Sharon Dixon uses a
computerized quilting
machine to make custom designs*



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"I heirloom my love into quilts." -Dorothy Towns



Sharon's T-Shirt quilts can be made out of children's school shirts



Quilts are great for cuddling up with a good book



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