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Memories a stitch at a time

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News Editor

Castlegar resident Rita Crawford has started a home-based business, Kootenay Custom Quilting, that offers customers a unique way to remember loved ones or special occasions.

A self-proclaimed "sewing nut," Crawford moved here from the Lower Mainland with her fiancé in May 2005 to make a new home after her partner's seven-year-old son, Kristopher, died in a tragic accident in September 2004.

This is where she started her unique business of making photo memory quilts, she explains.

"I made a few memory quilts of Kristopher

shortly after he passed away to help others, as well as myself, through this very difficult time in our lives, Crawford says.

"It is amazing to see how therapeutic these quilts really are to the recipients of them. We have ours hanging on our wall and stop to look at it every day."

Crawford says she wanted to help other people in their healing process, so the photo memory quilts became the main focus of her business.

In the process, however, she soon discovered a broader market for her quilts.

Crawford says the memory quilts are very popular for new births, with the baby's photo and birth date and times

embroidered on them. People also like them to remember graduations, weddings, anniversaries and family reunions, she adds.

"People even have their pet's photo put on them."

Crawford works out the newly renovated studio in her home and her quilts have become more and more sought after as happy customers spread the word.

Her most popular product is the lap quilts she produces, Crawford says, adding it's because people can either put them on their laps or hang them on a wall.

She adds it takes her about six weeks to produce a lap quilt once she has gone over the design with the customer.

As her business grows, so does the scope of materials Crawford uses for the quilts. Currently, she is making a quilt from silk ties.

"This woman wanted me to make a quilt from her deceased husband's ties and she's going to surprise her daughter with it."

As her business grows, so does her status as a business owner. Crawford has been nominated by Kootenay Business Magazine in the Young Entrepreneur of the Year for 2006 category.

"It is such an honour just to be nominated."

Readers wanting more information can call her at 365-2006 or log on to her website at www.kcquilting.com.



submitted photo

STITCH IN TIME — Rita Crawford, owner of Kootenay Custom Quilting, offers a unique product to customers — memories.