

Greece company works to empower employees

Mentally ill profit from selling crafts

By Rob Cullivan
Staff writer

GREECE — Sitting behind a counter stacked with crafts created by the mentally ill, Andrew Scorse surveyed the various people coming in and out of the Merchants Collective.

The Collective, which occupies a section of the Greece Park Mall on West Ridge Road, features various commercial booths that showcase their wares on weekends.

"I sold a necklace," Scorse remarked. "It's the first sale I've ever had."

Scorse's first sale of an article from Creations Great and Small, Inc., means more to him than it would to the average fledgling employee because Scorse suffers from psychosis.

A parishioner at St. Lawrence Church, 1000 N. Greece Road, Scorse received an honorable medical discharge from the U.S. Army in 1982 after he experienced a nervous breakdown while stationed in what was then West Germany. He currently participates in various treatments — including group therapy — and he takes medication to control the symptoms of his illness.

Scorse has also participated in a crafts program through the Veterans Administration, and he's hoping to expand his skills through Creations Great and Small.

"I understand they're trying to help us with entrepreneurial skills and socialization," Scorse observed. "It gives you something to do. Keeps you busy."

Scorse summed up much what Elaine Mullet wanted to give the mentally ill when she and her husband, Ronald, founded Creations Great and Small in 1989. Mullet has seen mental illness strike four members of her own family, including her stepmother, so she is well-acquainted with how afflictions of the mind can threaten the hopes of a soul.

But Mullet saw hope come alive in one of her stepsisters, who suffers from mental illness, after she began participating in a work program.

"The change in her was phenomenal," Mullet commented. "All of a sudden she had friends, she had money, she could go to bingo."

Mullet began thinking of ways to make what happened in her stepsister's life a reality for other mentally ill patients. She and her husband looked into the program that employed her stepsister and discovered that it focused on servicing manufacturers' needs. Such a focus was not exactly what Mullet wanted, she said.

In early 1990 she and her husband tried setting up a telemarketing service employing the mentally ill. But that enterprise only left the couple with \$6,000 in bills.

Mullet then surmised that if therapy groups for the mentally ill used craftwork as part of their treatment process, the logical choice for a business employing the mentally ill would be one selling crafts that they made themselves. Hence, Creations Great and Small was born.

Mullet also credited seeing an episode of the ABC News program "20/20" for convincing her that she had made the right choice for such a business. The episode featured a segment on a farm employing the mentally retarded in Illinois that Mullet and her husband subsequently visited. The Mulletts wanted to see their crafts business create the same positive effects in the lives of the mentally ill that they had seen the farm foster in the lives of the mentally retarded.

So, since September, 1991, the couple has focused on the crafts business, and has sold 41 mentally ill workers' goods. Hand-carved wooden rocking horses, ceramic Santa Clauses, various pieces of jewelry, tissue boxes, and dozens of other items are among the many products Creations Great and Small offers.

Most of the company's workers are referred to the Mulletts through programs run by Rochester-area mental health agencies. Mullet mentioned Park Ridge Mental Health Center, Averill Court-Community Health Center, and Strong Ties Clinic as among her sources for employees.

Many of her workers make their goods in their own residence, while others work at the Mullet's home.

"Some have gone on to other jobs," Mullet said. "We encourage entre-



(From left) Mike Walsh, manager of the Greece Park Outlet Mall, Andrew Scorse, Elaine Mullet, co-founder of Creations Great and Small, Inc., and Joe Mattioli, owner of the Merchants Collective, stand among the many items handmade by the mentally ill.

preneurship."

Mike Walsh, a parishioner at St. Joseph's in Penfield, manages the Greece Park Mall, and he read about Creations Great and Small selling their wares at various crafts fairs in the August edition of the Greece *Pennysaver*. He referred the not-for-profit enterprise to Joe Mattioli, owner of the Merchants Collective. Mattioli is a member of Sacred Heart Parish.

"I thought the products that they sell would go over well in a flea-market-type setting," Walsh said.

Mattioli noted that it didn't take a lot to convince him to donate space in the Merchants Collective to Creations Great and Small. His sister is mentally retarded, and he said her experiences gave him great compassion for all those who suffer mental deficiencies.

"They're marvelous people," Mattioli said of the Mulletts and their workers. "I just wanted them to have a place they can call home."

Creations Great and Small also earned high marks from Donna Mueller, a clinical nurse specialist who works in psychiatric rehabilitation. Mueller directs the Continuing Day Treatment Program at Strong Ties.

She labeled Creations Great and Small a positive example of what communities may be able to provide mentally ill persons in the future.

"I have referred six to 10 clients to the program," she said. "All have

come back with their level of functioning increased."

Interestingly, her view of the program seemed to echo feelings that Mullet and Scorse expressed.

"I have had the opportunity to see important outcomes when people with an illness are productive and are giving back to society," Mueller said. "When people find a way to sustain themselves financially, it increases their self-esteem."

EDITORS' NOTE: For information on the company, call 716/272-1290.

Kwanzaa celebration set for Dec. 29 at St. Bridget's

ROCHESTER — St. Bridget's Church, 175 St. Bridget's Drive, will celebrate *Kwanzaa* in prayer and song on Tuesday, Dec. 29, at 7 p.m.

Kwanzaa, the Swahili word for "first fruits," is the name given to a seven-day African-American celebration that usually runs from Dec. 26 to Jan. 1. Sponsored by the diocesan Office of Black Ministries, *Kwanzaa* celebrates the cultures, traditions and spirituality of African Americans. The event also reminds African Americans of the work that is yet to be done in the areas of social justice and empowerment.

People of all ethnic, cultural and faith backgrounds are encouraged to attend. For information, contact Jacquelyn Dobson at 716/328-3210.

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
JANUARY BINGO CALENDAR						
SPECIAL PAID ADVERTISEMENT						
Holy Family St. Ambrose St. Boniface St. Rita's St. Stanislaus St. Theodore	St. Charles Borromeo St. Mary	Holy Apostles St. Francis Xavier St. Stanislaus Our Lady of Mercy	Bishop Kearney Guardian Angels Holy Family Home School Assoc. Our Lady of Perpetual Help	St. Anne St. James St. Mary Our Mother St. Michael's St. Stanislaus St. Jude the Apostle	Holy Ghost Most Precious Blood St. Cecilia's St. Mark's	Good Shepherd St. Thomas the Apostle
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BINGO TIMES & LOCATIONS

Bishop Kearney 125 Kings Hwy. S. 671-1065 Wed. 8p.m.	St. Cecilia's 2732 Cuiver Rd. 467-4286 Fri. 8p.m.
Good Shepherd 3288 E. Henrietta Rd. 334-3518 Sat. 7:30pm	St. Charles Borromeo 64 Maiden Lane 663-3230 Mon. 8p.m.
Guardian Angels Church 2061 E. Henrietta Rd. 334-1412 Wed. 7:30pm	St. Francis Xavier 316 Bay St. 482-3211 Tues. 8p.m.
Holy Apostles 6 Austin St. 254-7170 Tues. 7:30p.m.	St. James 119 Brockley Rd 225-3710 Fri. 8p.m.
Holy Family Church 899 Jay Street 328-3110 Sun. 7:30pm	St. Mary Lyceum Hall Auburn 315-252-9545 Mon. 7:30p.m.
Holy Family Home School Assoc. 899 Jay St. 328-4800 Wed. 7:30p.m.	St. Mary Our Mother 811 Westlake St. Horseheads 607-739-3818
Holy Ghost 220 Coldwater Rd. 247-3535 Fri. 8p.m.	St. Michael's 170 Spencerport Rd. 429-8811 Sun. 7:30p.m.
Most Precious Blood 179 Stenson St. 458-6079 Fri. 7:30p.m.	St. Rita's 1008 Maple Dr. 671-1100 Sun. 7:30pm
Our Lady of Mercy 600 Danise Rd. 865-0775 Tue. 7:30pm	St. Stanislaus 1150 Hudson Ave. 467-1472 Sun. 6:15p.m.
Our Lady of Perpetual Help 323 Portland Ave. 467-2725 Wed. 7:30pm	St. Theodore St. Spencertown Rd. 271-3260 Thur. 7:30p.m.
St. Anne 1600 Mt. Hope Ave. 271-3260 Thur. 7:30pm	St. Thomas The Apostle 41 Colabrook Dr. 342-2323 Sat. 8p.m.