

# Youngstown artist offers creative gift idea

by Terry Duffy

The days are drawing ever closer to Christmas and you're still stuck on wrapping up your gift buying. Don't like what you've been checking out at the malls? How about something different?

Youngstown resident Pam O'Brien has a rather unique offering – a new artistic venture of one-of-a-kind embroidered photo tapestries. Known as Memories, One

Stitch at a Time, she says that this new business emerged following years of interest and encouragement of friends and family.

In a nutshell, Pam has the ability to transform and interpret any image or photo, wallet size or larger, to a digital image. From there she creates a tapestry of thousands of tightly stitched, tiny cross-stitches of rayon-embroidered threads applied to a fabric base. "This is accomplished with a commercial embroidery machine after pushing the limits of size and definition, using a home embroidery machine," Pam said. "Clients can present a photo of a loved one, a pet, house or any image they wish."

"So just how is this done?," you may ask. Pam explains that she taps into her photographic background and utilizes her computer as a darkroom. The editing of



Pam O'Brien of Memories, One Stitch at a Time.

many forms can be accomplished to ready the image for transformation into a cross-stitch pattern. "At this point, over 600 rayon embroidery thread colors are available to color match the original image or transform it into a black or white or sepia-toned creation," she said.

Pam also specializes in interpretations of old sepia-toned photos into photo tapestries. This is done by collaborating with a client to determine the best choices for the tapestry. From there, she closely attends to the entire process. "This application is not a conventional one for any embroidery machine," Pam said, adding the stitch-intensive process can lead to plenty of acting up and misbehaving by the embroidery machines.

"This constant attention to the stitch-out process assures a spec-

tacular result," Pam said. "It's a labor of love and excitement."

She adds she is always amazed to watch the tapestry emerge "one stitch at a time."

Various sizes are available, and the finished tapestry comes professionally framed. Unframed options are available so the tapestry may be used as a quilt or other applications.

Pam, whose studio is located at 600 Blairville Road (rear building), in Youngstown, offers special order tapestries as well as a Home Decorator series package that's available through Canterbury Place on Center Street in Lewiston. For the holidays, she has introduced a collection of four exclusive, limited-edition Christmas ornaments. This year's offerings includes a boy and a girl, a sepia-tones Santa face and a rich-colored cherub. Each is dated "2006" and comes with the artist's signature. Personalizing is available, as are gift certificates.

Studio and gallery hours are Saturdays from noon to 4 p.m. and Tuesdays, from 5:30 to 8 p.m.

For further information, call 745-7291.

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