

NAMES & FACES

Sew-sew hobby turns into business

BY KELLY BEHLING
CORRESPONDENT

Do you have a hobby? Is it something that you are passionate about? Wish you could just work on your hobby for your career?

Karen Comstock turned her hobby into a profitable career doing what she loves.

No one taught her how, but she began making quilts in 1980 while living in Ames, Iowa. Now, her patterns are sold around the county, throughout the world and are published in magazines and on calendars. Her quilts win ribbons at shows and she's made a successful business of it — even though she's never taken a business class.

Comstock already knew how to sew when she

SEE **QUILTER**, 6A



PHOTO BY KELLY BEHLING

Karen Comstock began making quilts in the 1980s. Now she designs patterns for other quilters to sew.

6A

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QUILTER

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began to quilt. "No one taught me," she said. "I just started doing it because we were a young family and I thought we needed to have blankets. And that quilting was the thing to do."

Soon after she began, she became friends with a woman who was starting a quilt shop in town. As their friendship developed, Comstock was asked to teach at the store. "She asked me to teach, but she wanted me to teach my designs."

The patterns that she saw in magazines and books didn't strike Comstock's fancy, and she began to alter them to fit her needs. When she started to create her own designs, she started with a simple project: a quilted wallet.

"Back then people would do craft shows, so I would make a whole bunch of them," Comstock said. "And one day, a lady looked at the wallets for about two hours.

QUILT QUESTIONS

Visit quiltricks.com to view Karen Comstock's patterns or her online newsletter.

Quilting classes are available at Etcetera Crafts. New classes start every month, beginner and advanced, and cost between \$20 and \$45. Call 467-7636.

Finally she said 'I love this wallet, but I wish it was blue.' So I wrote up the pattern and told her that she could make it in every color she wanted."

In 2003 Comstock and her family moved to Cary. "The first thing I found was the local quilt store Etcetera Crafts on Chatham Street," she said.

"She came in and introduced herself and told me where she taught in Iowa," recalled Jean Petersen, owner of Etcetera Crafts. "I asked her to bring in some samples. She had beautiful work and we signed her up to teach some

classes. Very shortly she began working at least two days a week in the shop."

With a little encouragement from the Wanna Bees, a quilting group that Comstock helped found, she started Quiltricks as a way to sell her patterns. The online business quickly grew and now she travels the country and has distributors who sell her patterns worldwide.

Many times, turning a hobby into a profession can take the fun out of it. Comstock feels that, for her, that is not the case. "I love it because quilting is always changing. There's always something different you can do. There's always a new idea and something else you can try."

Over the years Petersen has seen a shift in Comstock's work, which reflects her expanding business. "She has become much more dedicated to making patterns and having them published. She's going to large and small quilting shows all across the country," Peterson said.

HOMESCHOOL

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do something with your child, chances are, five other families feel the same way."

According to research prepared by Cary Homeschooler member Linda Whipker, there were 3,548 home schools registered in Wake County in 2007-08, with an estimated total of 7,059 students. With several area homeschool support groups, multiple field trip opportunities and Web sites packed with homeschooling information, families who choose to teach from home need never feel alone.

Several parents said e-mails passed through Cary Homeschoolers opened doors to limitless opportunities. Maggie Flores, a former first- and third-grade teacher, now teaches her sons, Austin, in second grade, and Jason, in kindergarten, and took advantage of a group called "Art in the Park" this year. Six families took turns teaching about artists