Crafts-A-Plenty—and Ears-A-Plenty

We have been planning to do a Focus on Business article on Reva Hoewing of Crafts-A-Plenty in Poolesville for some time now, and then a writer named Marc Acito beat us to the punch on www.walletpop.com in his column called “The Upside.” We enjoyed his take on Reva so much that we are reprinting his article below.

Since the store is in the center of town, and Reva specializes in all things crafty and gifty, we suspect most of you have already visited her by now. Crafts-A-Plenty, along with a huge inventory of supplies for crafts, specializes in some very popular one-of-a-kind items like the Cat’s Meow series on Poolesville, a booklet on the history of Poolesville (authored by her husband, Ray), vintage tables and chairs, and her newly-published 2011 Calendar offering unique historical pictures and stories of Poolesville. With the holidays coming up, it’s good to remember she has many gift items not found in your standard box store.

Of course, what makes the store special is Reva, as Mr. Acito captured her in his article:

Crafty Great-Grandmother Mends Broken Hearts—With Glue Gun

By Marc Acito

“So many people need someone to talk to,” says Reva of Poolesville, “I just listen.”

The seventy-six-year-old owner of Crafts-A-Plenty does a lot more than that. The mother of five, the grandmother of twelve, and the great-grandmother of eight, she still works five days a week in the craft shop she opened over thirty years ago.

Back then, Hoewing worked as a teacher in a program for underprivileged children. Her craft lessons proved so popular that locals in her small town of 5,000 began asking her for classes—but a fondness for cross-stitching and making pine cone wreaths isn’t what keeps her working after all these years. “It’s the interaction with people,” she says. “I could do crafts at home.”

So she’s become Poolesville’s unofficial mother confessor. “I think half the town goes to her with their heartaches, including me,” says longtime customer Philomena Roy. “She should work for the FBI. She has a mouth like a clam.”

Hoewing never turns anyone away, never hurries someone out if they don’t buy something. “I enjoy talking to people,” she says. “I think it’s my mission. Someone needs someone to talk to, and here I am. Some days I go home exhausted, but I’m back the next day. My daughter says I should change the name of the store to the Crying Towel.”

“I call her the glue gun for broken hearts,” says Roy.

Hoewing, who sings in her Methodist church choir, credits her faith with sustaining her. “If you don’t have God in your life, it’s hard to do things on your own.”

Spirituality aside, the business does make a profit, though Hoewing reports she’s not getting rich doing it—and she’s proud not to owe anyone, either.

But her biggest craft is a skill increasingly in short supply in the too-much-information age: she listens. “I don’t try to give people solutions or guide them a certain way.”

“She speaks with such gentleness of voice,” Roy adds. “It’s easy to talk to her.”

So who does Hoewing turn to when she needs to pour out her own troubles? “I talk to my best friend, and that’s my husband.” The pair have been married since 1952 when she was eighteen years old. “If I had to marry again,” she says, “I’d marry the same guy.” Ray Hoewing was head of the Public Affairs Council, encouraging civic engagement, before retiring to focus on charity work. But his wife and best friend have no plans for retirement.

“Not unless they sell the building out from underneath me,” she says. “Why retire when you’re happy?”