



STAFF PHOTOS BY ALLISON WISK

BUSINESS MAVEN: Juli Dewar readies T-shirts for shipment in her studio in Highland Park.

A 'knit-wit' with true grit

Juli Dewar's cleverness spins company out of hobby

By **ALLISON WISK**

Neighbors Assistant Editor

Entering her house on a heavily treed block of Highland Park, you notice that Juli Dewar is first and foremost in charge of her own universe.

An infinitely less stern version of Martha Stewart, Dewar has produced a home that is clearly a reflection of her know-how and creativity.

Making her way down the hardwood floors and through the French doors into her backyard studio, Dewar maneuvered around her dog, CoCo, a ubiquitous presence in her world.

Up the steps of the back house and into another realm that is just as marked by Dewar's imagination is the studio where Juli Dewar's company, Knitiot, found its legs.

A grid of cubbies lines the walls with yarn of every color peeking out. In the middle of the room, numerous projects are in the works in various stages of array and disarray.

Having first picked up the hobby of knitting from her mother, Dewar's first set of red, No. 13 needles sparked a lifelong love of the craft that has left her the self-professed "yarn-junkie" she is today. Though she may not be slaving

over the argyle socks of her mother's handiwork, Dewar's idolatry of knitting has provided her with a revived interest in a practical hobby that, in the past two years, has yielded a fruitful profession.

"She's so creative, it's scary," said Shelly Tillery, Dewar's friend.

"I'm just a follower," Tilley proclaimed through the laughter, so abundant in the room.

Several painted tables and chairs populate the already lively work space, and Dewar lifts ponchos, hats and a scarf that take her little time to make.

"The name started out of my making mistakes," said Dewar. "Oh, I'm such a 'knitiot'"

Having cultivated various other homespun enterprises out of love, including a T-shirt business and a line of jewelry, Dewar's eight-year tenure as a buyer at Harold's left her eager to provide the knitting community with a clever line of T-shirts emblazoned with "hip, groovy" slogans that surpassed the standard "grandma spinning wool from a sheep" variety.

A few National Needlework Association shows later, Dewar's line is high in demand amongst other knitters for her tops and nightshirts inscribed with messages such as "Knit at Nite" and the



CREATIVE TEAM: Juli Dewar with friend and knitting student Shelly Tillery in her studio's office.

irreverent "Knit Happens" and "Knitphomaniac."

Orders pour in, as do Dewar's ideas.

After knitting a miniscule bikini for a particularly brave friend, Dewar foresees iPod covers, "Knitiot-proof" kits and other products in her future that lean on her sharp wit.

Who knows? You might even see a Knitiot-crafted red carpet rolled out for Dewar at her own collection's show one of these days.

For this knitiot-savant, the possibilities are endless.

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