



Girl Scout Troop #12905 pose with their troop table in the background and their cake auction in full steam. The troop includes (back row, left to right) Addison Hedrick, Katherine Garnto, Rylie Gotts, Aleesha Coffey and (front row, left to right) Jayla Ikard, Julianne Lewis, and Tatum Fint.

A Stocking Made of Girl Scout Stitches

When you think of girl scouts, you usually have visions of lemonade stands and Samoa cookies. Maybe the occasional flashback to your own days as a Brownie even come back – like that time you learned how to sort the bandages and gauze in a first aid kit, went camping, or learned to sew. But it isn't common for you to associate those brown and green sashes with craft fairs where crocheted blankets, jewelry, and an online auction for iced cakes abound. However, the team of Bethlehem girls who make up Troop #12905 made it a mission to harness their entrepreneurial spirits and change that.

It was cold, blustery Saturday morning when I pulled into Mt. Pisgah Lutheran. It was only 8 a.m., but a dull roar and early-morning buzz slid through the glass double doors and met me at the entranceway. I followed the sound of high-pitched squeals to a small room teeming with young girls, high-rise displays, and vendors tacking their final touches onto tables that lined the walls. The warm voice of troop leader Doranda Hedrick greeted me first, welcoming me to the troop's first-ever Christmas Craft Fair. The girls stood behind her, donned in their turquoise, brown, and green vests, with big-toothed (and in a mouth or two, missing-toothed) smiles and color-

ful patches at this project they could call their own. Troop #12905 has 14 girls in all – a sprinkle of kindergarten and first-grade Daisies, a long line of second to third-grade Brownies, and a handful of Juniors. Rising from

and Junior Katherine Garnto respectively. Although the two Troop Leaders began to narrate the troop's most recent rumbblings and activities, the girls quickly corralled around me, eagerly pointing with flushed cheeks

two crafts and two cakes to their troop's own booth and Facebook cake auction. In addition to supplying their own table, the girls banded together with their leaders to track down 10 vendors to fill 10 booths. It was a treasure hunt of sorts, like digging for worms in soil or the perfect cookie variety for a new customer. And that they did.

The 10 booths were a color wheel of crafts. Some of the vendors were first-timers, others veterans of the fair and festival industry. A handful had connections with a special girl scout themselves, many were residents of the community, and some trekking from counties over. So, rather than glazing over all 10, I wanted to tell you the stories of a two vendors, makers, and artisans that made this Christmas Craft Fair bring the holiday spirit to the little town of Bethlehem. Enter Vickey Smith and Donna Reid, who I met at their booths in a church just below the oh so familiar star.

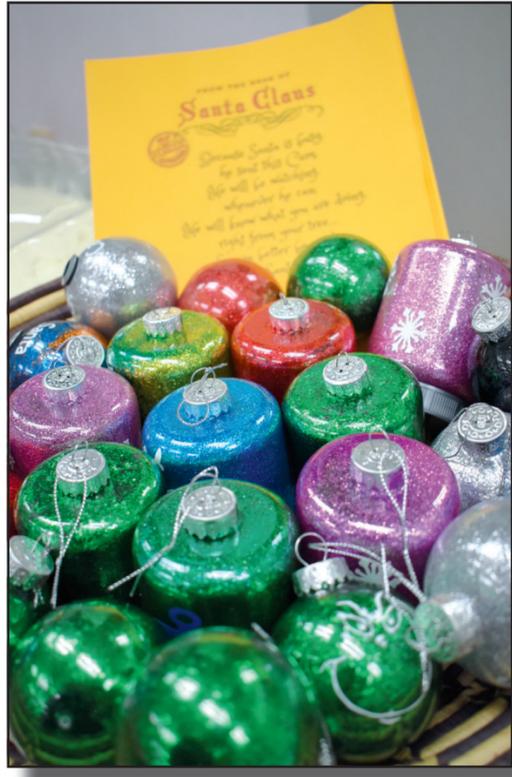
Sew Crafty Nana – Vickey Smith

"The question I always ask, before I go *anywhere* is, 'Can I take my yarn with me?'" Vickey Smith said with a chuckle as she straightened out a granny-square quilt on her display table. Referencing her oversized tote spilling

with yarn and protruding crochet needles, the nana of Girl Scout Daisy Tatum Fint was a breath of fresh air, good conversation, and crochet tutorial recommendations. Having worked at Frye Hospital for years, she didn't actually begin crocheting until she found out that her daughter was having a little girl. She decided to commit to a project, a blanket for her now-blond haired and blue-eyed granddaughter, and – paired with a broken ankle shortly after – grew it into a full-on hobby. Soon enough, Vickey was crocheting dresses for her granddaughter's dolls, fingerless mitts for the cold Winter temperatures, and big blankets for Christmas presents. Despite her kids' pleas to "stop carrying around that big bag of yarn," Vickey has continued to crochet away – anywhere, any place. And for that, her table – a crafter's dream – is brimming with kerchiefs, scarves, oven mitts and pint-sized bags that would make any longtime crocheter gawk.

NCGal Creations – Donna Reid

On her table sat two two-foot-tall Christmas trees: one decorated in ornaments made of complex quilted cloth patterns and the other with pink branches and ornaments fashioned as cotton candy-colored unicorns



eight as of last year, the Bethlehem troop added nearly double the number of girls to its ranks under the leadership of Dornada Hedrick and Athena Garnto, mothers of Brownie Addison Hedrick

and wide eyes to their patches as real evidence. There was the disaster relief badge from their canned food collection for Hurricane Florence victims out East, a patriotic patch commemorating their Veteran's Day project that involved interviewing, writing a summary, and baking goodies for a veteran of the community, and backyard buttons for gardening, cleanup, and cooking experiments in kitchen laboratories.

However, girl scouts are known for their business savvy and that glittery magic conjured up at pop-up tables outside any major grocery chain. And Bethlehem girls are no exception. The troop participates in two national fundraisers per year. Those include the sale of beloved cookies in the Spring – Mint Thins, peanut-buttery Tagalongs, and Lemonades to name a few. And, in the Fall, nuts: spicy, sweet, salty, or chocolate-covered – just take your pick. But, in addition to the two grand ventures, they are given the chance to host one fundraiser that allows them to *keep every penny of the profit*, sans stamped cookie boxes or tins. And for these girls, with their eyes locked on a trip to Girl Scout HQ – aka Savannah, Georgia – come summer, a craft fair at Christmastime fit their fancy.

But this was no cake walk – whether figurative or literal. Each girl was in charge of submitting



BAILEY SHERRILL

with shimmery beads for manes. Donna Reid doesn't do this throughout the week; she teaches Sports Marketing at Alexander Central. However, this side job garnered her a Facebook following and an Etsy page. At this Christmastime gathering, passer-byers drifted by or, in some cases, stopped to asked questions or make purchases at her booth; and every time, she put aside the ivory domino that she was midway through decorating and immediately hit it off without a hitch. Whether making ornaments with pins and flannels of family members long past or necklaces from ribbon and Scrabble pieces, Donna has small-business skill and products authentically handmade from her nimble fingertips.



Vickey Smith and granddaughter Tatum Fint (Girl Scout Daisy) share a warm embrace by the Sew Crafty Nana booth.

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. John 3:16



"The Shortest Distance Between Two People Is A Smile"
~ Anonymous

Carolina DENTAL CARE CENTER *Now Accepting New Patients At Both Locations!*
Taylorsville **Lenoir**
 828-635-8510 828-758-5566
 www.carolinadentalcarecenter.com
 Dr. Scott S. Smith, DMA, PA