

Happy Mail *Dubois card maker shares her craft*

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Crafting... Some folks will tell you they were born to do it; other folks will say they don't have a crafting bone in their body!

"Some people that aren't crafty," laughs Amy Beckman, "They are like, 'oh my God that is so stressful how do you do that!'"

Beckman, a Haysville native, is a card maker and all-around paper crafter. She's used to explaining to non-crafters that for her the creative process is a "stress reliever." Beckman's even been known to carry supplies into work, settle down in the break room and craft cards on her lunch hour. She tells it like this: "When everybody else is talking Facebook and talking this and talking that, I'll sit and make cards, and you know, tune that out!"

Amy and her husband Kent reside in Dubois on farm land that has been in the Beckman family for generations. Their home is tucked into a quiet valley less than a mile

from the center of town. On the morning of Thursday, October 4, patches of fog lay like gauzy shawls upon the shoulders of spent cornstalks. The front lawn is dewy; the oak forests out back are glistening.

Inside, a spare bedroom has been turned into a crafter's paradise. (The home has that cozy-vanilla-freshness only the tidiest house keepers accomplish. The interior is bright and friendly, just like Amy.) Beckman says of her well-stocked studio, "It's kind of like a room that spilled over to a room that spilled over to a basement!"

A stylish black workstation stands at-the-ready. Scissors, stickers and baskets of ephemera decorate the workstation's handyman pegboard. Paints, markers and glitter flaunt their vibrancy in neat little rows, while the top shelf is lined in jars of supplies, buttons, ribbon and paper cutouts. A tall cloth container is stitched in pink, *Happy Mail*; a small organizer with a handle reads, *Stay Calm & Craft On*.

There are white bookcases decorated in

artsy titles and coordinating equipment. Free-standing metal and plastic drawer sets hold all sorts of papers; atop them various rulers, glues, tapes and clips poke their heads over the rims of polka-dotted bins. On one wall hangs a sheathed sword...and some multi-colored Tae Kwon Do belts...

Amy giggles. "Those belong to my husband," she grins, also showing off the couple's curated NASCAR model collection and a few large-frame photographs of muscle cars that appear to be in pristine condition. Kent is an automobile enthusiast, and the couple loves to travel with his current show truck. Amy does not at all mind sharing studio space with their combined memorabilia.

Opposite Beckman's main work station is a low countertop where an assortment of cards await distribution. Amy creates every kind of card imaginable. There's the typical fare: birthday, anniversary, get well soon, thinking of you. And there's the not so typical. "Whatever a customer can think of," she nods, "I'm just gonna take it and—" her arm swooshes like an ocean wave, "—run with it."

Her personal aesthetic is so appreciated that customers often call and request twenty of *this* or a few dozen of *that* for future gifting. "I have people that have bought from me before, and they call me and say, 'Can you make me ten birthday cards of anything?'" People just kind of let me do whatever. They just need ten of these any color any style or whatever, and I like that I can just be kind of free with my ideas."

In terms of special requests, Amy keeps an open mind. She's made paper products for children's birthdays in super hero, Disney and winter wonderland themes; she's created cross-genre orders like 'Halloween birthday'; she's made autograph cards for vacation hot spots; she's filled orders for brides, including

assortments of cards for guests and bridal parties.

She uses air quotes to describe another card request she's filled — "dirty cards."

"Yeah, I actually just ordered some 'after dark' stamps to use," she nods. "I won't post those on Facebook or Instagram, but you know, I have that stuff, so I can make it for you!"

In fact, word-of-mouth and social media outreach serve key roles in Beckman's business, so much so that she's updating her photography skills to better showcase her handiwork.

Beckman began scrapbooking in 2003. She took a class on card making and her interest was piqued. After all, she had many of the required paper products and know-how already. She remembers happily realizing, "I don't have to buy [the same card] at Walmart that everybody gets!"

"I love to get mail. I mean, I do! I love it when someone sends me mail," she continues.

One card in particular stands out as most precious to Amy. The card is chic in its simplicity. The number 79 is punched from a white rectangle, which hovers over a background of teal. Inside the 79, multi-colored sequins jiggle-jingle. "Wishing you a happy birthday," reads the front in festive orange. Amy explains that this was the last birthday card she ever crafted for her father. She gave it to him only two weeks before his unexpected death. Afterward, the shock of loss affected everything in her life, including her crafting.

"He *always* displayed them at his house, you know, *for weeks*," she says of the many cards she gifted her father. "After he passed away, probably for three months, I didn't do anything — any of my scrapbooking or cards...I didn't want to make cards, but I bought a lot of supplies. I think that was my comfort. I just had that mindset. But then, I was like, no, he wouldn't want me to be negative like that...Now, I'm getting there. I can sit now for hours and make cards. It does give me a sense of peace."

According to Amy, it feels good to know that her cards provide others with moments of shared joy. "It's

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Above: A wonderful representation of Beckman's handiwork, the design for this card includes hand stitching and paper cutouts.

Right: A collection of colorful card making notions — buttons, brads, clips, fuzzies, tiny pearls and florals.

