

Barb Whyte
Featured Artist 2010-2011
Heart of Ohio Quilters Guild

My first sewing experiences were doll clothes by hand and then by machine, clothes for myself in high school and college. After marriage to Joe and the births of two daughters, Laura and Lisa, piled on the responsibilities along with teaching full time, I rarely sewed. When my younger daughter Lisa graduated from high school, I conquered the empty nest syndrome by immersing myself in crafts and quilting. I even taught a few craft classes to friends at Licking Valley High School on our lunch breaks. I began to realize that I would like to do more with my quilting, and when Judi Kirby opened a small quilt shop in Hebron, I taught some classes for her. I had also joined the Heart of Ohio Quilters Guild by then and was starting to learn more about quilting and to make more and more quilting friends. The Guild continues to be one of my favorite activities; it's the camaraderie of the quilters themselves, as well as the joy of seeing the wonderful works that members share and the programs and workshops that inspire me.

By the time Judi moved her shop Patchwork Cottage to an old Victorian house on the corner of Routes 37 and 40, I was ready. Retirement from teaching coincided with a trip to Paducah and the AQS show where every longarm available was on display. I picked out a Gammil Premier which was delivered to Hebron and set up in one room by the Gammil Techs who left after training me for a whole half hour. By the end of June, 1997, the year I retired, I was a longarm quilter under the name of Heavy Metal Quilting! Friends graciously lined up quilt tops for me to practice on, at my bargain price of seventy-five cents per square foot.

As I gained experience and ability, I moved from simple pantographs to more complex patterns and freehand designs. My prices went up as well so that when Judi went out of business, I was able to afford to rent my own space in Hebron and continue my quilting business. Although I have moved the shop three times, I remain in Hebron, currently at 106 North Street. I do not advertise as I find word of mouth to be the best advertising. Customers graciously continue to bring me tops, and although knee surgery has cut into my quilting time, I'm still an ongoing business.

In 2003 I designed "Pride of Ohio" for the Ohio Bicentennial Challenge. I was thrilled when it won first place in the Longarm Category. My personal favorite patterns are pieced although I do some machine appliqué and also some hand embroidery when I get the chance. I love when the quilting threads and patterns can reinforce the design of the top, either by complementing it or creating contrast. Each customer quilt is unique and I have been in the lucky position to have quilted close to a thousand quilts over the last 14 years. Although I intend to slow down a bit, I hope I will always be quilting on my Gammil, for myself and for others.