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Handbags that cast hope

Photos and story
By Jennifer Archibald
Carroll County Comet

Sometimes handbags do more than make a fashion statement.

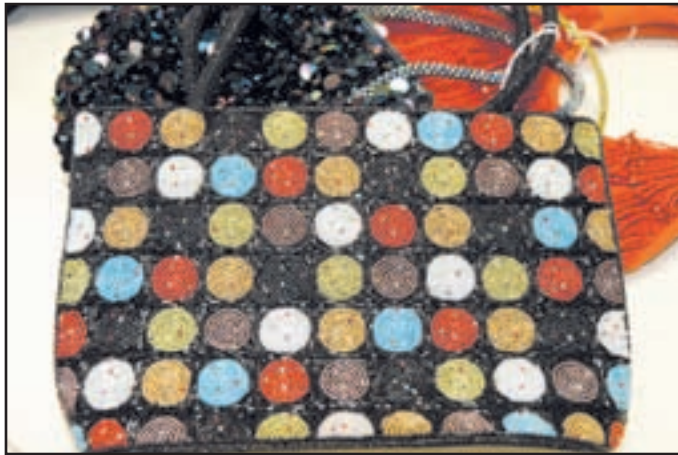
One line of handbags sold in Flora has an ongoing story to tell – a story of “connecting hearts and casting hope.”

Susie Dyke of The Grapevine Boutique told about these unique handbags at the recent Extension Homemakers Friends Day in Burlington. She also presented a style show of the featured purses and fashions from her store. In a twist from usual style shows, each model’s attire was chosen to complement the handbag.

The distinctive handbags are made by women in Southeast Asia and imported to the U.S. by MarTique, a division of Uniquely International Inc. The founders and owners of the company are Bob and Marty Wagoner of Oklahoma who were missionaries to Southeast Asia from 2002 to 2005. The MarTique slogan is “Fashion Without Borders.”

Dyke met the Wagoners when they delivered handbags to her store in person.

Her introduction to the handbags came informally about a year ago when a long-time cus-



Intricate beadwork design is seen in this MarTique handbag



tomer came into the store to shop. Dyke complimented her on her unusual handbag. The customer was Mary Margaret Wagoner of Lucerne, mother of Bob Wagoner.

When the Wagoners were missionaries, they went to the marketplace to meet people in their everyday struggles to make a living. As they began to connect with new Christian believers, and saw the beautiful handbags made by the women, they saw a way to make it possible for them to earn a fair wage and have hope for the future.

Dyke told some of the stories shared by the Wagoners. One woman was selling T-shirts on the streets to support her two children. Through her connection with MarTique, she became a wholesaler of the fine handbags, selling them to bou-

tiques catering to tourists. Dyke said just recently the woman became a store owner – quite an accomplishment for a woman in her country.

Another story is about Miss Kim, who teaches the Bible to deaf women. They make the “Ms. Kitty” purses, which are imported to the U.S. through MarTique. A portion of the proceeds from these children’s purses help pay for Miss Kim’s ministry and also go toward the construction of an orphanage in Cambodia.

The Wagoners return to Southeast Asia for two months each year to gather handbags and continue their ministry. They also collect stories from anyone connected to the handbags – including the women who make them, those who sell them, and those who buy them.

They attach these inspiring stories to each handbag, always ending with how the story demonstrates “connecting hearts and casting hope around the world.”

When the Wagoners visited The Grapevine Boutique, they learned how the store got its name. Dyke told them the inspiration came from John 15:5 – “I am the vine, you are the branches.” They took her picture, and said her story may someday appear with one of their handbags.

The MarTique line has more than 100 styles, and each style comes in various colors. The handbags are colorful and have eye-catching designs and striking embellishments. Many of the handbags have intricate bead work or embroidery work, all done by hand. The purses are identified by descriptive names such as the Quilt Bag, Dangling Shells, Silk Box, or Lotus Flower.

Dyke said the MarTique Lotus Flower, in red, can be seen in the movie, “Memoirs of a Geisha.” She said the actress who carried the handbag later autographed it and auctioned it on eBay. It brought nearly



Collection at The Grapevine Boutique
MarTique handbags are sold at The Grapevine Boutique in Flora. A sampling is shown above.



The handbag connection

By selling MarTique handbags, Susie Dyke, pictured, has become part of a network that “connects hearts and casts hope.” The sale of these high-quality handbags ensures that the Southeast Asian women who make them are paid a fair wage.



Stylish handbag

Lona Yeakley, pictured, was one of the models at the EH Friends Day style show, which focused on MarTique handbags.

\$4,000 which was donated to Miss Kim’s orphanage in Cambodia.

To view images of some of the handbags and read related personal stories, visit www.uniquemartique.com.

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Bridge A Rama

Bridge-A-Rama high scores for April were Jane Smith and Joann Vianco with 5,180 points, Helen Schilling and Vianco with 4,210 points and Smith and Vianco with 3,650 points.

High scorers in each group were Schilling and Donabelle Sieber, Laura Baker and Mary Brown, Schilling and Vianco, Smith and Sieber, Brown and Lean Aldrich, Pat Myer and Ginny Emerson, Betty Huffman and Melba Hughes, Mary and Glenn Brown and Jan and Marion Hathaway.

Proceeds from Bridge-A-Rama go toward Tri-Kappa scholarships.

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Meetings

Double Dozen EH

Double Dozen Extension Homemakers Club met May 1. Margie Albaugh was hostess, with Lona Yeakley assisting.

Twelve members were present.

For devotions, Margie Albaugh told of various difficulties encountered throughout the years in the preservation of “Old Glory.” She also read a child’s view of ice cream and “the soul.”

The birthdays of Betty Bell and Etta Byers were honored as well as the anniversary of Elizabeth Downham.

A thank you for participation in Friends Day was read, and it was noted that two members, Margie Albaugh and Susie Dyke, were winners in the Cultural Arts Exhibit. A donation will be made to the Cambodian Orphanage from proceeds received from the sale of purses that day. The purses were made in Southeast Asia.

Barbara Dillon presented the lesson, “Healthy Eating Out,” as well as the Health & Safety report on life expectancy.

Helen Forgey won the prize. The next meeting will be June 5, with Elizabeth Mylet as hostess.

Wednesday Forum

Members of Wednesday Forum met in May at the home

of Mary Ellen Campbell.

Member Jerry Landes presented her collection of grocery tins.

Included was a Clabber Girl Baking Powder tin with a price of 19 cents. Landes shared a brief history of baking powder and how Herman Hulman started Clabber Girl Corporation in 1892.

Republican Women

The April meeting of Carroll County Republican Women was held at Solomon’s Grill in Delphi.

Karen Powlen provided the program, “Spiritual and American Heritage.” She stressed the two “can be combined.” Religion is the foundation of our government. Fifty-six members (95%) of the signers of the Declaration of Independence were Christians and had spiritual backgrounds.

The May program will be a “Legislative update.” Indiana legislators Rich McClain and Brandt Hershman have been invited to present and describe business of the 2007 legislative session.

The May 21 meeting will be held at the Rockfield Community Building at 7 p.m. Hostesses will be Grace Deel, Neda Duff, Celsie Myer and Tricia Thompson. All interested Carroll County women are invited to attend.

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