

Quilts

Continued from Page 14

finally created a website [www.JustTshirtquilts.com] that would let people see examples and customize their own orders."

Each customer gets his or her own page on the site and can track progress until the quilt is finished.

The process begins with customers choosing 20 to 30 favorite T-shirts, depending on whether they want a quilt, a throw or a wall-hanging. It doesn't matter if the shirts are worn; Offermann can reinforce them in the quilting process.

"Choosing which shirts is often the hardest part for the customer, but then I guide them through the choices of colors and fabrics that can be used for the borders, backing and binding. Each piece is completely individual," she said.

Offermann can also include other pieces of clothing — such as nylon jackets — and flat memorabilia into the quilts. One mother recently ordered a quilt for her son's college graduation. Offermann is incorporating part of a jumpsuit from space camp and a photo of his favorite pet into the quilt.

"The human history component is what I love about what I do," she said. "I really get to know my customers."

"When I'm sewing, I feel like I'm doing something good for them, and that's rewarding. It's a lot like nursing in that respect, doing good for someone doesn't feel like work."

Offermann used to work in sales and marketing, but with jobs scarce in a down economy she decided to pursue a more stable career. A hospital-

based tuition stipend with a two-year obligation to work there helped pay for her education at Kennesaw State University.

"I worked as a technician first to see what the nursing field was like, and knew it would be a good decision," Offermann said.

Since she graduated, Offermann has worked for hospitals, a physician's office, a telemedicine company and done contract nursing training for patients on blood thinners.

"A lot of nursing is about relationship-building and education, and that helps me in developing my quilting business," Offermann said. "Most of my orders come through referrals."

Whether Offermann is helping a patient or a customer, including them in the process produces the

best outcomes. "I do a lot of collaboration in both careers," she said.

Clients appreciate that she is a nurse.

"Entrusting their personal items to me — knowing that I'm going to cut and rework them into something else — requires a high level of trust. They want to know that their treasures will be in good hands, and nurses have a good reputation for being trustworthy," she said.

Even as her business grows, Offermann has no plans to leave nursing.

"I invested a lot of time and effort to get here, and I enjoy taking care of patients. I'll always be a nurse," she said.

Those who want to see some of Offermann's creations can attend the Peachtree Health and Fitness Expo in Atlanta on July 2-3.



LEITA COWART / SPECIAL

"I enjoy taking care of patients. I'll always be a nurse."

Kyle Offermann, Just T-shirts Quilts owner, Northside Hospital-Forsyth nurse

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