Geez Leweez

Pursuing a passion, one stitch at a time

Mother-daughter owners Pati Kujawa and Kortney Schira lure crafty islanders to their shop.

by Jennifer Workman Lessinger

Since opening Geez Leweez in November 2004, mother-daughter owners Pati Kujawa and Kortney Schira have learned that a yarn shop is just what Sanibel and Captiva needed. The store, located in the Village Shops on Sanibel, has already built a loyal customer base—not surprising considering the current popularity and addictive nature of needlework.

Kujawa, her husband, Stan, and their six daughters (including Schira) had vacationed on Sanibel since 1986. The couple had planned to retire to the island some day. But as they began spending more time on Sanibel each year, they decided it would be better for their two youngest daughters, Karoline, 12, and Anne, 10, if they "landed in one place." So, after moving from Findlay, Ohio, to Sanibel, Kujawa knew this was her opportunity to fulfill her passion.

"For eighteen years, I worked with my husband and supported him in his auto dealership. I decided I wanted to do my thing. Now, he supports me," she says. Stan not only offers encouragement, but when he's not in Ohio running the dealership, he helps at the shop. Schira's husband, Brett, who also commutes to Ohio for work, spends a lot of time at the store as well. His job is to occupy the couple's two-year-old son, Stanford. Karoline and Anne also visit the shop after school.

"It's a relaxed, happy place," says Kujawa. Bright colors cover the walls, which are lined with needlepoint canvases and skeins of yarn. On the ceiling, local artist Laura Ball painted balls of yarn. It's enough to make even those who are all thumbs want to pick up a pair of knitting needles.

The cheerful store and its warm owners fit right in with the other Village Shops. The center's one-of-a-kind stores and friendly atmosphere are part of the reason why Kujawa selected the location. "We looked for spaces over the summer, and when this space became available, it