



TOWN OF CLAYTON COMMUNICATION & OUTREACH

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CLAYTON LIBRARY WELCOMES ALL FIBER ARTISTS TO THE TABLE

CLAYTON, NC – Hocutt Ellington Memorial Library is opening a new chapter for one of its most cherished programs. What began a little more than a decade ago as Knit Night has grown into something even broader. The gathering is now known as Fiber Arts Connection, welcoming all fiber artists to come together, create, and share their craft.

Fiber Arts Connection meets on the first and third Wednesday of each month from 5:15 - 6:45 p.m. at the library's temporary location (446 East Second Street). The updated name reflects the variety of projects participants already bring to the table from crochet and embroidery to weaving, felting, macrame, and more.

The session is self-directed and social. Participants bring their own materials and spend focused time working alongside others. There is no formal instructor. Instead, the emphasis is on conversation, encouragement, and shared inspiration.

Library Associate Caroline Mak, who oversees the program, said the new name better represents what has taken shape over time. "Opening the group to all fiber arts creates more opportunities for people to take part. We see friendships forming across generations and skill levels. It is not only about making something with your hands. It is about building relationships and feeling connected to your neighbors. That is at the heart of what the library stands for," said Mak.

Supporting lifelong learning and strengthening local ties are central to the library's mission, and Fiber Arts Connection brings both to life. On a recent Wednesday evening, four long rectangular tables were filled with color, texture, and lively conversation.

Kenneth, who recently moved from Raleigh to Clayton, practiced Japanese Kumihimo, a traditional braiding technique that weaves strands of silk or cord into decorative patterns. They carefully crafted colorful key chains to give away while chatting with those seated nearby. "I moved to Clayton for that small town feeling, and this group shows exactly what that means," said Kenneth. "Even though I am new, people welcomed me right away."

Across the table, Chelsea worked on a crochet scarf featuring a playful cat design. As she and Kenneth compared projects and techniques, ideas moved easily between them. "This time feels calming," said Chelseas. "I came to work on a scarf, but I also left with new ideas and new friends. You learn just by looking around the table and talking. It is easy to feel comfortable here."

Nearby, Trevor concentrated on a Tunisian crochet blanket, a detailed style known for textured stitches and bold patterns. Also new to the gathering, he said the friendly setting made it easy to join. "I am still learning the rhythm of this group, but everyone has been open and kind," said Trevor. "It is not just about finishing a blanket. It is about meeting people and becoming part of



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something here in town.”

On the other side of the room, Sohaila and her daughter Shirin sat side by side knitting winter hats and scarves. They have attended for some time and treasure the chance to share a hobby they both enjoy while spending meaningful time together. “It is special for us,” said Sohaila. “Shirin and I get to spend time together doing something we both enjoy. At the same time, we are surrounded by people who feel like friends.”

Beyond the crafting tables, participants have also made a difference in the wider community. In October 2023, members partnered with the Town's Public Art Advisory Board to yarn bomb 21 trees throughout Downtown Clayton, adding color and creativity to public spaces. In December 2024, they donated more than 100 handmade knitted and crocheted hats, scarves, and gloves to Harbor Shelter in Smithfield to help neighbors stay warm.

As participation continues to increase, members look forward to gathering in the renovated building (100 South Church Street) where a larger meeting space will allow even more room for creativity and fellowship.

Fiber Arts Connection is open to anyone who enjoys working with fiber. Whether a beginner or an experienced artist, participants are invited to bring a project and take part in a welcoming setting where creativity and relationships grow side by side.

For more information about Fiber Arts Connection and other library programs, visit claytonlibrarync.org.

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Photo 1: Group photo of Fiber Arts Connection from February 18th program

Photo 2: Library Associate Caroline Mak's crochet animals, known as amigurumi

Photo 3: Kenneth's Japanese Kumihimo piece

Photo 4: Chelsea's cat crochet scarf

Photo 5: Trevor's Tunisian crochet blanket

Photos 6: Shirin (left) and her mother Sohaila (right)

Photo 7: Sohaila (left) and her daughter Shirin (right)