

# Black Sheep Handspinners Guild Newsletter

December 2009

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<http://www.blacksheephandspinnersguild.org>

The Black Sheep meet from 11am-3pm on the second Saturday of the month, locations to be announced.

We are meeting at the All Saint's Church in Lansing, across from the Lansing Schools, from 11AM to 3PM, December 12, 2009.

This is our holiday party -- bring an unlabeled, wrapped gift to exchange if you'd like to participate. We'll draw numbers.

## **NOTE THE LOCATION CHANGE!**

**Dues for 2010 are \$20.00** Either cash or checks are good – Sharon Gombas will collect dues.

## President's Message

*Jim Johnson*

## **ROC DAY IS COMING UP BEFORE WE KNOW IT!**

Remember, January 9, 2010, at the All Saints Church in Lansing. Please invite all your friends and family and be sure to sign up for a volunteer slot. Thanks very much.

## Guild Agenda December 12

1. Introductions
2. Show & Tell Table
3. Roc Day volunteer sign up
4. Announcements
5. New Business
6. Guild and non guild Announcements
7. Gift exchange -- bring a gift (with not label on it) if you would like to participate

## The Hat Pattern Adventure

Susan Sarabasha

*Note: There is a word in this story that may be offensive to some. Note the context when you read it. --Ed.*

My gosh, the years go by fast. I was figuring out just how long I knew Carl, who is 22, and it is 10 years now. WOW! Carl looked at me his first day of math in 7th grade and we made a lifelong connection then and there. Since then we have built a mentor/protégé relationship, studied for SAT's, applied for scholarships, gone to college interviews together and talked. Carl graduated from Ithaca High School as the president of the school's Gay Straight Alliance. When he attended Alfred he was active in their group, and now that he is at TC3 he is active again in a Gay Straight Alliance. Carl has a huge sense of right and wrong and empathy with those who have grown up without proper parenting and without privilege. Once he finishes his associates degree this coming May, he will be going on to get a degree in social work.

So to celebrate both my love for him and for stranded colorwork, I decided to make him a nice holiday present to keep his ears and head warm, as he walks around town a lot. While my back brain was working on this idea, I was wandering around the Internet and happened to come upon this pattern called Fag Hat. I really do not care for that word but the designer was very clever in using Morse Code to write it on her stranded colorwork hat for her friend. Inspiration comes from everywhere. Thank you.

So I present to you a FREE Hat pattern

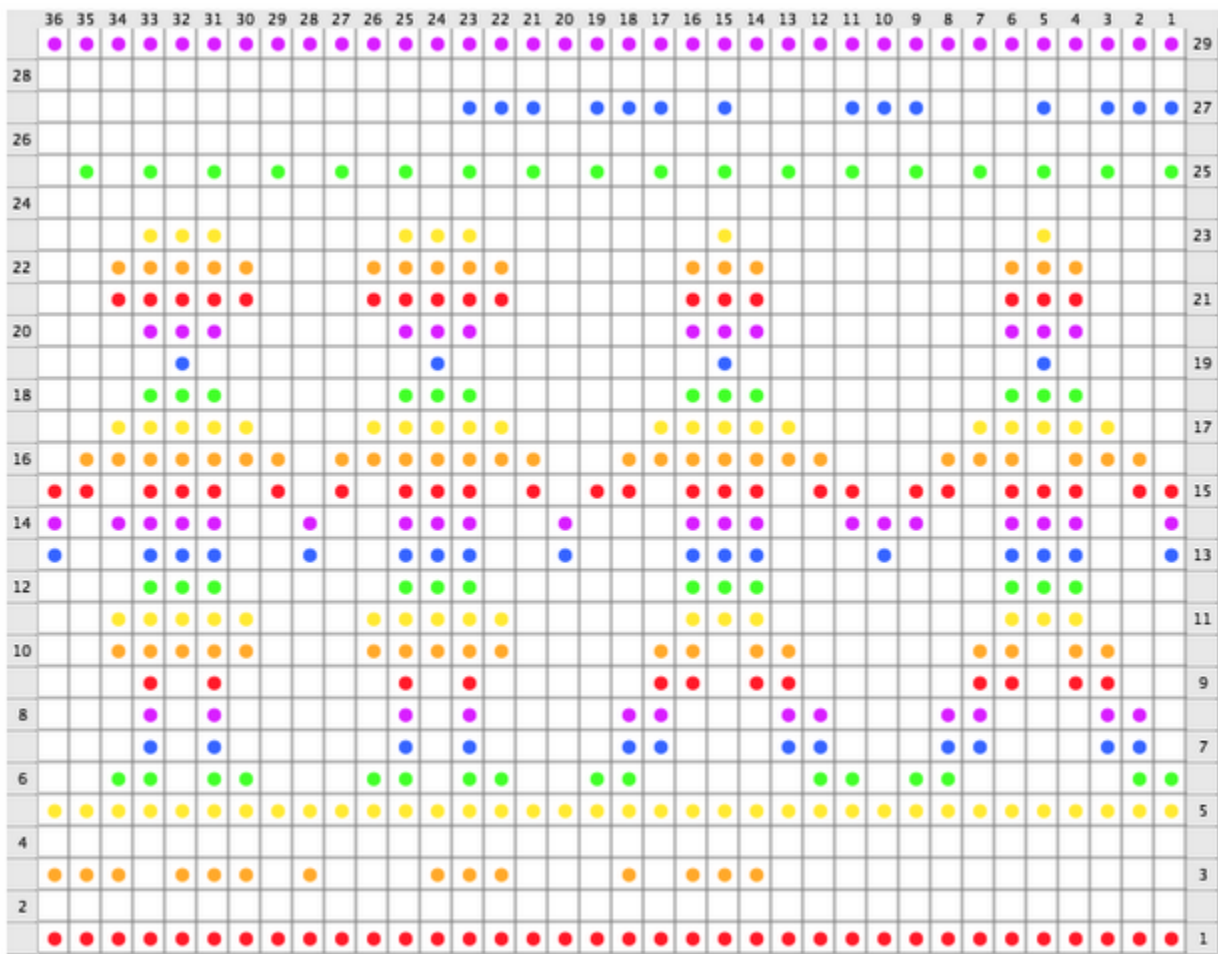


This is a simple ribbed edge watch cap with stranded color work people holding hands. If you go around the hat you cannot tell if the couples are guy-guy, gal-gal or gal-guy. The letters GSA are knit in Morse Code on the bottom in the rust and on the top in dill.

I used close to worsted yarn throughout. The blue (MC) is Dark Starz yearling mohair I hand dyed. One skein easily will make two hats. I am really reluctant to tell you that the rainbow colors are Red Heart. Actually I looked a good bit for some rainbow yarn in the correct weight but could not find any. In AC Moore of all places I found some bamboo/wool in just the right colors and at very reasonable prices considering how few yards of each are needed. Eco Ways Bamboo Twilight, Cayenne, Dill, Gold, Rust and silk Bamboo Orchid.

The ribbing and top decreases are done with a 16" US6/4mm circ. The body of the hat on 16" US7/4.5mm circs.

Using long tail method and MC, cast on 108 stitches with smaller needles. \*K2, P2\* around for 1.5 inches. Change to larger needles and follow this chart for where to use which color. All the white boxes are MC. The chart will repeat 3X around and only once in rows.



Created in KnitVisualizer (www.knitfoundry.com)

After completing the chart, change back to smaller needles and MC.

Decrease as follows:

\*K8, k2tog\*

Knit next round.

\*K7, k2tog\*

Knit next round.

Follow this pattern until

\*K1, k2tog\*,

Knit next round,

\*k2tog\*

Cut off a length of yarn and thread through stitches with an embroidery needle, securing the end inside the hat. Then tuck in all those colored ends.

*Note: to see the original designer's pattern, go here:*

*<http://www.fuzzknot.com/knitting/patterns/faghat.html>*

*--Ed.*

## **Please Comment on This Welcome Document**

The new members committee created this document for new members and are asking for your feedback. Please send feedback to Wayne Harbert at [weh2@cornell.edu](mailto:weh2@cornell.edu). --Ed.

## **Some Handspinning Questions and Answers The Blacksheep Handspinners Guild**

### **What is the Blacksheep Handspinners Guild?**

We are a group of people excited about handspinning and allied crafts, and interested in sharing and promoting them. The Blacksheep Handspinners Guild has met continuously since 1974. We get together once a month, from 11 to 3 on the second Saturday of the month, to spin, talk about spinning, show off our projects, and plan special events. Our meetings are at All Saints Catholic Church in Lansing, except in December, June, July and August, when we meet at members' houses. Every year in January we organize a Roc Day\* Celebration and Fiber Fair, with classes, workshops, exhibits, demonstrations, vendors, contests, prizes, and children's activities. Some of us also take part in spinning demonstrations at various other events during the year. We encourage everyone, and most especially, beginning spinners, to join us at our monthly meetings. You don't need to be a member to spin with us, you don't need to know how to spin, and you don't need to own a spinning wheel. If you wish to join the guild, there is an annual membership fee of \$20.

We have a monthly newsletter, available at <http://www.blacksheephandspinnersguild.org>

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\* 'Roc' is an old term for the tool that spinners sometimes use to hold unspun fiber—also called a distaff—and Roc Day, the day after the twelfth day of Christmas, was traditionally the day that spinners resumed their work after the holiday.

which contains announcements of upcoming events, articles on spinning and related matters, and ads for fiber and equipment. Back issues of the newsletter, as well as announcements of upcoming meetings and events can also be found at that site.

The guild also maintains a lending library of books and magazines which members can check out a month at a time. The books include many good titles for beginning spinners, as well as books on related crafts, such as dyeing and knitting. We also have some equipment (including a table loom, a drum carder and a felting machine) which can be rented to members on a monthly basis for a small fee.

Most of us have other fiber-related interests, ranging from knitting, crocheting, weaving, and felting, to natural dyeing, animal husbandry, shearing and wool processing, spinning wheel repair and restoration, bow-string construction and more. If you are interested in one of these areas, please ask, and we will point you in the right direction.

### **What is handspinning?**

Handspinning is the creation of yarn from fibers by traditional methods. This can be done on various types of equipment, ranging from the bare hands to hand spindles to spinning wheels. Spinning wheels can be simple and basic or very elaborate and expensive. They come in a variety of types. You will find in our guild people who are adept at using all sorts of spinning techniques and equipment, and glad to teach you about them.

### **What kind of fibers are used?**

Fibers for spinning fall into three main categories—animal fibers, such as wool and silk, vegetable fibers such as cotton, flax, hemp and ramie, and synthetic fibers. The first of these categories includes a number of fibers from exotic animals like alpaca, camels, golden retrievers and musk oxen. Sheep's wool is by far the most commonly used, though, and the easiest to start with. It comes in a variety of different types, varying in fineness, staple (fiber length), crimp (waviness), color, and luster. Spinners at the meetings will be glad to tell you which fiber they are spinning, and what its characteristics are.

### **How do I get started?**

Spinning is an easy craft to master. The two fundamental skills-- controlling the thickness of the drafted fibers and controlling the twist--take some practice to develop the required coordination, but you should be off and spinning within a day or two.



If you have no equipment, the easiest, cheapest and often most satisfying way to start is with a hand spindle. The hand spindle is much like a top. It consists of a vertical spindle which adds the twist to the yarn (and also stores the finished yarn) and a horizontal whorl that functions as a fly-wheel to keep the spindle spinning. You can fashion one yourself, using very basic materials. For example, a CD or a tinker-toy wheel can serve as the whorl and a piece of dowel or even a



willow twig as the spindle. There are members can show you how to make and spin on them. If you don't want to build your own, beautiful, handcrafted, exquisitely balanced hand spindles made of exotic woods can be bought relatively inexpensively from a number of craftspeople, including some who belong to our guild. The hand spindle gives you good practice at two-handed manipulation of the fiber (the 'worsted' method of pinching off a bit of fiber, drafting it to the desired thickness, and then releasing it so that the spin of the hand spindle can twist it together). This method is the most common one used on spinning wheels, so what you learn on a hand spindle transfers readily to the spinning wheel.

If you do not yet have a spinning wheel, you should try out a number of different configurations and brands before investing in one, and talk to experienced spinners about their respective differences, advantages and disadvantages. Most modern spinning wheels are 'flyer' wheels—one of the two main types. On flyer wheels, the two basic processes of spinning--twisting the yarn and winding it up on a bobbin-- are continuous. The flyer assembly consists of a rotating flyer, which puts in the twist, and a rotating bobbin, which gathers the twisted yarn in. The two move at different rates, and the rate at which they rotate relative to each other determines how much the yarn is twisted before it is wound onto the bobbin. The bobbin and the flyer are made to rotate by a drive wheel, which is set in motion by foot treadles. Modern flyer wheels come in variety of designs, and can differ in the details of their operation. Spinners in the guild will be happy to explain how their wheels work, and to let you try your hand at them. (Some may even let you borrow a spare wheel to practice on.)

Once you have decided which type of wheel you want, you can often find used ones in good condition on e-bay, or in local barter lists.

Spinning wheels in antique stores should be approached with caution unless you are experienced. They are often missing parts, and antique store owners almost never know much about them. The information they have to offer about the age and the origin of the wheel may be inaccurate. Some wheels have maker's marks that can help you determine where they were made, but many do not. It should also be kept in mind too that spinning requirements were different in the nineteenth century than they are now, so antique wheels are not set up to meet the demands of modern spinners, and are not an ideal choice for beginning spinners. If you are thinking of buying one, you should bring along an experienced spinner to look it over. However, if you do know what you are looking for, antique wheels, if they are in good condition, can provide a rich and interesting introduction to the history of our craft.

If you have inherited an old wheel, there are guild members who can tell you what it will take to get it into spinning shape, and who can help you to do so. Bring your wheel to a meeting, and we will be happy to talk with you about it.

Less common than flyer wheels are spindle wheels, in which the twisting and winding on are accomplished using a bare spindle, in separate operations. These work on the same principle as the hand spindle, except that the spindle is fixed horizontally on the spinning wheel, and is driven by a larger drive wheel. On most spindle wheels, the drive wheel is turned by hand, so only one hand is used for controlling the fiber. This category includes wheels ranging from tiny

Indian box charka wheels that you can tuck under your arm to five foot tall 'walking wheels'. Some of us enjoy spinning on these, and would be happy to talk about them if you are interested.

### **Some good books for beginning spinners:**

The following recent books are helpful for beginners. There are also many others, some of which are out of print, available from the guild library.

McCuin, Judith MacKenzie. 2007. *Teach Yourself Visually: Handspinning*. Wiley.

Casey, Maggie. 2008. *Start Spinning*. Interweave Press.

Pennington, David and Michael Taylor. 2004. *A Guide to American Spinning Wheels and Accessories*. Schiffer. An invaluable reference for people interested in old wheels.

## **Editor's Notes**

*Marianne Pelletier*

### **Guild Meeting Minutes, November 14, 2009**

- The December meeting will be at the All Saints Church rather than someone's home. Bring a dish to pass and a grab bag gift if you want to participate in a gift exchange.
- Also, please bring whatever auction items you'd like to donate to the December meeting.
- Ruth wrote out a list of the books in the Guild's library, divided by category. She can e-mail them to anyone interested. The books and equipment are now in storage. Members discussed the relative merits of scanning magazines in order to reduce space use.
- Azizza will talk to the church priest to discuss storage options in the church.
- Members discussed Roc Day: we need volunteers to help with door management, spinning at the door for demonstration, auction help. Volunteers are welcome to contact Sharon Gombas.
- There were 11 applicants for 10 vendor spots, Discussion ensued about how to make the choice. The decision was made at the November 18 Roc Day committee meeting.
- The new member committee made a new member fact sheet (see above). Please comment on it.
- Ellie showed her T shirt with logo and members discussed their interest in buying more.

## Upcoming Events

*Marianne thanks Knitter's Review for most of these listings.*

### Countryside Artisans Fiber Farm Tour

December 4-6, 11-13 Sugarloaf Mountain, MD. Watch all the skiers alternately sneer at you and ask you to knit them hats.

[http://www.knittersreview.com/upcoming\\_events.asp#dec](http://www.knittersreview.com/upcoming_events.asp#dec)

### Christmas Craft Markets Cruise with Myrna Stahman

Who are these people that the events are named after them?

December 6-12, Nuremburg, Germany and Vienna, Austria. You knit. I'll be eating chocolate and drinking beer.

[http://www.craftcruises.com/cruise.php?brand=Knitting%20Cruises&cruise\\_name=2009%20Danube%20Explorer&cruise\\_line=Viking%20River%20Cruises&cruise\\_ship=Viking%20Spirit&dep\\_date=2009-12-06&cruise=30&a\\_aid=R0906-U22427](http://www.craftcruises.com/cruise.php?brand=Knitting%20Cruises&cruise_name=2009%20Danube%20Explorer&cruise_line=Viking%20River%20Cruises&cruise_ship=Viking%20Spirit&dep_date=2009-12-06&cruise=30&a_aid=R0906-U22427)

### An Enchanted Forest of Knit Goods at the City of Craft

December 12-13, Theatre Center, Toronto, ON.

I don't even have to make up a joke on this one.

<http://ryankamstra.blogspot.com/2009/09/streetknit-winter-drive-2009-2010.html>

### The Ancient Maya & Present Day Textile Traditions with Dr. Gabrielle Vail

January 15-23, Chiapas, Mexico.

[http://tiastephanietours.com/more\\_info/trip3.html](http://tiastephanietours.com/more_info/trip3.html)

### Second Annual Knitting Weekend

At the first annual knitting weekend, nobody got hurt.

January 22-24, Pawtucket, RI

<http://www.slatermill.org/event/146>

### Pittsburgh Knit & Crochet Festival!

Come be our Valentine! We can't wait to have you join us Feb. 13-14, 2010, at the Four Points Sheraton North in Mars, PA. Registration can be found online at [www.pghknitandcrochet.com](http://www.pghknitandcrochet.com).

Knittreat Update is published by

<http://www.pghknitandcrochet.com>

Pittsburgh Knit & Crochet P.O. Box 7706, Pittsburgh, PA 15215 / (412) 963-7030 We do not share our mailing list with any third party.

### North Country Spinners

September 24-26, 2010 Yup, next year

Johnsonburg Presbyterian Center, Johnsonburg, NJ, Warren County.

Located in the northwestern corner of NJ. To locate please click **here**

<http://www.northcountyspinners.org/retreat.htm>



## **Thank You to Our Roc Day Vendors! Come By and See Their Stuff**

Carol Schwartzott - Crayonbox Design - handknitted hats, bags, sweaters; hand dyed and handspun yarn - [crayonboxdesigns.com](http://crayonboxdesigns.com)

Bob Smith and Patrick Shepherd - Winderwood Farm - Ashford and Kromski wheels, looms and equipment; wool, silk, and exotic fiber, fused glass - on Etsy and eBay

Robin Nistock - Nistock Farms - raw and processed wool, sheepskins, felt sheets, dyed curls for felting/crafting, drop spindle kits - [www.nistockfarms.com](http://www.nistockfarms.com)

Lisa Ann Merien - Spinner's Hill - spinning, felting, weaving, rug hooking, knitting supplies; hand dyed and carded fiber, fiber blends, dyed locks, silks, yarn, sheep and fiber animal pottery - [www.spinnershill.com](http://www.spinnershill.com)

Susan Sarabasha - Susan's Spinning Bunny - hand dyed fibers and yarn, patterns, kits, Jim's spindles and stools, needles - [www.spinningbunny.com](http://www.spinningbunny.com)

Sharon Gombas - Felted scarves, hats, small rugs

Christine Johnson - Johanneshof Romneys - Registered Romney roving, fleeces, note cards, handcrafted buttons, combed top

Charlotte Sharkey - Caravan Fiber Farm - Shetland wool, angora, crocheted "stash" bags, handmade buttons, shawl pins and jewelry, small weavings, felting wool

Melissa Stahl - Melissa Jean Designs - porcelain buttons; corozzo, wood and shell buttons; original knitting patterns, kits and yarn - [www.melissajeane.net](http://www.melissajeane.net)

Karey Solomon - Graceful Arts Fiber Studio - handpainted yarns and rovings, Majacraft wheels - [gracefulartsfiberstudio.com](http://gracefulartsfiberstudio.com)

Elizabeth Kinne Gossner - Stillmeadow - Finn sheep rovings in natural and dyed colors, handthrown pottery/functional stoneware including "yarn bowls"

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Finger Lakes Fiber Arts Festival  
Hemlock, N.Y.

**Christine Johnson**  
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### To place an ad

A check for \$5.00 made to BSHG for an ad to run three times (a year is \$15) should be sent to the current treasurer, Sharon Gombas, 177 Salmon Creek Rd. Lansing, NY 14882. Send the ad to the newsletter editor, Marianne Pelletier, at: [fudger28@yahoo.com](mailto:fudger28@yahoo.com). If you have a question for her or others, you can email us through the links at the top of the newsletter.