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Members of the *Multi-Talented Advocates of Knitting*, aka *MTA OKs*, meet every Tuesday to practice the ancient art of knitting. Front row from left: Deidra Gray, Suzanne Schmutzler, Kathleen Sweet, Linda Wasley and Gail Edwards. Back row from left: Donna Lee Watson, Cynthia Shavers, Avis Brame, Sandra Sandoval, Monika Suarez and Fe Alcid-Little.



Multi-talented Advocates of Knitting Join Forces at Metro

By Shantay Iosia

(Nov. 5, 2005) Metro helps maintain a fading art, one Tuesday at a time.

Needle artists of varying ability meet in the Imperial conference room on the 12th floor to knit or crochet every Tuesday.

The group calls themselves the "MTA OK" (Multi-Talented Advocates of Knitting) and most say they attend because they find the ancient practice challenging yet relaxing.

The instructor, Suzanne Schmutzler, says the class offers a friendly atmosphere where people feel comfortable and are encouraged to learn.

Schmutzler provides projects for people of all levels. Newcomers with no experience can expect to

PHOTOS: SHANTAY IOSIA



Metro's Deidra Gray knits a shawl using novelty yarn.

learn four techniques before advancing: cast on, knit stitch, purl stitch and cast off.

Schmutzler supplies assignments to practice these techniques and the rest is up to the student.

"Most come with something they want to do already in mind," she says. "We're here to help find a direction and to offer encouragement."

Throughout the room, some admired the progress of various projects and shared their visions of their unfinished pieces while others exchanged knitting patterns and household gripes.

Metro's Monika Suarez began knitting earlier this year. She attended the class with a ball of yarn and needles but no previous experience.

"I knew nothing," she says. "It was something my grandmother had done that I always wanted to do."

MTA OKer Linda Wasley is also a new learner and says that although she is not as good as many others, she finds the class very rewarding.

"When I'm working with the needles I really feel a sense of history and heritage. I think of all the millions of hours spent knitting when they didn't have Target or Wal-Mart," she says. "I know that if this were the 1800s my family would be naked and starving."

Knitters who have become more confident have ventured into competition for awards at the L.A. County Fair. *MTA Okers* Sandra Sandoval and Avis Brame have received two red ribbons for second place, two white for third place and one fourth place ribbon, leading the way for others to try their skills.

Brame says she started knitting inconsistently since she was about 8.

Knitting Tip of the Day:

Knitting socks can be very challenging and time consuming. Schmutzler recommends starting both socks at the same time. By doing this you are able to learn a technique and reinforce what you've learned by doing it on the second sock. It provides better consistency and eliminates the mental exhaustion of starting the entire process again after you've finished the first.

She says she doesn't have much time outside of work to knit but enjoys the time she spends with the group. She has even found a few knitters on her commuter train. They've begun a little circle of commuting knitters and have been nicknamed the "Happy Hookers."

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