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A crafters' paradise Hen House retreat perfect for hatching happy memories

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Crafty. It's an apt description for Diana Bohland in every sense of the word.

Not only does the Oregon woman enjoy a wide array of handicrafts, including knitting, crocheting, stamping and scrapbooking, but recently she hatched up a way to turn her talents and passion into a new business that will offer other women who are crazy for crafts a way to indulge their passions - big time.



Last month, Bohland opened The Hen House Retreat at 2242 Parkwood Ave. in Toledo's Historic Old West End.

The retreat offers weekend getaway packages where up to 12 women can craft to their hearts' content, relax and be pampered and enjoy the ambience and each other's company.

Bohland and her husband purchased the robin-egg blue Queen-Anne style house in the summer. The house was built in 1892 for Mr. & Mrs. Charles O. Brigham. Brigham was the director of the Western Union Telegraph offices in Toledo.

The couple immediately set about furnishing the house, choosing a unique blend of turn-of-the-century furnishings and knick-knacks along with a collection of ergonomic high-back chairs, spacious tables and bright task lamps for the craft areas.

"About six years ago, I started stamping and scrapbooking and then I became a Stampin Up! demonstrator," Bohland said. "Throughout the years, I've hosted many workshops, stamp clubs, and stamp camps.

"Last year, a group of six of us went away for a weekend scrapbook retreat in Michigan and we had a wonderful time," she said. "We went back a second time this past January, taking a group of 15, which filled the house.

"Some women crafted and some didn't - they just went along to enjoy the company of their friends," she said.

"I thought, 'What a neat idea. What a great business to have.'"

After returning from her second retreat, Bohland and her husband John started looking at properties for a location for their crafter's retreat, focusing their search in the Old West End.

"We have always loved the older homes," she said. "We looked at quite a few

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houses, but I got such a good feeling when we walked through the door here.

"I figured if I felt that good here, a lot of women looking to get away for the weekend would feel the same," she said.

Then there was the challenge of coming up with a good name. "When I was hosting crafting events in my home, my husband would say, 'Is tonight your hen fest? Are the hens coming over to play?'"

"That's where the name came from," Bohland said, adding that it's a nice coincidence that the Toledo Mud Hens roost just a few miles away.

After taking possession of the house in June, Bohland began scouring local antique shops for furnishings. When it came to the cropping stations, comfort and workability were key. "I must have sat in every chair in Office Max," she said. "When you're crafting for hours at a time, the comfort of the chair is very important. So is good lighting."

The retreat is also furnished with a computer station with Internet access, a printer, scanner and copier, along with assorted craft magazines and tools like paper punches, a die-cut machine, decorative scissors, etc. Wireless Internet is also available.

And though crafting is fun, guests may choose to take a break and indulge in a manicure, pedicure or a massage, available for an extra cost.

Meals are catered by Pam's Corner in downtown Toledo. Snacks and beverages are also available and guests are welcome to bring along a bottle of wine or other libations.

And let's not underestimate the power of chocolate at a weekend retreat. Bohland has stashes of the sweet stuff conveniently located throughout the house.

When the day is done, guests can curl up in one of the three second-story bedrooms, each of which accommodates four people.

Throughout it all, she acts as the "mother hen," sharing her crafting expertise and making sure guests are comfortable and having a good time.

Weekend retreats, which begin with check-in Friday at 5 p.m. and run through 11 a.m. Sunday, are \$270. Discounts are available for groups of six or more.

If space is available, crafters can sign up to go the retreat for evening crops Fridays or Saturdays from 7 to midnight. or an afternoon crop Saturday from noon to 5 p.m. for \$30. Participants can enjoy snacks, beverages, prizes, and unlimited use of all tools.

"While we have a lot of scrapbooking tools, the retreat is also a great atmosphere for other crafts, including knitting, beading or other projects," Bohland said.

All thumbs? No problem - everyone's welcome to come and enjoy the company of the other "chicks" at the Hen House and just relax.

Bohland recently kicked off the business with a weekend for her friends. "The retreat is a great place for friends who live in different cities to meet and have fun together."

She is currently decorating the house for Christmas. "It will be fun. I'm going to be a part of the Tour de Noel, sponsored Dec. 2 by the Women of the Old West End.

"I'm looking forward to being busy," she said. "With the cooler weather setting in, I think women will be happy to settle in and `nest' for the weekend.



“Like our tag line says...we’ll be hatching memories by the dozen.”

For more information about the Hen House Retreat, call 419-698-2775 or 419-343-0240 (mobile) or visit www.henhousetretreat.com. Visitors to the Web site are invited to visit the “forum” section and learn more about a page layout contest, where the winner could win a weekend at The Hen House.

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