

An expression of praise

BY Lisa Leslie Henderson

PHOTOGRAPHY BY Marty McAuliff

As you enter South Sutton while driving north on Route 114, a marker encourages you to “enter here to be and find a friend.” Just a stone’s throw further along the road is a signpost for Nunsuch Blessed Beads, and behind it, a small wooden cottage bearing the Italian word, Portiuncula. If you take a moment to pull in and explore, it is quite likely that you will indeed find a friend.

That friend is Courtney Haase, the owner of Nunsuch Blessed Beads. Originally from New Orleans — her thick, southern drawl is a giveaway — Haase is an entrepreneur with a twinkle in her eye and plenty of graciousness in her manner. In addition to being a local mentor and overseer of the town’s welfare program, Haase is an artist, a former nun and a highly successful goat farmer. Her latest venture, designing rosaries and other devotional objects, is a confluence of her talent and passions.



“Creating these rosaries has enriched my life,” Haase says. The meditative nature of the handiwork is reminiscent of the convent that she

joined at age 16 and in which she remained for almost two decades. The Poor Clares, part of the Franciscan movement, encourages its members to pray always and look within to nurture their connection with God. Through her bead work, Haase is able to encourage those around her, with whom she would never have come in contact in her former cloistered life, to do similarly. “These physical items help to turn your heart to God,” explains Haase. “These stones are a way to bring God’s blessing to our daily lives.”

Prayer beads have been a central part of most spiritual traditions for centuries; in fact, a majority of the world prays with beads. As portable altars, prayer beads help infuse the sacred into daily life. “They are an invitation to get acquainted with God, not just in times of trouble,” Haase says. “They remind



As Courtney Haase says, “It’s okay to pay on plastic, but don’t ever pray on plastic.”

us, and encourage us, that prayer is an every moment activity.”

Prayer beads allow for tactile communication that can align itself with words, and reach beyond them. As hands make their way around the strand, the body is engaged in prayer in much the same way as when lighting Sabbath candles, showing the Sign of the Cross, breaking bread, or passing the Peace.

Haase brings an artistic eye to the traditional rosary, utilizing amethyst, jasper, fresh water pearls and other fine stones combined with sterling silver to create heirloom-quality devotional items. Each piece has a theme that is reflected in the materials, including the stone’s color and cultural associations, as well as the chosen crucifix, metals and accompanying prayer.

The rosary which Haase has named Magdalene’s Tears, for example, is made of amethyst and lepidolite, and incorporates the Pardon crucifix (which reads “Father forgive them”) and a Mary Magdalene metal. “Moment in History”

— with its Mardi Gras colors around an “Our Lady of Prompt Succor” medal — celebrates the rebuilding of New Orleans.

Sports fans may find their connection through the rosaries designed in the colors of the Boston Celtics, the Red Sox and the New England Patriots. Haase has also designed chaplets for other religious traditions and for specific lines of work, including teachers, physicians, and members of the armed forces. “Several families have purchased rosaries to accompany their child as they are deployed to Iraq,” Haase says. Families often purchase matching chaplets for each family member to be in solidarity with the son or daughter who is going off to war.

Haase is happy to custom make rosaries and chaplets to reflect an individual’s school, team, colors or patron saint, and will even make original beads from flowers used at weddings, funerals and other occasions. “I try to reflect each person’s own spirituality in their piece,” she says. “They know it when they see it; in their piece, they find peace.”



WHO: Courtney Haase

WHAT: Nunsuch Blessed Beads

WHERE: Route 114 (2/10 of a mile from the post office), South Sutton

WHEN: Thursday to Sunday, 11 a.m. to 5 p.m., or by appointment

WHY: A beautiful — and spiritual — work of art

HOW MUCH: Chaplets are \$45; rosaries are \$125 to \$175 and up, depending on materials

WEB: www.nunsuch.org

Lisa Henderson is a freelance writer and author of Best-Loved Family Adventures, a guide book of fun and interesting things to do with kids in the Kearsarge and Upper Valley areas.

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