

Local resident serious about jewelry

07.21.11 - 08:25 pm



Ever since she was a child, Alexa Hostetler always displayed a real talent for beading. Matching the right colors and shapes simply seemed second nature to her.

But making jewelry wasn't something the Fuquay-Varina resident took very seriously. It wasn't until a mysterious illness struck her at the age of 12 that Hostetler began using her talent as a creative outlet.

Now, the 15 year-old has her creations – Alexa's Heirlooms – sold throughout the Triangle and has attracted a devoted clientele.



During a recent appearance at The Rusty Bucket in downtown Apex, a

steady stream of customers filed into the store and many stopped to chat with Hostetler.

After closely inspecting her jewelry, the same question is repeatedly asked.

"They usually ask me if I made it and they seem surprised," said Hostetler with a laugh. "Of course, people were much more surprised a few years ago when I was doing this. But it's a great feeling when they tell you how much they like everything. I always like hearing that."

Hostetler first became interested in the craft after watching her mother, Lorie, make jewelry for friends. It wasn't until 2007, when she became ill, that her interest grew.

For more than three years, Hostetler battled terrible bouts of fatigue and stomach illness. She visited doctors throughout the area who were unable to offer an explanation.

"It was bad," said Hostetler. "Every six to eight weeks, I would become very sick for an entire week. I would be lethargic, have headaches and a fever. My stomach was the worst. I would become so ill that I would fall asleep on the bathroom floor."

Friends of her mother suspected that Hostetler had Lyme Disease but doctors dismissed the theory.

"The doctors kept saying you couldn't get Lyme Disease in North Carolina," said Hostetler. "My mom's friends told her to have me checked for it because the symptoms were so similar."

The Hostetler's family doctor took some blood from the teen and sent it to a specialist in California. The tests came back positive.

"I was relieved to find out what it was," said Hostetler. "I started getting treatment right away and now I'm fine."

It was during her visits to a certain doctor that Hostetler repeatedly met Mack Thorpe, owner of The Rusty Bucket.

"My mother and I would always talk with him and one day he mentioned he owned the store," said Hostetler. "We were surprised because we love going there."

Thorpe asked Hostetler if she would be interested in selling her items in his store and she quickly agreed.

"I guess something good came out of being sick," said Hostetler. "I got serious about making jewelry and it's something I really enjoy doing."

For more information about Hostetler's jewelry, visit www.therustybucket.biz.

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