

Ladies Who Lunch Craft, Fellowship and find Friendship

They gather around a table sharing smiles and welcoming embraces.

Edna Peck shows a few onlookers how to put together a wreath made from sandwich bags and wire hangers. Rosie Thompson discusses the no sew fleece pillows and blankets that she and a few of the other ladies made as prizes for the last Bingo night.

These are the Ladies Who Lunch, a weekly fellowship group run out of the Carver Community Center that started five years ago as a way for housing authority residents, and the greater Frederick Community, to come together to craft and create. Cydney Yerushalmi, who started the group after relocating from Orlando, Florida to Frederick to live close to her sister, said she didn't know anyone else and hoped to make friends quickly.

She was put in contact with Kevin Lollar, executive director of the Housing Authority of the City of Frederick, whose brother happens to be married to a good friend of Yerushalmi's in Orlando. When she met up with Lollar and Ann Ryan, who heads up the family services division HACF, Yerushalmi said they both encouraged her to get involved and start a group.

"I'm forever grateful to Kevin for giving me this access," she said.

Initially, Ladies Who Lunch began as a knitting class with Yerushalmi providing most of the instruction. These days, what it has become is a camaraderie of ladies who enjoy sharing a meal and conversation with one another, along with various types of art – from coloring and painting to crafting.

"Everybody likes lunch and so it kind of evolved into a group of people who like each other," Yerushalmi explains. "And really we have such a good time and I love those ladies – they are so good to me, they are so caring and nice and lovely. One of the ladies will call and say 'can you take me to the doctors?' and we all do it."

Together, the women have made blankets and throws, potholders, dried flower arrangements and many other crafts during their weekly time together. They are all generous in spirit and have given away a lot of their creations to the Beacon House, Citizens Nursing Home and other charities, particularly around the holidays.

The Ladies Who Lunch plan out their weekly menus and each member contributes food. The women really overdo it when celebrating a birthday of one of the members, even opting for a restaurant meal or other special outing from time to time. One hot summer Tuesday, the ladies opted for a menu of hotdogs, potato salad, chips and cake, and discussed what they liked best about their group. Anne Orem said she likes the fellowship of the group, and many women chimed in that they too cherish the fellowship. Members say they also like Ms. Anne's deviled eggs.

Dee Ayres said she enjoys meeting different people and learning different art forms. Linda Luster is often called to pray over the food. The ladies look forward to Mary Hoy's potato salad and Nancy Bowins' lemon meringue pie. "It's an extremely nice bunch of women and each one of them has different talents," Hoy said. Marie Davis is the life of the party. "She gives a lot of opinions," one woman explained to laughter from some of the ladies. The women say Rosemary Jackson is the "boss" of the group. Soon to be 84, she is one of the oldest in the group. Ponzie Maeseles said she loves to listen to the ladies talk and the stories they share.

The women all light up when posing for a photograph or showing a newcomer photos from previous sessions. They all beam when a few photographs show the ladies wearing their "Ladies Who Lunch" t-shirts.

Although she didn't know anyone aside from her sister when she moved to Frederick, Yerushalmi now has about a dozen new friends, thanks to Ladies Who Lunch. "It's great and I love it," Yerushalmi said. "I like people and I like social groups."

Yerushalmi said although many people came to the group's first meeting, the numbers have fizzled a bit over the weeks and months, to about a dozen women who come faithfully each week. Yerushalmi said everyone is welcome to attend and that she wishes more people would join Ladies Who Lunch.

"It's such a nice group of people," she adds.

