

## Happy New Year!

*by Maddy Cranley*

No, it's not the first day of January, the traditional debut of a new year. Although, with all the new beginnings that take place on and around the Labor Day holiday, this season certainly seems to be a more appropriate choice for the start of a calendar. Even though we may no longer be trudging off to school each morning, the changes in our daily lives are many. The weather is changing and the leaves are changing color. Old neighbors move out and new neighbors move in. It's time to clean up our outside retreats and move inside, take the summer dustcloths off the furniture and bring out richer, darker colors. We put away the barbecue recipes and start cooking stove-top stews. The air conditioner goes into storage and down quilts are placed on the beds. As school begins, along with the schedule it demands of us, children in the household display new books, sport new clothes while talking about new classmates and new teachers.

I don't think we ever shake the anticipation and excitement of returning to school, the cornerstone around which our daily lives revolved for so many years. As the younger ones go back to a classroom setting, we too take stock of what we could be learning. It seems to be a time to start something, anything, but particularly to acquire a new skill. If you are a knitter, there is always so much more to learn. Have you ever thought about learning Bavarian knitting, or knitting reversible fabric or trying to create a picture with lace patterns? If you are one of those that benefits by learning in a group situation or class, you have a great selection of choices available to you. You may consider joining a local knitting guild, learning along with others as you participate in the group instructions that so many of the guilds offer. The Knitting Guild of America ([www.tkga.com](http://www.tkga.com)) or The Canadian Knitwear Designers' Association ([www.canknit.com](http://www.canknit.com)) maintain comprehensive lists of guilds operating throughout North America making it easy to locate one near you. If only a shorter time commitment is available, there are numerous seminars and workshops at regional conferences held throughout the year sponsored by TKGA, Stitches events held twice a year in the West and East, and The Creative Sewing and Needlework Festivals held each spring and fall in Toronto. These venues host a wide range of classes and seminars over a three to four day period. Instructors from all over North America gather in one location to offer an incredible selection of workshops on topics ranging from Traditional Ganseys to Borders and Buttonholes.

If you have the discipline to learn on your own, you may want to become a Master Knitter. The TKGA offers a Master Knitter Program which allows you to learn new technique and skills under the supervision of qualified knitters. Conducted on a correspondence basis, at a very reasonable cost, this master program allows you to work at a pace suitable to your schedule. Both programs offer Level One Beginner through to Level Three Advanced. At each level, you are required to submit samples of knitting, which are to be worked according to specified requirements. These samples are then evaluated by a Master Knitting Committee. If you are just interested in one particular technique, the TKGA also offers correspondence courses on individual knitting skills such as Professional Finishing or Mosaic Knitting.

The process of learning new techniques will inspire you to explore the craft of knitting and as a bonus, instead of a grade or term paper to worry over at the end of a course, you will have a beautiful new garment or afghan ready to keep you warm in the coming fall and winter season.

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**Maddy Cranley** is a professional knitwear designer, who has created exclusive designs for knitting and craft magazines, authored and published three books on the subject of creating felt garments and projects from handknitting, and produces an ever-growing line of maddy laine handknitting patterns. For additional information, see <http://www.maddycraft.com>

