

distinguished designer

the social side of stamping

Shelli Gardner shares the creative—and social—benefits of rubber-stamping

design: courtesy of stampin' up!

text: natalie jackman photos skylar nielsen



“I SEE STAMPING AS THE QUILTING BEE OF THE NEW MILLENNIUM,” says Shelli Gardner, co-founder and CEO of Stampin’ Up! For Shelli, stamping is more than a craft—it’s “a communal thing” that brings friends and family together to strengthen and celebrate their relationships. She recounts how her family recently got together to create stamped baby shower invitations in anticipation of a granddaughter’s birth.

Shelli makes relationship-building a priority in her business as well. “The thing that I love about the way Stampin’ Up! approaches stamping is that we offer instruction and social interaction instead of just a product,” she says of her company’s direct sales strategy. Stampin’ Up! demonstrators conduct home workshops where people can use products and learn techniques

while they enjoy refreshments and make new friends.

DISCOVERING A PASSION

Shelli hadn’t planned to start a business—until her sister brought home some rubber stamps. “I realized that I didn’t have to be an artist to be creative! I started making cards, and a wonderful world opened up.”

Shelli and her sister decided to turn their new passion into a business. They bought stamps wholesale and filled orders during their children’s naptime. They also burned a lot of midnight oil. Shelli struggled to balance mothering five girls and running a business. “The girls and the business were all my babies,” she says.

Thirteen years later, Stampin’ Up! designs and manufactures their own coordinated stamp sets with a staff of 350 Utah employees, while 20,000 demonstrators sell nationwide. The company is expanding into Canada. Shelli spreads her enthusiasm at craft conventions, and stamps alongside her customers at home workshops.

STAMPING POSSIBILITIES

“I love to watch people’s faces and celebrate their sense of accomplishment. There are so

many things stampers can do to get different effects.” In addition to paper crafts, people are stamping on personal checks, clothing, and jewelry. Stamping has moved into home decor—furniture, fabrics, walls, floors, and mailboxes. Shelli plans to decorate her new house using stamps. She even met a woman who “totally stamped the exterior of her car.”

Shelli advises beginning stampers to “start simple. You can do beautiful, easy projects—the stamps do most of the work. Mat some of your images for depth and a nice layered effect. With all of the color choices and coordinated stamps available, you can stamp on almost anything. The only limit is your imagination.”

Experience the satisfaction of stamping with these cards and gift boxes. Each simple project lets you practice a new technique. But I have to warn you—stamping is addictive! When you invite friends and family over for a stampathon, they may not want to leave.

