



Amanda Reynolds puts faith in her embroidery business

Kendal-based embroiderer Amanda has combined her needlework skills with her own spiritual journey to create a novel business.

Amanda made her first clergy stoles in 1995 when her husband was at theological college. Amanda was already a qualified solicitor but with two very young children she decided to take a career break and combined spending more time with them with obtaining a Certificate in Ecclesiastical Embroidery.

She considered developing her skills further but opted instead to return to her career as a lawyer whilst maintaining her interest in and love of embroidery.

However, following several personal upheavals in 2009 and 2010 which included redundancy she moved to the Lake District and finally decided to take the risk and use her skills to support herself financially. Her faith had since broadened to include other belief systems, and it was this that gave her the idea for her business.

Working from her home in Kendal, she now produces commissioned work for a wide variety of faiths using not only traditional Christian and other world faith symbols but, for example, also Druidic and Pagan imagery. She has had considerable interest from clients worldwide who either want vestments for use in their ministry or more personal or commemorative items.

“What I do is very specialised,” Amanda says. “Each stole is custom made using silks and metal threads and sometimes I have incorporated items such as an eagle feather or other natural elements. It is labour-intensive and skilled, and what delights me in the designing and making of each one is knowing that it will reflect the wearer’s own particular spiritual journey.”

Amanda received assistance from Cumbria Rural Enterprise Agency (CREA) under the Intensive Start-Up Support programme, providing her with a personal business adviser, attending workshops to increase her knowledge of finance, marketing and making the most of her selling point.

CREA Business Adviser Kellie Bradburn-Sims says, “Amanda’s case demonstrates the huge range of business types that ISUS can help, and it is satisfying to see someone turn a long-time interest into a business. I am pleased we were able to help her.”

Amanda is now developing her website and is looking into setting up an online shop which will sell a small range of stock items as well as continuing with her commissions, and with her growing reputation the future looks bright.

The ISUS programme is part of Solutions for Business, the Government’s package of publicly funded business support designed to help companies start and grow. The programme is funded by the NWDA and European Regional Development Fund (ERDF).

The European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) is making a real difference to people and businesses in the Northwest. With €755 million to invest between 2007 and 2013, ERDF is enhancing the competitiveness of the region’s economy by supporting growth in enterprise and employment. ERDF in the Northwest is managed by the Northwest Regional Development Agency (NWDA).