



SWFL COMPANY TO WATCH

Design-Your-Gift is a Fun Destination for All

What do you do when the weather is too cold for the pool or the beach? Or too hot in the summer to be outside? Or when you have out-of-town visitors and you need to find a fun and different activity for them? Or when you have restless kids to entertain? Just bring them to Design-Your-Gift, where they can make fun jewelry for themselves or for the women in their lives.

Although I started this business in my basement in St. Louis, it has now grown to be a very fun destination here in Southwest Florida. In fact, Trip Advisor ranks us as No. 5 of 30 Activities in Bonita Springs!

Of course, it's great for women to come and make a gift or purchase one of my original designs for a special outfit. But it's also ideal for office groups wanting a "ladies night out," and for dads to bring the kids on Saturday and make mom a birthday, holiday, Valentines or Mother's Day gift. Even boys like to come and create that special gift. Some of their creativity is amazing! It is also a very fun venue for a birthday party – ages 6 to 106! When you want to celebrate, or simply get together with your golf, tennis, bridge or other group of friends, Design-Your-Gift is the place to be. I've also taken trays of beads and tools to gated communities and assisted living activities centers – so those who can't make it into the store can still enjoy this fun, creative activity.

Visitors can choose from more than 40,000 beads, many from my travels around the world, including New Delhi, Manila, Paris, Buenos Aires, Lisbon, Amsterdam, Prague, Murano, St. Petersburg and more.

When I buy beads, I cut them off the strings and put them in bins. I usually only buy one or two strands, so designs are one-of-a-kind. We also have beautiful original lampwork beads that I create from glass in an offsite studio. Each year I attend a "Bead Camp" in Southwest Florida, and learn new, original glass bead designs from renowned guest teachers so that my visitors, in turn, can make those unique gifts.

Customers can make simple key chains and stretchy bracelets, bracelets with clasps, earrings or necklaces. Or they can simply purchase any of our loose beads and incorporate them into special projects they are designing at home. If they don't know how to wrap ear wires or crimp necklace clasps, I'm happy to teach them. And when they give a gift that they have made here, they can say "I designed this for you!" It's very special to give something that is unique and one-of-a-kind!

We are open noon to 6 Monday through Thursday, noon to 5 Friday, and 10:30 to 2:30 Saturday. And we are happy to book a special party for a group any morning, evening or during the weekend. Call or email sam@design-your-gift.com to schedule that event! As we continue to grow, we want people to think of us as the place to go when they want to have fun and want unique and original jewelry that no one else will have.

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By **SAM BLACK**
Guest Columnist