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Working moms get crafty

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What's a working mom to do after a tough week at the office? More and more are spending precious hours pursuing tactile crafts, such as scrap booking, sewing, quilting and beading, according to the Craft & Hobby Association. Crafters say it not only is a relaxing, creative outlet that allows them to unwind after a hectic, harried week, but also one that provides a venue for them to spend time with old friends and often make new ones. Others love the fact that they can leave a lasting legacy for family members or create personalized gifts for themselves and others. Stephanie Williams, a New Freedom resident, is a wife and mom of two young daughters. She is active with her church, volunteers at school events, leads a local Girl Scout troop, coordinates play dates, runs countless errands and holds down a job as a receptionist at an obstetrician's office. She also spends about eight hours a month cropping family photos and journaling major milestones, as well as everyday moments. She's created five albums so far. "It's my downtime," Williams said. "It's an outlet for me. It's fun, and I'm preserving memories for my girls. They get a big kick out of it." Verna Valotta, who owns and operates Scrapbook Junction on South Queen Street near Leader Heights with her daughter, Karrie Fishel, said working moms make up the majority of her customers. Many of them attend all-night crops or work at home into the wee hours of the morning to get their pages done. Angela Treffinger, controller for an international microscope company who confesses to living by her Palm Pilot, pursues a love of scrap booking and quilting. The second was a hobby inspired by her grandmother, which now will be shared with Treffinger's firstborn. Her first creation was a yellow and lime green baby quilt that she estimates took some 14 hours to craft during the course of four weekly classes and after hours at home. "I find it very enjoyable, very relaxing," said Treffinger, who resides in Etters and works in Stewartstown. "And I love getting to know so many different, very unique women." Though prepared to curb her crafting hours upon the arrival of a little one in less than a month, "I don't see giving it up completely," she said. "I do find the time to do it. That's my time for me." According to the Craft & Hobby Association, there are some 25 million scrappers and 25 million quilters nationwide. Combined with other favorites such as knitting and crocheting, quilting and sewing, beading and candle making, the crafts industry generated \$30.6 million in sales last year, the association reported. Many crafters begin by taking classes and joining small groups whose members enjoy the same pastime. "The classes that are most popular right now are beading and knitting," said Linda Carroll, craft coordinator at the Ben Franklin Crafts store in Springettsbury Township. One beading class was shared by a 12-year-old, a young woman expecting her second child and women in their 50s and 60s. By night's end, they all had crafted a bracelet with Swarovski crystals and had created a finished product to call their own. "They're pretty, sparkly," Carroll said of the popularity of beading. "And there's instant gratification whereas a lot of

crafts take so long." Regardless of the hobby they call their own, most are quite willing to devote the intensive time required. "My first love is cross-stitch samples," said Karen Novakoski, the mother of a teen and a speech pathologist who has created 12 to 13 quilts, an accomplishment made possible by carving out 20 minutes before work each day. "I'm a morning person," she said, "and this is actually kind of a therapeutic thing for me. It really is a stress reliever and a creative outlet."

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