

# BUSINESS

## Wired for success

### Local artist's work featured on cover of magazine

By **Shelby Sebens**  
NewsTribune Reporter

A local artist is trying to craft her one-of-a-kind artwork into a product people will buy.

One of Suzanne Shafer-Wilson's wire needle lace baskets will grace the cover of the March 2006 edition of *The Crafts Report*, a national artists' business magazine. "It was picked over a traditional basket," the Lostant woman said.

Her decision to hire a professional photographer to take slides of work that she could submit to the magazine was a wise one, she said.

"I was kind of at the point where 'I've got to do something,'" Shafer-Wilson said. "It was the best investment I could have made, hiring a professional photographer. I knew he would get the kind of quality I would need."

And it worked. At the end of January, *The Crafts Report* contacted Shafer-Wilson for its cover.

Shafer-Wilson's basket stood out among the more traditional candidates for the cover, said Mike Ricci, the magazine's art director.

"Suzanne's were just so different," he said, adding they were also well done. "She would absolutely be somebody we'd be interested in following up with."

The former art teacher and current western steel sign designer learned how to make needle lace at Northern Illinois University where she received a master's degree in fiber arts. Shafer-Wilson takes lace designs and applies them to three-dimensional products made of everything from plastic wire to copper to animal fur.

But it was a copper basket that persuaded officials at *The Crafts Report* to put her work on the cover.

The March edition, which focused on baskets, also includes a blurb about Shafer-Wilson's work on the inside.

Ricci said the craft report is different than other art magazines because it helps artists looking to turn their craft into a business.

"We're the magazine that focuses on it as a business, as a career," Ricci said.

And that's exactly what Shafer-Wilson is trying to do.

"I'm just plugging away," she said, noting she has entered her work in three competitions in Michigan through the Handweavers Guild of America, and has her work in two Chicago venues—Woman Made and Vale Craft galleries.

But it's no leisurely hobby. It takes between 12 and 18 hours for Shafer-Wilson to create her larger pieces, crafting it all by



NewsTribune photo/ Kemp Smith

**Suzanne Shafer-Wilson** of Lostant poses with three pieces of her artwork and *The Crafts Report*. One of Shafer-Wilson's wire needle lace baskets graces the cover of the national magazine.

hand with wrenches and pliers.

Although Shafer-Wilson's work is not sold locally — with the exception of a recent showcase at August Hill Winery — one of her baskets will be sold at the St. Bede auction in March to benefit the school. The pieces are sold from \$50 and up, depending on the size. The basket at St. Bede will have a minimum bid of \$150.

For more information about Shafer-

Wilson's art visit [www.suzanneshaferswilson.womanmade.net](http://www.suzanneshaferswilson.womanmade.net).

Shafer-Wilson also will be leading workshops through Illinois Valley Handweavers Guild and hopes to set something up at Starved Rock.

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