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From knocking down pins to knockout sales

At first, the concept of a necklace made out of a bowling ball seems absurd. And when Char Dudley, human service technician, began trying to gather supplies from local bowling supply stores and bowling alleys for her new endeavor, she was met with skepticism.

By: [Sarah Gorvin](#), The Republican Eagle

At first, the concept of a necklace made out of a bowling ball seems absurd. And when Char Dudley, human service technician, began trying to gather supplies from local bowling supply stores and bowling alleys for her new endeavor, she was met with skepticism.

"They thought I was crazy," Dudley said with a laugh.

But now, about six months later, the necklaces, made from polished bits of smashed bowling ball, are flying off shelves. Dudley says she can't make them fast enough to keep up with demand.

"We never expected it to go this fast," Dudley said of the project's success.

"It has turned out to be hugely popular," said Sally Ogren, director of programs and services for the Red Wing ProAct.

ProAct serves adults with mental disabilities, offering education and work placement in the community - arrangements for employees in the community, ProAct clients still need something to do. That's where projects like this come in.

A necklace begins with ProAct employees smashing colorful bowling balls in the parking lot with a maul. (The mauls are used to make garden gazing balls, another ProAct project, Dudley said.)

Then, using a hand saw, the large chunks are cut down into smaller, charm-shaped bits. Those pieces are ground on sandpaper to smooth them and remove any scratches.

"Really, it's a team effort," Ogren said.

The final step is polishing, which is done with a buffer and car polish. When the project first began, clients used a motorized buffer "speeds things up," Dudley said.

Which is good, considering that even though they can produce about 10 necklaces a day, demand is still growing.

Fifteen-necklace displays set up in Scofield Drug and Gift and The Picket Fence Crafts in Cannon Falls and at the Redman Club in Red Wing and at Coffee by the Bay in Bay City are popular as well.

Peggy Danielson, manager of Loons and Ladyslippers in Red Wing, said when her store runs out, customers always come in.

"(Customers) just love them. They feel like they're really unique," Danielson said. "A lot of them don't buy jewelry often."

Danielson credits the inexpensive price for the necklaces' success. Single charms cost \$5, and a cord cost programs.

"People don't have to spend a lot of money, but can still keep up with the trends," Danielson said.

She added that customers also like the fact that the necklaces are made in Red Wing and by ProAct clients that really catches peoples' eyes.

"When you wear them out, people are asking and commenting. Everyone thinks they're stone," Danielson said. "It's like a bowling ball."

If you have a spare bowling ball...

ProAct has been given scratched or dented balls by local business and bowling alleys. But Char Dudley says donations. If you have a spare ball you'd like to donate, call ProAct at 651-388-7108.

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PHOTO: Bowling ball necklaces



Peggy Danielson, manager of Loons and Ladyslippers in Red Wing, adjusts her store's display of pendants made of polished bowling ball chips. Danielson said the necklaces are very popular with customers, and the store sold eight of them on Friday alone.
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