

Exploring Asylum Hill – Hartford Artisan Weaving Center

by Bernie Michel

It's been a few years since we wrote about Hartford Artisan Weaving Center at 42 Woodland St, so this seemed like a good time to check in. They went back to full classes at the beginning of September, with the usual precautions. All of the weavers and the volunteers have to be vaccinated and generally wear masks, as did Ann Kollegger the Executive Director of the Weaving Center and I. It was especially encouraging to see how well they have done in the face of the pandemic. One advantage that they have is that the looms can be spaced 6 feet apart rather easily, and given that they now occupy nearly all of the building, their able to spread out the 67 looms that they have operating.



Louise was busy making bookmarks for the annual sale that will take place November 13th & 14th from 10:00am to 5:00pm both days. She is a wonderful example of what the Weaving Center is all about. She began weaving at Oak Hill before the Weaving Center came to Asylum Hill. It has always been primarily intended to allow those whose lives are restricted with low or no vision to socialize and be productive, and expanded to senior citizens. Louise is now both. She is also an experienced weaver. Once the loom is set up for her, she happily performs the repetitive process of weaving. She explained to me the care that must be taken to get each thread where it needs to be, not too tight and not too loose. Experience is a great teacher and even knowing how much the cloth will shrink when it is washed needs to be considered when the weaving is done. Too tight, and the edges will bunch up and not lie flat.

What is really amazing is that there are more volunteers than weavers.

It's volunteers that design the projects, take the various colored thread or yarn and set up the warp (the fixed vertical threads) and prepare the shuttles with the corresponding thread. Once the weaving is completed, they take the material off the loom and sew what



ever is needed for the finished project, including washing, drying ironing etc. Leftover scraps are rarely discarded but used in many creative ways. The most interesting is the “monsters” that Marsha, a volunteer has created in the Sewing room. Pieces too small to be used elsewhere, become stuffed animals that are also available at the annual sale. For more photos go to; <https://bit.ly/HAWCphotos>