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The Kindles Have Arrived

Kindles - Perhaps you have already heard of their work. If you've ever wondered how a snowman seems to wink just as you walk by, or how the lights on the tree seem to have an extra sparkle on Christmas Eve? Consider Kindles. How does Santa fit down even the tightest Chimney? It's those Kindles at work again, putting the twinkle in the eye of even the smallest child believing in the magic of Christmas morning.

Far away, in a land where snow falls in glittering heaps of confectioner's sugar, there lives a group of sprites whose vast experience, energy and spirit have given them an extraordinary opportunity. These aren't just any elves, they'd be quick to point out with pride and distinction: they're Kindles, Guardians of the Christmas Spirit.

It seems a Kindle's work is never done, but far from being drudgery, the Kindles work involves mounds of chatter, laughter and light-heartedness. A room that has been touched by Kindles is swept with the glitter of fantasy, the charm of Christmases gone by and the sparkling prospects of what is yet to come. Kindles work collectively with playful diligence but often their overabundant enthusiasm causes prospects to go a little off kilter.

Bakerkins see that holiday cookies are done to perfection, though it is quite likely they have added a bit more sugar than the recipe intended. Decorator Kindles assure that your tree lights are twinkling and that the garland is draped just right. Artisans apply the finishing touches on millions of toys made each year for Santa's delivery, lovingly by the toymaker Kindles. There are Kindles in charge of wrapping packages and those who fill workrooms with joyous holiday music. Mailroom helpers, who were once responsible for sorting Santa's letters, will now supervise your Christmas cards, making certain that they are perfectly addressed, licked, stamped and mailed - well almost perfectly.

Though the Kindles' origin is a closely held mystery, this much is assured: like a snowflake, no two are alike. Each is an original from the top of their hats to the tips of their toes. No doubt, all Kindles are content and patient, mischievous and playful, helpful and kind. Sometimes musing and more often amusing, they are sure to evoke the creative spirit within - the one that had forgotten how to play, and nearly overlooked the joy and spirit of Christmas.

Is it the magic of the Season that enables Kindles to remind us that there is still the spirit of a child within each of us? It must be. Believe in Kindles, they are here. But more importantly, believe in the power of Christmas.



The Byers' Family Portrait



Many Caroler fans have told us they purchased their first group of Carolers to resemble members of their family. Others bring gifts of Carolers resembling the host and hostess when they're attending Holiday gatherings. With these creative uses for the Carolers in mind, we had some fun gathering a grouping of Carolers to resemble our own family. Some of the characters were perfect because of their faces and expressions. Others were chosen

because their costumes and accessories matched a certain family member's hobby or interest. Well, here we are all together posing for our Caroler family portrait. We thought you might enjoy reading about some of the different considerations we made when we created this display.

In order to achieve good composition in an arrangement you should take several things into consideration. Look at the space you wish to fill and consider the height, width and depth required for good proportion. We chose a small chest for our display. In the back, we placed an inverted basket, which is about 6" high and 14" long to help achieve height and depth. Children standing between adults help to put faces at a multitude of heights. Here we have Ashlyn holding a favorite doll in between Bob Sr., son Jeff and his wife Dawn. Joyce loves to cook when she is not busy designing Carolers and she's in the middle with her mother, Bob Jr., Pam, and John. Color also plays an important role. The red plaids worn by Jeff and Dawn on the right is picked up in Bob and Pam's jackets and then is visually pulled to the red in Jacob's train at the bottom of the composition. Samuel is starting kindergarten this fall and has his lessons in hand while George loves to play any game where he gets to throw a ball.

A mixture of artificial as well as fresh greens help to soften the multi-textures of the accessories and tie the total composition together.



Employee Spotlight:

Susan Wasser Fanticola

Because she was moving to Florida and couldn't take them with her, Susan Wasser gave her only two Carolers to a neighbor. Six months later, Susan moved back to her old neighborhood and, since she had recently taken a job with Byers' Choice, asked if she could get the Carolers back. Her neighbor had a confession. "I didn't want to hurt your feelings," said the neighbor. "But I thought they were so ugly, I threw them out." Susan laughs: "A lot of people would sure love to own those older Carolers today!"

That incident happened in 1982, when Byers' Choice was a fledgling manufacturer with just 19 employees. Susan was initially hired to do wrapping, but she eventually worked in all the phases of Caroler making, except cutting and sewing. She even recalls that during her first summer with the company, she

was asked to teach two teenage boys how to make the plaster bases. Jeff Byers and his school friend didn't last long at the job, but, fortunately for Byers' Choice, Jeff eventually found his niche with his parent's firm.

Speaking of Bob and Joyce, Susan says, "They've been my family." She says that when she was initially hired, Bob Sr. had seen that she was a single mom in need of a job, and although he had just hired a person for the vacant position that morning, he hired Susan anyway. The first hire lasted just 3 weeks, but things worked out well for Susan



and she stayed. She was impressed at the outset, when she noted that Joyce worked alongside the production employees each and every day, and Bob Sr. always came through the workroom floor every morning with a hearty good morning.

About 10 years ago, Susan approached Bob Sr. about working in the office, something that she had done prior to working at Byers' Choice. A receptionist position opened up, and Susan took the job. Today Susan still meets and greets those who pass through the front doors, and it is her voice you are likely to hear when you call.

"People love to tell their stories," says Susan, who enjoys listening to them. Caroler fans mostly like to talk about how their

collections got started, and she adds that people from Quarryville, Pa., love to make sure she knows that they hail from Joyce's hometown.

Susan also gets to hear people's requests for specific Carolers. "Right now," Susan says, "people want a fireman." But for a long time what they really wanted was a bride and groom. With the creation of the white Victorian dancing couple this year, many collectors feel that that wish has been granted.

When asked why she thinks Byers' Choice has flourished over the years that she's been with the company, Susan quickly states that she



Susan, as Marley, answering phones on the first ring

thinks it is because the Carolers are still totally handmade and have the same excellent quality as when she first started wrapping Caroler bodies 17 years ago. She added that the Carolers are very affordable. - "I've never heard anyone complain about the price."

One of the best things about working as the receptionist is that Susan can readily see how happy the Carolers make people. "Very seldom do visitors leave Byers' Choice without a smile on their face," she says.



Susan dresses Carolers in the early years



Another dress-up day at Byers' Choice

Clue: This person appeared on Jeopardy

Answer: Who is Pam Byers? Those of you who are avid fans of the game show Jeopardy as well as fans of Byers' Choice might have recently recognized a familiar contestant. Pam Byers, Bob Jr.'s wife, fulfilled a personal dream by competing on the show in September. Unfortunately, Pam didn't win, but we sure enjoyed watching her play.



Decorating Kindles Create Holiday Displays



The Kindles have arrived and they're creating quite a commotion. The idea of designing a handful of elves to assist Santa in his workshop was suggested nearly six years ago when we were developing an original display for the Byers' Choice Gallery. These busy assistants to Santa were put together loosely using pipe cleaners, clay, fabric and glue. Since they were going to reside behind glass in a permanent display and would not be handled often, they did not have to be very sturdy.

Our visitors so loved this display and these whimsical characters that we set out to create a group of elves for retail. The concept of posable "Kindles" that would stand six inches tall and have a variety of different faces, hands, shoes and costumes became a real design challenge. It took several years for us to refine their bodies so that they would have a bendable elf-like shape to which heads, hands and shoes could be attached.

Jeff Byers took to the sculpting of more than twenty-five different faces to add to the variety. Each character was given a name and a short description of his unique personality. In the early stages, it became quite apparent that the Kindles were developing into an entirely different line outside of the Carolers with their own personalities and folklore. It was then that Bob and Joyce's two sons founded Kindle Creations and started producing this new line of Christmas decorations for a small number of retailers.

Byers' Choice and Kindle Creations have since joined resources to bring the story of the Kindles to you. These whimsical characters make your holiday decorating fun and easy. We recommend that you allow the Bakerkins to help in the kitchen with your Christmas cookies while the rest of the Kindles hang the stockings, trim the tree and set the dinner table. Don't be afraid to bend and position these characters as creatively as you desire. Kindles remind us of the lighter side of Christmas that is full of fantasy and wonder. We hope they will do the same for you.



Bakerkins Help in the Kitchen

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