

Leanne Anderson



When Leanne Anderson had to quit her job in manufacturing due to injury, it could have been the end of her crafting career. Instead, it marked the beginning of a new and exciting design journey.

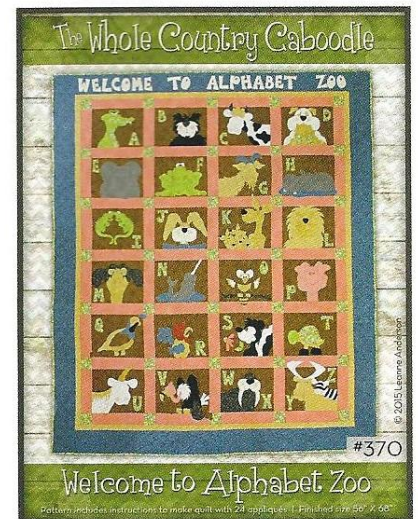
By Hayley Penrose

After being diagnosed with carpal tunnel syndrome and requiring surgery, Leanne Anderson had no choice but to quit her manufacturing job. Carpal tunnel syndrome is a painful disorder of the hand that is caused by pressure on the nerves that run through the wrist, so she couldn't continue the repetitive sewing her job required. Not one to let something like that stop her from doing what she loved, Leanne decided it was the perfect opportunity to design her first line of machine appliqué patterns. Around this time she also attended her first International Quilt Market.

Just two years later, Leanne was approached by a fabric company to submit some artwork for consideration of fabric design. She was successful and continued to design for that company for 14 years. For the past eight years and counting, she has been

designing for Henry Glass & Co fabrics. "I have been in business for over 30 years, starting out in custom sewing and alterations," she details. "I could have never dreamed of doing what I am doing and absolutely love the area of design."

Growing up, Leanne was never far from design and craft. Her grandmother and mother both did a lot of sewing, especially dressmaking. "My grandmother was a professional seamstress, she taught classes through the Adult Education program and my mom sewed to save money," she explains. "I wasn't really interested in sewing until I was in high school, but I was constantly surrounded by creativity." Leanne went to college as an art major but switched to the Home Economic department during her sophomore year and ended up graduating with a degree in Home Economics in Business with a Business



Marketing minor.

Leanne's first designs were whimsical appliques designed for apparel including jumpers, coats and sweatshirts. One of her earliest designs, 'Hey Noah... What About

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Me?', features a small unicorn that seems to have just missed the boat, and remains one of her top sellers today.

That design, like many in Leanne's portfolio, has religious connections. "I'm often asked where I get my inspiration," she begins. "First and foremost would be my faith in God. I believe my gifts are God-given so I want to give Him the credit first. Henry Glass allows me to tell a story on cloth and, often times, it is faith-based. I am so appreciative to them for

allowing me to do this."

She also takes a lot of inspiration from her family. Married for 35 years, Leanne's credits those closest to her with providing constant ideas for design. She has three grown children, two of whom are married with their own children, as well as a foreign exchange daughter who is also married with a child. As a grandparent to five, with another on the way, they are a huge source of happiness and inspiration for her. "Nana would be my favourite title...I never knew that being a Nana could give me so much

joy!" she exclaims.

Family also plays a significant role in the running of her business, The Whole Country Caboodle. Leanne's youngest daughter Kaytlyn has been working with her since she graduated college, using her graphic design skills to create pattern covers and promotional material, keeping the website updated and so much more. Recently, Leanne and Kaytlyn have teamed up and started designing fabric together. Leanne's mother is also involved in the business, working behind the scenes assembling kits as the resident 'Kit Lady'.

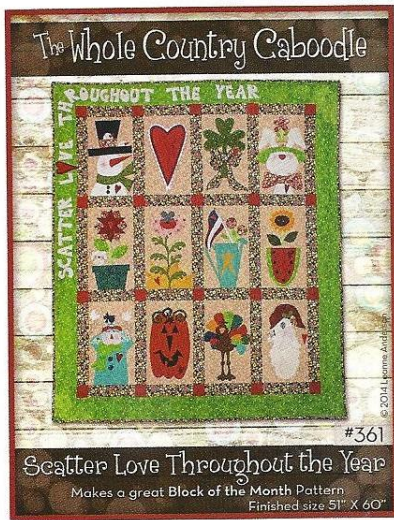
Outside the quilting world, Leanne has worked as a high school youth director and has done some work in Women's Ministry. "Working in this field keeps me very grounded in my design work and gets me away from the drawing board once in a while," she explains. "I love working with high school students and in many ways feel it enhances my work in this industry."

It always comes back to quilting and designing for Leanne. She has taught her design techniques to others in quilt guilds and has filmed an instructional video on fusible raw-edge appliqué for iqlt.com, an online resource for quilters which will be launching soon. "The fusible raw-edge method I use assembles the entire appliqué before it is ironed onto the item you are working on," she details. "It really takes the guess work out of where the pieces go."

There is no way that Leanne's projects would be completed without her most valuable tools – a pencil and a Teflon sheet. These two elements are integral in helping her creations make it into the world. "I do some artwork on the computer, but my characters are all hand drawn and then scanned



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into the computer," she explains. "I'm a bit old school and love the feel of a good sharp pencil in my hand."

It's all part of her design process, spending time in her studio, overlooking the lake on which she lives. "[It's] not something that just turns on like a switch," she explains. "So the quiet days are an inspiration to my design and give me a chance to get into the right mode to create."

With years of experience in the industry, Leanne has a few key recommendations for those wanting to follow in her footsteps. "Ask a lot of questions," she advises. "See what's out there, develop your own style and love what you do. It's an extremely competitive industry and I have seen a lot of designers come and go in the 23 years I have been designing."

Leanne takes her own advice, trying not to be too influenced by what she

sees in the industry. "I really strive to do what I am inspired to do and to have my own look," she says. That idea is reflected in her work, having just finished a fabric collection featuring a Rescue Pet Store and her whimsical dogs. She has also just released a book with AQS Camp Nana which features practical projects and fun activities to create an indoor camping adventure with your children or grandchildren. Currently in the works are new designs for market and three other fabric collections – all while renovating their family cabin!

"I don't sit much," Leanne admits, "but am happiest when I am busy. I believe that God has given me so much, and it's a privilege to be able to give back through my designs."



For more information about Leanne's designs and patterns, visit www.thewholecountrycaboodle.com or follow her blog at www.thewholecountrycaboodle.blogspot.com