

She's Crafty... Christmas Crafts for You and Your Children

JAMIE MEZZINA | COLUMNIST

With less than forty days until Christmas, it is time to start thinking about how to get our homes decorated and keep children entertained during this busy time. I would like to share a couple of ideas that I have this year that will hopefully help you accomplish both.

I have found a simple and unique centerpiece idea that can be made quickly and costs pennies. All you need are a few Mason jars, some fake snow or cotton balls, and some bottle brush trees or trees from your existing Christmas village. I was able to find all of the needed items at my local dollar store and even added a few extra decorative touches that I found at the dollar store as well. First you take an odd number -- I recommend 3 or 5 depending on the size of your table-- of Mason jars of varying sizes and heights. Remove their lids. Then using a hot glue gun or craft glue, attach the base of each tree to the inside of the lid, making sure that smaller trees are used for the small jars and the large trees for the large jars, etc. Allow the glue to set based on the glue instructions. Next you glue the fake snow or cotton balls that have been stretched out, to the base of the tree and around the remaining area of the inside of the lid to give the illusion of snow around the bottom of the tree. I was even able to find spray snow at the dollar store to add snow to the trees themselves. When all of the glue is dry and set, place the jars over the trees and attach the lid as you would normally. The mason jars will be upside down on your table. Then, arrange your tree filled jars on the center of your dining room or kitchen table, or a tabletop anywhere in your home. As an extra touch you could also place a strand of

The second decorative idea is also a kid-friendly craft that you can use to decorate your Christmas tree, wreath or even attach to a package to make someone's gift extra special. All you need is scissors, a basic sewing machine or needle and thread to sew by hand, muslin or scrap fabric and a roll of twisted paper wired ribbon and polyester stuffing. Home spun angels ornaments can be made very inexpensively and are a great way to learn to sew or teach your child to sew. You simply draw a basic 6 inch angel design on notebook paper. This looks just like a key hole with a round head and attached triangle shaped body. Once you draw the angel, cut it out to use as your pattern for all of your muslin angels. Muslin is a very inexpensive fabric found at craft stores. It is usually \$1.00 per yard. The amount of muslin you need depends on how many angels you plan on making. Double your muslin fabric and attach your angel pattern with straight pins. Cut out your angel. Remember that two angel shapes makes one completed angel, front and back. Sew around the edge of both pieces of fabric leaving an inch at the bottom open so you can stuff the angel. Turn the angel inside out so seams cannot be seen. Stuff the angel so that she has a full shape like a teddy bear. Use your needle and muslin colored thread to hand stitch the opening closed. Try to use really small stitches so they cannot be seen. Cut a piece of twisted paper ribbon about 6 inches long. Do not untwist ribbon yet. Tie the ribbon around the angel's waist. Make sure the ribbon is snug but not changing the shape of the angel. Tie the ribbon, using no loops, and give it one or two twists to secure it. The wire inside the ribbon will keep it tied. Once the ribbon is secure, untwist and



Puppy Tails

MIALIE T. SZYMANSKI | CONTRIBUTING REPORTER

*As the moon goes to bed, the sun comes up
And here we meet a sleepy pup,
Who was walking through G-ville one bright sunny day,
Then saw The Villager and decided to stay.*

Tap, tap. Tappity-tap-tap. Doodle Dog opened one eye to look out from his warm bed. Nothing else but his floppy ear moved as he was tucked in quite cozily. The smooth window where the sun normally shone through was covered with tiny little droplets of water, round on one side and flat on the other where they stuck to the glass. The storm had been raining down on the little town - and the little puppy - for days. The drops on the window were quickly turning into larger blobs. Doodle Dog knew it would be another afternoon inside. He wasn't going out in that downpour and all that wind!

As a thunderclap sounded above the office roof, Doodle Dog snuggled even deeper into his blankets and tried not to think of all the things he didn't like about the weather. To keep his mind off the things he didn't like, Doodle Dog decided instead to think of all the things he DID like. Since winter is right around the corner, Doodle Dog knew that the wet rainstorm became a little bit colder, it would turn into snow. He likes snow! Even more than that, he likes everything that snow means: making snowballs, snow angels and snow dogs outside and non-melty snowmen to deliver to friends all around town, or evenings curled up inside in his favorite corner surrounded by his favorite stories, the leaves and leaves of paper in the books, each with a new tale to tell.

Now that the office was all nice and neat and organized, the rug, desk, bookcases, and cups of those pesky pens all in their places, Doodle Dog thought of how grateful he was that he could spend his time inside relaxing with his dust bunny friends rather than hauling all those heavy books around. That was a lot of work! But, looking at the pretty clean space surrounding him, Doodle Dog knew all that hard work was worth it. Now he knew exactly where every book was, including his very favorite, extra special books like the one with the very important dog on the cover that the author at the bookstore had signed just for him. The floppy-eared puppy smiled as he thought of the first page just inside the cover of the book where the very important dog had placed a paw print too. Doodle Dog appreciated all the important work that dog does and he appreciated even more that he'd had the opportunity to meet the very important dog!

The rain continued to pound like drumbeats on the other side of the office walls and overhead, so Doodle Dog thought even harder about all the things he appreciated. He started to think of all his friends that he gets to see every day, the dogs and cats and other creatures that lived in town. But then Doodle Dog remembered all the dogs and cats that were out in the weather, that rain and wind that would soon be snow and slush. Digging his nose down farther, Doodle Dog thought about how

thankful he is to have this warm bed with its cozy blankets surrounded by all those books and the basket of chewy toys at the base of the bookcase. He hoped all those dogs and cats outside in the weather could find a warm, cozy place to sleep that night that was just as warm and cozy as his corner. The little floppy-eared puppy hoped that spring would come again soon because there were more warm and cozy days outside during springtime than there were any other time of the year.

Doodle Dog imagined the thundering rainstorm on his roof was actually a gentle spring shower turning everything green and waking up all the creatures from their hibernation. Doodle Dog thought of all the green creatures he'd found in spring and wondered if next spring he would find just as many blue creatures and yellow creatures and purple creatures too. Or even better, multi-colored creatures! The little floppy-eared puppy thought of the beautiful butterfly he'd befriended this year and all of the colors on its wings, as if it'd flown through the base of a rainbow and taken a little piece of the brilliant hues with it. Just then a brilliantly-hued yellow streak flashed against the windowpane, making Doodle Dog jump just a little bit in his cozy bed. Thinking of all those sparkling colors way up high in the sky made Doodle Dog think of the colorful hot air balloon he'd had the chance to ride in, way up high in the sky. Right now he was feeling a little bit afraid, but as he thought about being grateful for how brave he had been when he flew over the town in a hot air balloon, Doodle Dog decided he could be brave during the storm too. He hadn't been knighted as Sir Doodle Dog for nothing, after all!

As he thought of sailing through the clouds and drifting over the town, Doodle Dog drifted into a dozy dream, thinking about his favorite meadow and the new meadow he'd found. And there would be even more meadows to explore in the coming spring! He could hear the nymphs and fireflies and fairies singing in the meadow and then he remembered he had been singing -- er, barking -- too! It had been a very creative year for Doodle Dog and he was grateful for his hidden talents, making the paw print painting in the park and being among those honored for his contributions to the art world. Doodle Dog even remembered attempting to be a "sculpture". Maybe he could learn how to be a popcorn-ball-dog or a cinnamon-bun-dog instead of just a pretzel-dog! As he dreamed like the birds and bunnies and squirrels and flower buds that were hibernating for winter, Doodle Dog was grateful for finding the perfect little pumpkin that stood guard on the table by his bookcase; it made him feel proud! He was also proud of the people in the park that had learned how to work together. He knew that was one of the things that made his little town so great, and he was grateful for that too. And the thing that he liked most of all was that he would have the chance to get up tomorrow looking for a new adventure, and have a chance to see where a much gentler breeze -- and his old leafy friend -- would lead him!



Notes from the vineyard