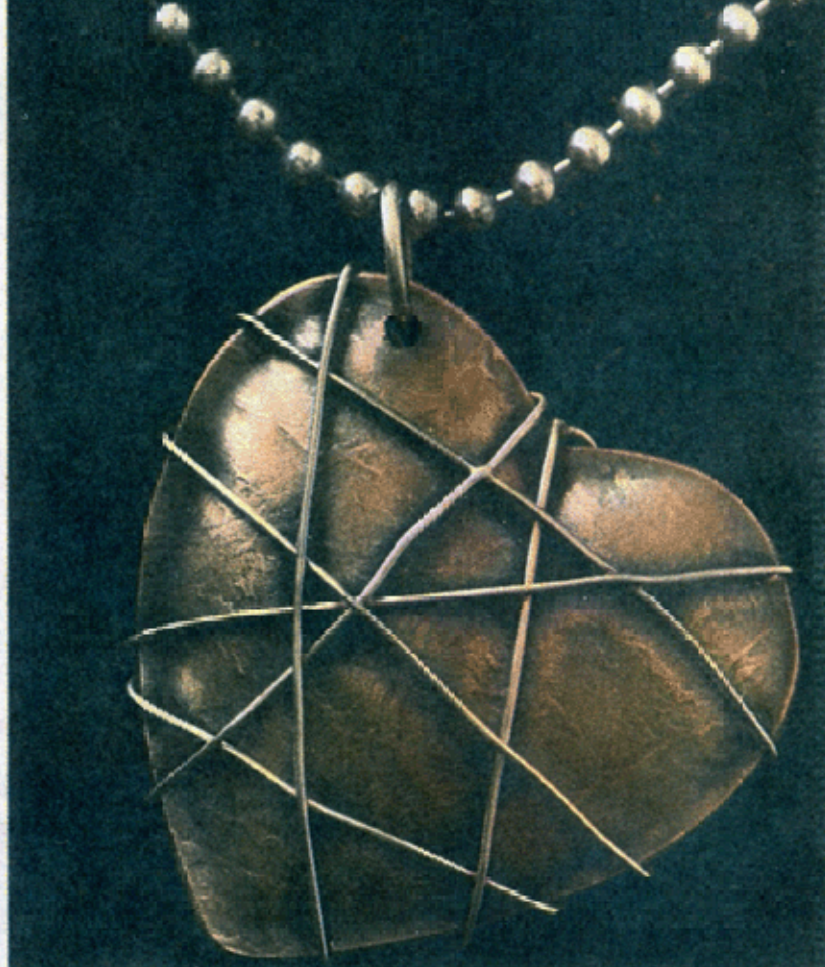




A necklace from Michele Grady's "rose collection" (above) is made of sterling silver wire and freshwater pearls. A copper heart (right) is bound with sterling silver wire.



# Her heart *is in* her work

By Gretchen Barrett-Henaty  
BCT staff writer

gbarrett@phillyburbs.com

Local jewelry artist and designer Michele Grady made her first piece of "real" jewelry at 18 and hasn't stopped since.

The Evesham mother of two and Holy Cross High School graduate recently introduced her latest line of jewelry, which features copper hearts embellished with silver wire, at her first national wholesale show, the Buyers Market of American Craft in February.

Held twice a year at the Philadelphia Convention Center, the market showcases the work of artists who work in various mediums and draws representatives from galleries and shops from all over the country.

Grady's work is available at numerous shops and galleries nationwide, but exhibiting at the market represented a turning point for her and her business, with the goal of building it up and gaining more national exposure.

"I've played with jewelry-making for about 20 years, but I've been doing it professionally for about seven," said Grady, who although she is mostly self-taught, became forever linked with jewelry making after taking a class with her sister at Moore College of Art in Philadelphia. She took an art course while her sister took the jewelry-making class.

"My sister made a ring with a little spinner on it, and I just loved it," she said. "After that, I got a scholarship to take a jewelry class, and I made four pieces. Then I took a continuing education course with a college instructor, and I was hooked."

Grady, who sells her custom pieces online at MicheleGrady.com, as well as wholesale, retail and at various wearable arts and craft shows and events in the area, also teaches jewelry making, offering workshops and classes for adults and children, using beads, precious metal clay and wire working, at art centers and galleries, such as Creative Genius Gallery and Art Studio in Medford, the Markeim Art Center in Haddonfield, and at her own studio.



BCT staff photos/DENNIS MC DONALD

The jewelry artist uses a propane torch and solder to hold together a copper heart.

Her new line melds copper and silver, forming the metals into pendants and earrings featuring puffed copper hearts surrounded with silver wire.

Each piece is fabricated by hand in her Evesham studio. Using what some might consider unconventional tools, an automotive press to form the copper into shape and an acetylene torch to weld pieces, Grady said most of her work and style have developed by trial and error. She often uses other materials, such as aluminum and window screening, to add texture or pattern to the metals.

Just one wire-wrapped heart takes about 30 minutes to make, she said.

"I don't draw (the piece) out until I play with it. Things come from different ideas and places. I like to make each one different. I wouldn't want to make the same thing over and over."

Her favorites are bold rings and pendants. "I love making rings. I like big rings and necklaces. I feel there's no point in making jewelry you can't see," Grady said. "If you are going to spend the time to make it, you should be making statement jewelry."

Prices for her jewelry range from about \$24 for a pair of earrings to about \$600 for a large silver necklace with copper accents.

"I just started incorporating copper with brass," she said. She's always trying something new. For example, brass, she said, because "the price of silver has gone up so much."



Grady (above), who works in her Evesham studio, sells her pieces on the Internet, in galleries and at shows. From the pearl collection comes earrings made from freshwater pearls (left).



This sterling silver heart with copper underlay is one of the signature pieces of Grady's new line.