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MARY BETH ALMOND C &amp; G Staff Writer

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DETROIT - Those who head to Comerica Park on Aug. 10 can expect to see Tigers fans trading their typical hot dogs, peanuts and beer for something a bit unconventional - a pair of knitting needles.

"Stitch N' Pitch," a national push by Major League Baseball and The National NeedleArts Association to recruit new fans, began four years ago with the Seattle Mariners.

"Some women who worked in the front office of the Seattle Mariners were brainstorming about what other groups they could get to come out to the baseball park, and a couple of them suggested inviting knitters. ... They were floored when over 1,000 people came out to the game that day," TNNA publicist Libby Gluck said.

The following year, the event was adopted by The National NeedleArts Association - the trade organization for knit, crochet, cross-stitch, needlepoint and embroidery - which launched it by calling up every Major League Baseball team and asking if they wanted to host a Stitch N' Pitch event. Gluck said TNNA was able to get 15 teams to host an event that year, all of which couldn't believe how many people the program brought into the stadium.

"We were actually floored that Major League Baseball embraced the whole concept because, typically, Major League Baseball is very male and testosterone-oriented. We were thinking that they might laugh at us, and a couple of them did, but it's funny because now we are up to 26 games in the major leagues, we expanded the program this year to the minor leagues with 23 games, and we are also doing an event in Japan," she said.

In less than three years, Stitch N' Pitch is a recognized program across the country, if not all around the world, Gluck said. It is now hosted by 26 of the 30 Major League Baseball franchises in parks across the country.

The Detroit Tigers first embraced the concept in September of last year. They will hold their second annual Stitch N' Pitch at Comerica Park Aug. 10 at 1 p.m. with special sections reserved for Stitch N' Pitch attendees.

Tickets, which include a bag of freebies from vendors and coupons from all of the stores involved, are available for \$20 each at The Knitting Room in Birmingham, Have You Any Wool in Berkley, My Craft Room in Troy, Heritage Spinning and Weaving in Lake Orion, Crafty Lady Trio in Macomb, and City Knits in Mount Clemens and Detroit.

Joyce Rapezzi, owner of My Craft Room in Troy, said there will be games and free instruction before the game begins for those who arrive early.

"It's a great event. We participated in the same event last year and thought it was a good way to encourage people to learn to knit and practice all the needle arts," Rapezzi said. "Everyone who bought tickets will generally bring their knitting, crochet or needlework to the game and do that while they watch the Tigers."

Tickets are in high demand, Rapezzi said, and as of press time, Crafty Lady Trio in Macomb was the only location with tickets left available to purchase.

Margaret Sheckell, one of four owners of The Knitting Room in Birmingham, said a lot of people sit at baseball games wishing they would feel comfortable knitting. This is a chance from them to do so, where they will fit right in, she said.

Sheckell said those interested in attending should act fast, because the 80 tickets supplied to The Knitting Room already sold out.

"It came as a little bit of a surprise to us, to tell you the truth," she said.

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This is a chance from them to do so and fit right in, she said.

Rapezzi said the tickets were in pretty high demand this year because the Tigers didn't have as many tickets to give out.

"They didn't take too long to sell out," she said.

This year, Stitch N' Pitch will raise awareness for the Needle Arts Mentoring Program, a group that teaches the needle arts to schoolchildren.

Anyone with needle art experience can start a program, and volunteers are given free startup supplies and teaching materials for their classes. As of February 2008, more than 160 programs can be found throughout 30 states with volunteers touching the lives of more than 4,000 children. Proceeds from each Stitch N' Pitch ticket sold will go to the program.

For more information, visit [www.stitchnpitch.com](http://www.stitchnpitch.com).

Staff Writer Jennifer McDonald contributed to this report.

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Caption: Friends enjoy the Detroit Stitch N' Pitch last year at Comerica Park.

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