

History of the Comforters

Isaiah 40: 1 “Comfort, O comfort my people.”

Since the 1970's St. Paul's women have been gathering to make quilts for shut-ins and patients in hospitals and nursing homes. Marilyn Emerson's and Joyce Chace's mothers, Mildred Greenawalt and Clara Seibert, were founding members of the Quilters. When Clara could no longer head up the group, Bernice Wolf took over and led them for over 20 years. In 1994, after reading about a woman's campaign called “Warm Up America,” Dorothy Menth recruited other women to join her in making lap robes. In 1998 they also began making booties. This group joined the Quilters and together they took the name “Comforters.” Now, every first Wednesday (except for July and August) these devoted women gather to quilt, knit, crochet, make yarn balls, visit, laugh and share. As Dorothy says, “We solve a lot of problems in those two hours!”

Today, the quilts are sent to Haven House, a shelter for battered women and children, Children's Hospital, and soon baby quilts will be sent to Harvest House. Linda Schunak coordinates the Quilters and reports that they make 15-16 twin sized quilts and 12 small to medium quilts a year. Lap robes and booties are sent to Erie County Home, Beechwood, Deaconess, and Niagara Lutheran nursing homes, Greenfield, St. Elizabeth, and Cornerstone Manor.

Marilyn Emerson is overseeing the Prayer Shawl ministry. Jean Brundage oversees the shawls and blankets that are presented at every Baptism and Confirmation.

Even women who do not attend the regular sessions help out. Sara Gallagher's mother, Martha Dasselaar, makes booties and newborn baby caps. Some take “homework” with them to turn tangled bunches of yarn into neat balls while they watch TV. Though they have a small budget line, the women generally just buy what they need and add that to their contribution tally.

They end each session with a bag lunch and a dessert one of them brings to share. They are always happy to have new “flying fingers” and even invite you to just join them for lunch if you'd like. Other ways to help would be by donating good-sized pieces of fabric (call Linda Schunak, 689-3781), by giving yarn (call Dorothy Menth, 632-0691), or by making a monetary donation.

Current members of the Comforters are: Dolores Shearer, Bertha Efstation, Dorothy Wolff, Marilyn Speich, Joan Maefs, Betty Aprile, Jean Brundage, Sara Gallagher, Dorothy Menth, Linda Schunak, Joyce Chace, Marilyn Emerson, and Elaine Masman.

We miss the quilters and comforters that served this ministry in their lifetime. Ruth Rohl would used to bring in finished booties every Sunday. Norma Gibson, Glen's mother, used to make hundreds of squares for the lap robes. We also remember Bernice Wolf and Sally Baus.