

Hopkins Hill kids helping out

Blanket-making program at Coventry elementary school teaches students lessons

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COVENTRY — For 30 students at Coventry's Hopkins Hill Elementary, giving a little comfort and security to a child in what would otherwise be a scary experience was nothing but a few snips, ties and stitches.

The fourth and fifth grade classes led the school-wide project to make over

100 blankets for Project Linus, a national organization that brings "security, warmth and comfort" through handmade blankets to children in hospitals or shelters. Hopkins Hill began participating eight years ago and has continued ever since.

"They talk about the comfort of blankets," said Teacher Cathy Burdick of Project Linus.

Burdick stated that she believes the

students at Hopkins Hill understand and benefit as they participate in the project.

"And a lot of children, after they learn how to do this, start making them for friends so it kind of spreads the word."

"The [students] who come the first day come for every session—they don't want to miss it," she added. "I really think it's important for them."

The project was divvied up into six

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Lauren Knight-Daily Times

Project Linus teacher Cathy Burdick (back row, far left) and the 4th- and 5th-graders from Hopkins Hill Elementary who participated in the blanket-making project at the school.

Blankets a chance to give some back

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one-hour sessions. The fourth and fifth graders began their blankets by snipping strips into the edges of a fleece cutout, creating a fringe, and then passing two blankets to each classroom for tying. Once completed, they handed them over to Martha Sholes, the Rhode Island coordinator for Project Linus, to stitch a label into each blanket.

As the students created the blankets, Burdick explained that she and Mary Tonet, a first grade teacher, shared stories, read newspaper articles and discussed how each blanket would help a child in need.

"We talked about [where] the blankets go," she said. "Some of the children in past years even received blankets when they were in the hospital so they knew first hand... I have a granddaughter who had been in the hospital for three surgeries and she had received

some blankets so it was kind of nice to share that with them."

Before they began work, Brianna LeClair, 9, explained that she already knew all about Project Linus. When her cousin was in the hospital for surgery, she received a blanket and, knowing how Brianna and her grandmother had made blankets in the past, asked her if she made it.

"I said, 'no, it was from the school,'" remembered Brianna. Her cousin loved it and told her, "They must have put so much time into it."

Two of the students remembered personally receiving a blanket during their stay at a hospital. Julie Laranjo, 10, recalled how she had been playing on a boat, tripped, and sprained her foot.

"I couldn't walk so they took X-rays, and when I was in the room, I got a blanket," she said.

Zoe Fontaine, 9, also received one last year after she broke her arm.

"I was really excited because I knew people had made them," she said. However, unlike many others, Zoe did not take her blanket home.

"They took it because I asked if they could keep it for other kids. I wanted other kids to enjoy it too," she said.

Now, Zoe and her classmates were able to enjoy the other side of Project Linus: the process of constructing the blankets.

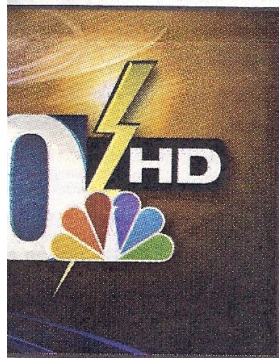
"It's really fun making the blankets," said Arianna Brock, 9. "It's good because the children probably need one when they are in the hospital."

Macie Botello, 11, agreed and added, "If they got their blankets, they would keep them warm at night."

According to Mackenzie Perry, 10, the fourth and fifth graders also wrote and illustrated cards for the children who would receive blankets. When delivered, she hopes that the letters will bring a little joy into their lives.

"I wanted to bring cheerful words to them," she said.

When Hopkins Hill first began, they made 100 blankets, each year adding another. This year, they created 107 blankets. According to Burdick, the blankets will be given to children in local hospitals, homeless shelters and the Elizabeth Buffum Chace House.



Princeton to Chatham	Chatham to Watch Hill
Sun./Brzy.	Sun./Brzy.
V 15-25	W 15-25
3-6	3-6
5	5

Area Forecast

weekend. Skies will generally only be in the 30's, that, a warm-up is on the way for 50's to near 60 with the weather cools down

