

# Kids help provide blanket comfort

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COVENTRY — It is warm outside now, but before you know it the hundreds of blankets that students at Hopkins Hill School made this year will come in handy.

Each year a group of students at the school volunteer to come to school once a week an hour before school starts to help Cathy Burdick, a special educator at the school, with the Blankets for Buddies program.

The program is part of the national Project Linus program, which provides handmade blankets to children who are staying in local hospitals for care of any kind. The Rhode Island chapter also provides blankets to children up to the age of 18 staying in various women's shelters across the state.

Burdick created the club at the school six years ago with just a handful of students. Since that time more and more students have climbed on



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**This group of students from Hopkins Hill School helped make 106 blankets for the Project Linus Program this year through the Blankets for Buddies program.**

board as have a few parent helpers and other teachers at the school.

The first year of the club, Burdick

established a goal to make 100 blankets for the program. Each year since then she encouraged the students to

make one additional blanket, so this year, the students are up to 106 blankets.

The blankets are made of fleece and are created using a tie method. Two pieces of fleece are cut to about a yard and then paired side-by-side. Then, designated cutters are charged with the task of making three-inch cuts, similar to fringe, in one inch sections all the way around the fleece. Then, the top and bottom cut pieces are tied together using a double knot.

The majority of the work is completed by the members of the club, but in the final weeks of the program, when the students are trying to meet their deadline — which was last Saturday, National Linus Blanket Day — the unfinished blankets are dispersed among the entire student population. A single blanket is sent to each classroom in the school so that all of the students can help tie a blanket together.

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# Students build 106 blankets

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Once all of the blankets are finished, Burdick said she and her husband bag them up and cart them off to a state collection site. This year, she said, they delivered them last Saturday to Blaine Sewing shop in Cranston.

The state coordinator of Project Linus, Martha Sholes, picks up the blankets at the state collection sites and sews a Project Linus label of each and every blanket before bringing the blankets to children in need.

This year, Burdick said, the club averaged about 15 kids per session, but had as many as 30

on certain days. She said each year student participation and interest grows. The program is typically geared toward fourth and fifth grade students and this year, she said, there was an equal representation of both grades in the club.

Mary Lyn said she joined the club because she wanted to "help kids that are in the hospital." While others, like Courtney James, a fourth grader in the club, said she comes because she just enjoys the blanket making technique — so much, in fact, that she has made several blankets on her own as gifts for friends and family members.

Kacy Perry, a fourth grader at the school, said the technique "is not hard," but it is time consuming.

"We have to work hard every week to try and achieve our goal," Perry said. "But we did it this year."

To thank the students in the club for all of their hard work, Burdick purchased flip flops for all of the members in the club out of her own pocket. Then the club members used left over scraps from the fleece fabric to tie fringe onto their flip flops. All of the club members wore their flip flops on the last day of the club to celebrate the club's success.