

# Kids warm to the idea of building blankets

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COVENTRY — There is a dozen or so students from Hopkins Hill Elementary School that are in their classroom long before school starts on Thursday mornings.

They wake up extra early and come in to the school to help one of the teachers at the school, Cathy Burdick, make blankets for the Linus Project. They call themselves "Blankets For Buddies."

The Blankets for Buddies Program is open to fourth and fifth grade students at Hopkins Hill School and is coordinated by Burdick. She began the Blankets for Buddies Program at Hopkins Hill School five years ago with just a handful of student volunteers, but today, there are 18 stu-

dents that belong to the group.

Every Thursday morning beginning at 8 a.m., the kids join their teacher and a parent volunteer to work on the blankets in Burdick's classroom. The blankets, which are made of fleece yardage, are first cut to size. Then two pieces of fabric are paired together and the edges are cut into 3 inch strips similar to fringe. The top and bottom strips are tied together by members of the club.

Burdick said that the group likes to invite the rest of the school's student population that isn't a part of the club to help out with the blankets. To do that, she said, the students leave some of the cut ends untied and then send the blankets out to classrooms within the building and invite the students in those classrooms to complete the tying of the blanket.

"It is a nice way to get the entire school in-

involved," Burdick said. "And almost every single classroom in the school has had the opportunity to do a blanket. Even the little ones and I know it's helpful for them because they are working on tying anyway so it becomes a part of their lesson."

In the first year of the program, Burdick said she set a goal for the school to complete 100 blankets, which they achieved. Each subsequent year thereafter, the goal was to increase by one blanket. This year the students have made 104 blankets.

Burdick said she dropped those blankets off to Martha Sholes, the Rhode Island coordinator of Project Linus, earlier this month so that she could stitch Project Linus tags on each of the blankets prior to distribution.

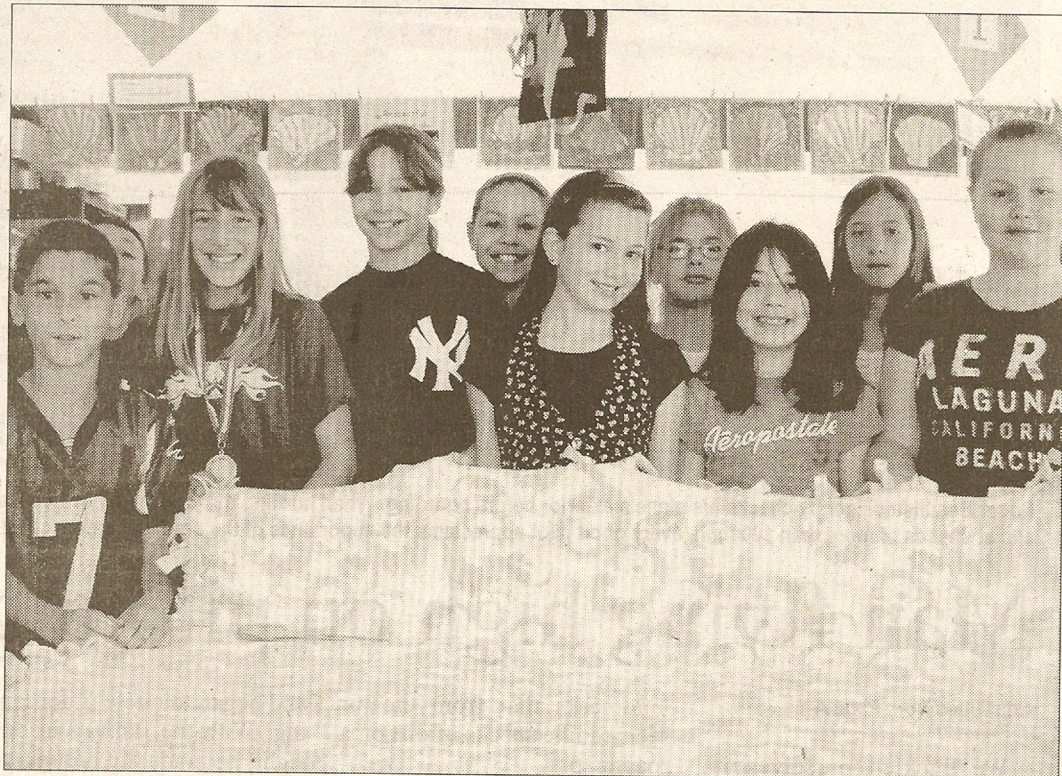
The Rhode Island Chapter of Project Linus

provides the handmade blankets to patients at Hasbro Children's Hospital as well as to children in homeless and women's shelters.

"The blankets are for any child with compromised health or who is in a displaced home all the way up until the age of 18," Burdick said. "That is why we try to get a variety of prints so that there is something for everyone. We do baby blankets and some adult type prints too."

Burdick said she tries to find "the most cost effective way" to buy the over 200 yards of fleece that she will need to complete all of the blankets. She said some of the funding comes in the form of donations, some is raised through fundraisers and sometimes fabric itself is donated to the school by students' parents.

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Jessica Selby • Daily Times

Hopkins Hill Elementary School students have volunteered their time once a week before school starts in the morning to help make blankets that will be distributed to patients at Hasbro Childrens' Hospital through Project Linus.

# Kids piece together comfort

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Last year, she said, the school held a fundraiser to support the program that raised enough money to purchase fabric for two years. Burdick said it is also helpful that JoAnne's Fabric, the store that she purchases the fabric from, sells her the material at a discounted rate.

According to information provided by the school, Hopkins Hill School produces the largest amount of fleece blankets in the state for the children at Hasbro Hospital through their program.

To thank the students for all of their hard work and commitment to the cause, Burdick organ-

izes a culminating activity for the members of the club, which they was held this past week during their final meeting.

Burdick purchases flip flops for each member of the club and the students tie the leftover fleece that they cut into strips around the strap area of the flip flops. The students are then able to take the flip flops home to wear over the summer as a reminder of all of their hard work.

Burdick also gets a souvenir from the club. Each year the students add to a club quilt. It has five large fleece squares, each one depicting the theme for that year. The club members all sign it and Burdick displays it as a keepsake in her classroom.