

Students make and donate blankets for Project Linus



Jessica Selby-Daily Times

Fourth and fifth grade students at the Hopkins Hill Elementary School volunteered to make blankets for National Blanket Day and the Linus Project. They made 106 blankets for donation to either hospitals or homeless shelters.

Project Linus benefits children in hospitals, homeless shelters

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COVENTRY — Today, on National Blanket Day, Project Linus will be receiving a large donation from the students at Hopkins Hill Elementary School.

Each year a select group of youngsters from the fourth and fifth grade volunteer to come into school an hour before school starts to be a part of the Project Linus Blanket for Buddies program.

Cathy Burdick, a teacher at Hopkins Hill Elementary School, has been coordinating the program at the school for the past seven years. Each year she guides the student volunteers through the blanket making process.

They use various styles and colors of fleece to make individual sized children's blankets. The blankets, when completed, are donated to Project Linus, which donates the blankets to children receiving care in local hospitals or living in local homeless shelters.

The students at Hopkins Hill Elementary School use what is called a tie

technique to make their blankets for the Project Linus program. How the technique works, Burdick said, is that the students have to cut approximately one inch slits every two inches or so all along the blankets edge. Then the students tie each of those slits together to make knots giving the blanket a fringed edge.

Traditionally, Burdick said, the students had followed a double layer blanket technique, but changed it this year based on a request from the Project Linus organization coordinators.

"They told us that they loved the blankets that we made for them, but that they were noticing that the blankets were too warm for the kids who were really sick and going through chemo, so we decided to change our design to a single layer blanket instead," Burdick said.

This year the students managed to make 106 single layer blankets. They have some specific for girls, some for boys, and some that could be used for either.

In the past, Burdick said, she has had to organize fund raisers to purchase the fabric used to make the blankets, but hasn't actually had to for the past two years. The fabric that the students used this year and last, Burdick said, was donated to them by an anonymous donor through the Project

Linus Organization.

The students started making the blankets using that fabric on Thursday mornings in January and continued to meet each Thursday since then, till just last week. Each week the students would gather at 8 a.m. in Burdick's classroom. They transformed her classroom into a major workspace using the tables, the floor and the chairs as devices with which to mount, leverage and manage the large pieces of fabric.

Burdick said that each session the students prepared an average of about 20 blankets; some weeks more, some weeks a little less.

The students in the Blankets for Buddies program basically did all of the preparations; cutting and initial tying, but then left some tying so that other students could participate. Burdick said that every year she likes to invite the entire school to participate so asks that the students in the program not fully complete the blankets so that others can help.

She said that once the initial stages of the blanket making process are complete, the students fold up the blankets and then bring them to the front of the school and place them on a table for other teachers to take at their leisure. Each of those teachers gets the opportunity

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Blankets will provide comfort and warmth for children

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to complete a blanket with the students in their classroom as an in class project.

This year, Burdick said that every single teacher in the school participated with their students. Even the kindergarten students worked on the blankets with their fifth grade buddy helpers.

"We could finish the blankets on our own, but we like for the entire school to be a part of the project," Burdick said. "And everyone really seems to enjoy it."

Burdick said that she will be bringing the completed blankets this Saturday to the official collection site for the local Project Linus donations. She and the kids in the program both said that they were very surprised, as well as happy, that they were able to meet their goal of making one more blanket this year that they did last, bringing their official total up to 106 blankets.

Those blankets have all been on display this week in the front foyer of the school building.