

Knitting for a cause

Making shawls allows ministry to be a blessing to others



Prayer Shawl Ministry members (from left) Brook Brown of Madison and Sara Waldbauer of Clinton concentrate on their knitting during the ministry's Sunday afternoon work session at Emeritus at Trace Pointe in Clinton. The group meets twice a month on Sunday afternoons to knit comforting shawls for people going through a hard time in life. (Ruth Ingram | The Clinton News)

The men and women of the Prayer Shawl Ministry of the Episcopal Church of the Creator are on a mission to add a little warmth to Clinton and surrounding communities. The ministry grew out of a bi-monthly meeting of parishioners who came together for fellowship and a night of knitting shawls to give to those going through a tough time.

In 2008, the group began praying over the shawls they were knitting and those that would receive them, and the prayer shawl ministry was born. "The shawls are something tangible, warm, and soft that lets people know they're loved and cared for," said Shawl Ministry member Pat Martz, who's been knitting since high school. "It's comforting to people that are terminally ill or babies at their

christenings." That first year, five people received a shawl, and in 2009 that number grew to 25. The group now meets at Emeritus at Trace Point on Northside Drive, where many residents have delved into the activity, contributing their time and talents by knitting and crocheting. Martz was one of the founding members.

"We usually have ten people in our group, ranging from 12 years old to 80 plus," she said. "It really gives us all a sense of belonging." The shawls hand-knitted by the members of the ministry are also distributed to those experiencing happy times, Martz said. Martz' daughter, Brook Brown, was given a prayer shawl when she was put on bed rest during the last trimester of her pregnancy last year. When Noah was born, Brown used the shawl to swaddle him, and when he had to have an unexpected skull surgery two months later, it was by his side throughout the ordeal. During Noah's time in intensive care, Brown noticed a teenage boy and his mother. "When we wheeled Noah out of the intensive care unit, all the nurses were clapping," said Brown. "After we got in a room, I kept thinking about this mom and her son. I just felt led to take her our prayer shawl." So she did just that, praying over the family the entire time.

"It's such a great way to reach out to people," Brown said. "At that point, I knew Noah was going to be fine, and I know that prayer got us through. I wanted to pass that along, so to speak. The shawl gives a small comfort in a critical time."

Another founder of the group, Jim Sharp, has time after time reached out to people through the ministry. "There was a lady in my neighborhood whose daughter had just passed away due to cystic fibrosis," he said. "I didn't know her, but I took her the shawl. As I was leaving, she was running down the driveway calling my name. "She said to me, 'What can I do for you?' I told her she can pray for me. So, it came full circle." "The prayer shawl ministry is 100 times more rewarding to me than it is to those people that we give the shawls to," Sharp said. "We are able to touch complete strangers in a very personal and spiritual way and give them something that shows them that they have been prayed for."

Martz said that making a prayer shawl for someone else is not a selfish act, but instead can help to transform the person making it. It's a gift given in the hope that the recipient will see more clearly that there is hope for tomorrow, that no one is ever completely alone, and that someone out there cares enough to reach out, she said. "We want anyone and everyone to know that they are welcome to join us," said Martz.

For more information on the prayer shawl ministry of the Church of the Creator, visit www.creatorclinton.com or call (601) 924-2261.