



QUILTS

American Canyon woman launches quilting project for children



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American Canyon resident Patricia Walling vividly remembers facing financial challenges as a single mother.

Now, as a grandmother and great-grandma, she wants to help the children of others who may be in the same position she was.

"I'm seeing my grandchildren and great-grandchildren, thinking, 'What if these kids needed something. Who's out there to help them?'" she

said.

Walling decided to use her talent in quilting to help the children in American Canyon.

She started Quilts 4 Kids, which provides quilts to public service agencies, such as the American Canyon Police Department and the American Canyon Family Resource Center. Those agencies distribute the quilts to children in crisis or need.

Walling has taught others how to quilt, who have then helped her make the quilt tops. She finishes them into a full quilt by adding batting and a back. Earlier this month, she dropped off 20 quilts she and others made at the family resource center.

The resource center provides job-finding resources and food and help with other basic needs, said Sherry Tennyson, director of the resource center. But it is nice to be able to provide something that is comforting as well, she said.

"Sometimes it's the only thing that they might have that they can call theirs," she said. It isn't often that children receive something handmade anymore, she noted.

The quilts feature bright colors, cartoon characters or appealing patterns. Children brighten at the soft blankets they can take home with them, Tennyson said.

The program's slogan is, "A quilt is a hug that lasts all night," Walling said.

Walling began quilting in 2003 when she was working at Napa Valley Wine Train. She saw a woman quilting while waiting for the train.

The woman told her about a website that is a resource for quilting. She signed up and made her first quilt.

“Then I became a quilt-a-holic,” she said. “The first quilt and that was it; I couldn't stop.”

About a year ago, Walling heard about a group that makes quilts for children in large cities. She decided that children in a small city such as American Canyon would benefit from them as well.

She started making quilts for children in trauma and donated them to the police department.

Walling told her friends at her mobile home park what she planned to do, and several volunteered to help if she would teach them to quilt.

Renee Pryor, administrative clerk for American Canyon Police and Fire departments, was there when Walling delivered the first quilts.

Officials were grateful to accept them for children whose home may have burned down or are in some other kind of crisis, she said.

Public safety officials told Walling about the family resource center's needs, Walling said. She donated 20 more to the center on Sept. 3, she said.

“I'm just having more fun with it, and I love it,” Walling said.

But she needs help.

Walling is hoping to recruit people to help sew quilt tops. She will teach volunteers how to sew the pieces of fabric into basic patters. She will finish off the quilts for them.

Walling is also looking for donations of fabric, batting or the funds to purchase more materials.

“There are other police departments. There are other family resource centers. There are so many kids, and now that I've gotten involved with it I want to keep going,” she said.

She is offering quilt-making classes at the Olympia Mobilodge of Napa on the second Saturday of the each month for people wanting to help. She also will give a class at the American Canyon Senior Center on the third Friday of the month starting Oct. 18. Both classes are from 2-4 p.m.

She tries to keep the quilts she is making for Quilts 4 Kids simple and straight forward so people can catch on easily, she said. “The more we make, the more we can give out.”

Those who want to donate time or money can email: quilts4kids1@gmail.com.