



# Azie's Blanket Coverage

May 2009 Edition

Covering Metro Phoenix, Arizona

## Blanket Delivery Update

Thank you, volunteers! Your generous donations have made it possible for AZ Blankets 4 Kids to distribute **2,592** blankets to various agencies that assist seriously ill and traumatized children during the months of January thru April 2009.

Total deliveries from inception to date :

**50,423!**

## Piecemakers Honor Memory of Devoted Volunteer

The Piecemakers at Sun Valley Park lost a good friend in Norma Cummings on March 30th. Norma and Anne Fetz were instrumental in getting their guild involved with AZ Blankets 4 Kids.

Norma loved to quilt, knit and crochet. She turned 80 last September.



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The photo to the left was taken at her 80th birthday party. Each year the ladies in the guild would strive to do more for our kids. Norma's daughter, Kim Tomczak, has stepped in for her mom over the past two years, sewing kits as well as crocheting afghans and premie hats. She will continue to do so in her mother's honor.

The photos above are from the Sun Valley Piecemakers' Quilt Show in Apache Junction held on March 1st. They made a beautiful display for everyone to enjoy. As the display was taken down and packed for our distribution staff, the number of blankets totaled over 350.

We see members from this sweet group at most of our big bees throughout the year as well as the regular bees held at Las Palmas Grand.

These ladies are unstoppable and will continue their good work in honor of their good friend Norma.

### Contact us:

(480) 283-8746  
info@azblankets4kids.com  
www.azblankets4kids.com

## Volunteer Spotlight: Ellie Gill, One in a Million



You may have seen some e-mails from us lately about this spunky lady. If you didn't know who we were talking about, we'll remedy that here and now. Despite a recent diagnosis of pancreatic cancer, Ellie Gill is one of those people that always seems to be in the right frame of mind.

We first introduced you to Ellie in the Summer '05 edition of our newsletter when she won a gorgeous raffle quilt. She was planning a trip to Australia (which included quilting classes) and mailed in her raffle tickets just before she left. On her return she had a pleasant surprise.

Ellie found AZB4K after retiring as a Social Studies teacher at Dobson High School in May of 2000. In January of 2001, Ellie attended a quilting bee at Cutting Edge Quiltworks (CEQ). From then on she became part of our family.

Although officially retired, Ellie is always teaching any listener about her love of history; learning new ways of doing something different; and she's so happy to be doing something that she loves.



Ellie has been a regular at CEQ with Piece by Peace Quilters for many years. She's made so many quilts for her family, friends, and for charity that it's impossible to count them all.

Ellie is planning a return trip to Australia in July and we wish her the very best with hugs and prayers. We also extend our heartfelt gratitude for all the time and talent she has given us over the years. We look forward to seeing her soon at Cutting Edge.



## Village Quilters at Mesa Spirit RV Resort

The Village Quilters at Mesa Spirit RV Resort are made up of winter visitors from the states and Canada. They meet between November and March each year. They have about 30 members on average with visitors staying anywhere from one to five months through the winter.

They have been making and donating quilts to AZ Blankets 4 Kids since 2001. They've donated over 150 quilts since then with 31 sent this year (2008-2009 season). They also donate blankets to Sunshine Acres Children's Home.

The photo above shows many of those beautiful quilts and their

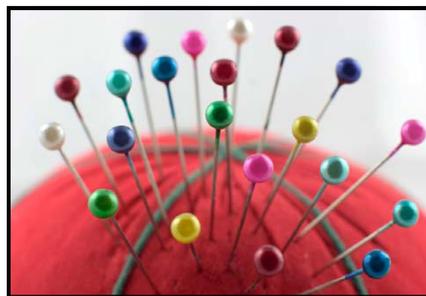
makers. Some of those makers are beginning quilters who take great joy in sewing their quilts for kids and learning new skills in quilting.

Thank you Village Quilters for devoting your talents and limited time here each year to our kids. It means a great deal to us and it can mean the world to a recipient.

## The Breast Cancer 3 Day

If you attended the Sunland Springs Village Bee on April 4th, you already know that AZB4K board member, Kelli Nemece, is doing something crazy.

She's walking in the Breast Cancer 3 Day benefiting Komen for the Cure. The crazy part is that she's walking 60 miles in those 3 days. She walks to honor her mom, Pat (pictured below with Kelli), who was a breast cancer survivor. If you would like to learn more or donate to her fundraising efforts, please go to [www.The3Day.org](http://www.The3Day.org), click "Donate," and search for Kelli Nemece. Or you can call 800.996.3DAY.



## On Pins & Needles

Just a quick request about pins and needles. Before you donate your quilts, please take a moment to thoroughly check the blanket for any pins or needles. It's easy to miss them during construction and we don't want a child to find them.

Sometimes they are sewn into the blanket and not easily detected. Sweep your hands across both sides of the blanket in several directions with a fair amount of pressure. Thank you for helping us avoid a sticky situation.



## Queen Valley Sharing Circle

On March 9<sup>th</sup>, 2009, Karen Johnston, Judy Babcock, and Carole Willsey enjoyed a scenic drive to Queen Valley to spend the day visiting with Darlene Miller and her group of talented women from the Sharing Circle. Carol Graham and equally talented group from Queen Creek's Caring Circle were also there to share the day.

Ten years ago Darlene Miller and Debbie Hart began a project to "create leaders in the community" by providing women the opportunity to share their skills with people in need while getting to know each other.

Through the years the Sharing Circle has made dresses for girls in Haiti, Quillows for youth homes, quilts for Casa, local firemen, Sunshine Acres, Marcus House



and for their annual children's Christmas party; and stuffed animals for the elderly. For the last two years they have been sewing for AZ Blankets 4 kids.

These ladies' strong friendship with each other and commitment to touch the community with their kindness is evident in their welcoming embrace.

Lunch was awesome, quilting tips were appreciated, especially on the proper way to tie quilts, and their finished quilts were exceptional.

The Sharing Circle and The Caring Circle presented us with 51 beautiful premie and children's quilts and an invitation to join them again.



## Hummingbird Quilters from Apache Wells

Welcome Hummingbird Quilters to the family of groups contributing to AZ Blankets 4 Kids.

Although new to us, Hummingbird Quilters have been an organized group for over 20 years and have at least 45 members. They reside in the senior community of Apache Wells in Mesa.

They meet weekly to sew and

socialize and have a monthly business meeting. They also have a monthly project day. Project day is a day without calories and chocolate is appreciated!

Not all of the Hummingbird Quilters sew and quilt. Those members are known as their Quilting Angels. They help by serving as runners, ironing or just filling in wherever a helping hand is needed. We all know how important these types of angels are to our mission and we thank them.

This group contacted AZB4K board member, Sylvia Saffell, around Easter, with the news that they had been making and storing some quilts they wanted to donate to us. When Sylvia met with Hummingbirds Doris Solbrig (chairperson), Elaine Carlson and Joan England, she was pleased to accept a donation of 151 blankets. Sylvia had high praise for the quality of the blankets and assured our new sewing friends that their quilts would be greatly appreciated by their young recipients.

The group raises money by making and raffling quilts. They currently have a raffle for a quilt they'll draw for in November. They may stop in at a Las Palmas Grand sewing day. Give them a warm welcome if you meet them and maybe even buy a raffle ticket.

They are happy to join the AZB4K family and we are more than happy to have them. We hope to share more about them in future newsletters.

# 50,000 Blankets

Thanks to some sleuthing by our Sylvia Saffell, we know that Mary Duennes delivered our 50,000<sup>th</sup> blanket to Phoenix Children's Hospital on March 12<sup>th</sup>. With this incredible milestone in our organization, we wanted to tell you a little bit about how we got here.

In 1999, the Phoenix - SE & West Valley Chapter of Project Linus was co-coordinated by Carrie Fleming, Kammy Keyes and Carol Deloney. These ladies rallied volunteers, coordinated bees and delivered blankets to many of the agencies we still serve today. In September of 2000, Project Linus National Headquarters sent notification to chapter coordinators that their Board of Directors voted to officially close Project Linus.

After this news, the main concern of the local chapter was to continue to fulfill commitments to the many organizations that had come to rely on their efforts to provide comfort to children in need. In their words...

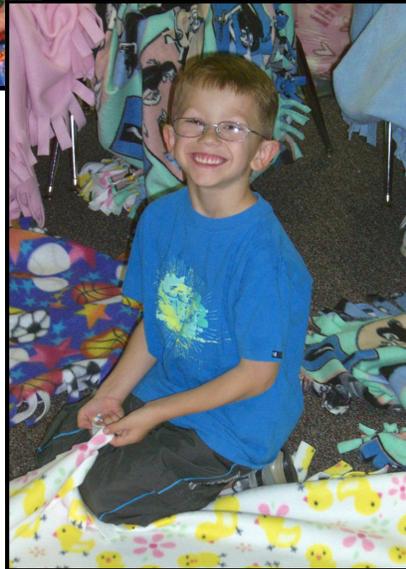
***"The work we do in the name of children is priceless. With or without national affiliation, our group will continue to deliver blankets to needy children. Because of our dedication to the children we service, we feel organizational changes will not deter us from our commitment to these children."***  
And so began AZ Blankets 4 Kids.



Documents and photos show many volunteers who still work with us today, including... Susan Quisenberry, Phyllis Akins, Bunnie Williams, Louise Mansolillo and Vicky Varga. Sewing groups involved from AZB4K inception include Sunrise Village, Sun Lakes and Palmas Del Sol East. The first large blanket bee for AZB4K was held on October 28th, 2000 at the Chandler PD Community Room as "Make A Difference Day!" The first AZB4K quilt raffle was held as part of an Historic District House Tour and had 3 quilts up for raffle. The raffle took place in front of the beautiful historic home of Mary Duennes in December of 2000 (top left photo). Today, Mary keeps very busy delivering blankets to our Phoenix and West Valley agencies.

A few of the agencies at the time of inception included: Foundation for Burns & Trauma, Cystic Fibrosis Foundation,

# 50,000 Blankets



Maggie's Place, Autumn House, Camp Rainbow, Sojourner Center, Save the Family and New Life Center. Quilt shops helping AZB4K get started included Quilter's Delight, Quilter's Emporium, Quilter's Koop and JoAnn's Fabrics.

In December of 2000, the winner of the AZB4K "name the logo" contest was announced. The winning name was "Azie Bear" contributed by our very own current board member, Bunnie Williams. Bunnie won a decorative basket that she still enjoys today in her home.

In August of 2001, we received official notification from the IRS that our application for recognition as a tax exempt organization under section 501(c) (3) had been accepted. This is a great asset to our organization as it allows contributions to be tax deductible.

We currently have over 30 active sewing groups making blankets for our kids and hundreds of individual volunteers. Many of our groups meet weekly or several times a month to sew for us. In addition, we typically host or co-host six large bees each year that are open to the general public.

We currently have ten blanket drop-off locations throughout the Phoenix Metro area (see the back page for details and give them your patronage as thanks). We publish an 8 page newsletter 3 times a year and maintain a website with over 40 free quilt patterns available.

Unfortunately, as our organization grows, so does the need for our blankets. As we celebrate this amazing benchmark



of 50,000 blankets delivered, we know we cannot rest on our laurels. We know there are many more blankets needed to put into the arms of kids in crisis.

Thank you for helping us reach this amazing milestone and keep it in your thoughts as you return to your rotary

cutters, sewing machines, irons, crochet hooks and knitting needles and get back to work on the next 50,000.

## La Hacienda Bee

Click, clack went the sewing machines, the hum of voices in the air, the sounds of volunteers working on quilts for AZ Blankets 4 Kids. What a great way to spend a beautiful Saturday morning on February 21st. The ladies of La Hacienda provided the yummy Oat Bran Flax muffins we always look forward to. Lunch was the usual salad potluck with dishes of all kinds laid out to share. There were so many choices and they were all delicious!

Most volunteers brought sewing machines and got busy assembling tops, adding binding or quilt-



ting. Others helped with hand tying, sewing labels, ironing, cutting and preparing binding.

We were also able to spray outside thanks to the perfect weather. Quilters inside kept sprayers busy throughout the day.

We shared a donation of quilt and craft findings with volunteers in attendance thanks to the estate of Jean Murry.

Another beautiful door prize basket was prepared by Carole Willsey. The lucky winner at this bee was Dorothy Rasmusen of Good Life (see left photo). Dorothy has been a devoted tying expert at our bees for years. Congratulations and thanks Dorothy!

This bee netted an awesome 326 blankets from the 69 busy volunteers in attendance. Thanks to all for a fun and productive bee.

## Sunland Springs Village

A windy April 4<sup>th</sup> was a wonderful day to be inside working on quilts for kids. Sunland Springs Village opened up their doors to 55 dedicated women who filled the room with the busy sound of sewing machines and the clacking of scissors.

Volunteers were putting together kits, making tops or preemies, ironing, tying, attaching labels, trimming, layering, quilting, binding, and packaging for delivery. To help us stay alert and energized, delicious breads, goodies and coffee were available during a morning break. Then we had pizza, salad and soda for lunch.

The door prize was a beautiful basket full of fabrics, sewing aids and a book. The winner was Kay Fisher (right) of Tempe Needle Welders. A special 50/50 raffle was held to help Kelli Nemec raise funds for the Breast Cancer 3 Day Walk. We raised \$174 with half going to Kelli, the other half won by Bev Gracek of Mesa Village. Congratulations Bev!

The afternoon brought a special visit from Brownie Troop 788. Visitors included 6 Brownies, a Jr. Girl Scout, troop leaders, parents and grandparents. The group donated two blankets and \$250 they raised from Girl Scout cookie sales. The girls also collected donations to send hundreds of boxes of Girl Scout cookies to Servicemen and women overseas.

At the end of the day, 253 blankets were collected for our kids. Thanks to all who attended for their great work.



## Weaver's Needle Bee

The wonderful women at Weaver's Needle hosted our March 6<sup>th</sup> Bee.

The busy sound of sewing machines and the rip slash of scissors makes for a happy group turning out children's comfort quilts. We had a wonderful group of ladies working away at all stages

of quilt making... from cutting blocks for kits to sewing on labels and every stage in between.

Lunch was a tasty potluck with contributions from all in attendance.

Our lucky door prize winner for the day was Mary Malacheck of Weaver's Needle who took home a basket overflowing with sewing notions, fabric and crafting goodies of all sorts.

With 48 volunteers in attendance, our distribution folks packed up 152 blankets from this bee. Thanks to Weaver's Needle for being devoted volunteers and a gracious host.



## Karen's Komments

Making a difference – one child at a time.

The mission of AZ Blankets 4 Kids is “to provide handmade quilts and blankets as gifts to ill and traumatized children in the Phoenix metropolitan area.” What a wonderful job our volunteers do in fulfilling that mission. We receive so many notes from parents of the children receiving the blankets; they are so appreciative and comment on how important the blankets are to their kids.

From one parent at Phoenix Indian Medical Center: “Our youngest son has one of your

blankets that he takes everywhere with him. Thank you so much.”

From Victim Services Unit of the City of Mesa Police Department: “The blankets are given to victims when they come to the center and help give them some sense of security during an uncertain time in their life. Your donations help many victims and their families during their time of crisis.”

From Banner Children's Hospital: “Hospitalization can be difficult for children...unfamiliar surroundings...feelings of uncertainty. Your blankets provide positive experiences and memories for hospitalized children.”

From Families Forward, Inc: “I wish you could have seen the faces of the kids when they were given the blankets!!!... because they offer a more soothing comfort to the children.”

Florence Crittenton: “I've seen them (your blankets) on every bed in every cottage, and they give the girl's room such a feeling of home... something of their very own they can wrap up in and treasure.”

A nurse at St. Joseph's Hospital told us about an incident: A 3 year old came back into the hospital very ill and in a conversation with the mother, the nurse asked what was most important to her son. Without hesitation the mother said “his blanket.” The boy died and was buried with that blanket. Perhaps you made that blanket.

Someone bringing a blanket to a child in a hospital relayed this story. The child was very unresponsive, made no eye contact, she wanted the room dark. When given the blanket she did respond. Glancing back at the child, the nurse saw her stroking the blanket... she was touching each square. The blanket made a difference.

One of the volunteer sewers saw a child at Wal-Mart dragging a blanket she recognized as one she had made. That child had received the blanket at a time of distress and trauma and still clung to it daily.

We hear many reports of children in foster care who have very little that really belongs to them. But the blankets are truly theirs. It's one thing they treasure and take with them wherever they go. Even when worn and tattered, they don't want to give them up or have them replaced. The bond is strong.

So never think that what you're sewing is “just a blanket.” These blankets make a big difference in the lives of the children who receive them. I want to thank you all for the work and love you put into each blanket.

“You're not just making a blanket; you're making a difference.”



February 21, 2009

**La Hacienda RV Resort**

Apache Junction

69 - Attendees

326 - Total blankets from this event

March 6, 2009

**Weaver's Needle RV Resort**

Apache Junction

48 - Attendees

152 - Total blankets from this event

April 4, 2009

**Sunland Springs Village**

Mesa

55 - Attendees

253 - Total blankets from this event

## Blanket Drop-off Locations:

### 35th Ave. Sew & Vac

4939 W. Ray Rd., #27  
Chandler (480) 961-7363

### 3 Dudes Quilting

5053 E. Elliot Rd.  
Phoenix (480) 598-8601

### A Quilter's Oasis

9963 E. Baseline Rd., #105  
Mesa (480) 354-4077

### Bernina SW Sewing Center

7415 E. Southern Ave., #108  
Mesa (480) 964-8914

### Cutting Edge Quiltworks

1949 W. Ray Rd., #33  
Chandler (480) 857-3443

### Quilter's Bee

7549 W. Cactus Rd.  
Peoria (623) 334-9359

### Quilter's Ranch

1721 E. Warner Rd.  
Tempe (480) 838-8350

### QuiltZ

13825 N. 32nd St.  
Phoenix (602) 482-4141

### Sun Valley Quilts

9857 W. Bell Rd.  
Sun City (623) 972-2091

### Zoe's Trunk

2986 N. Alma School Rd., #4  
Chandler (480) 857-4833

## Upcoming Events

### Saturday, June 20 from 9 to 3

Las Palmas Grand  
2550 S. Ellsworth Rd, Mesa

### Saturday, October 17 from 9 to 3

Fall Bee at Chandler PD  
250 E. Chicago St., Chandler

### 3rd Thursday of Month from 9 to 3

Las Palmas Grand - Ballroom  
2550 S. Ellsworth Road, Mesa

### 1st Thursday of Month from 10 to 4

Peace by Piece  
35th Ave. Sew & Vac  
4939 W. Ray Rd. Chandler

### 3rd Thursday of Month from 10 to 4

Peace by Piece  
Cutting Edge Quiltworks  
1949 W. Ray Road, Chandler

**Help us thank these shops for their support by giving them your patronage. Let's go shopping!**

**AZ Blankets 4 Kids, Inc.**  
**P. O. Box 11206**  
**Tempe, AZ 85284-0021**