

Quilter leads flag drive for D.C. families

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A flag quilt begun by a Goleta woman for families of victims of the Sept. 11 Washington, D.C., terrorist attack has triggered a nationwide burst of patchwork patriotism, even moving veteran East Coast firefighters to tears.

The Monday after the attacks, Marty Froli, a Santa Barbara City College Adult Education quilting instructor, was driving home when she saw emergency vehicles and a man lying in the street.

Later, on television news, she learned the victim was a young man of Middle Eastern descent who had been beaten.

"I was just furious," she said. "What went through my head was, 'Why do people channel all their energy into something negative?' I wanted to do something positive."

"I sat down at the computer and started drawing a flag," said Mrs. Froli, charter president of the Coastal Quilters Guild. "I had planned to make one quilt for myself."

As she began sewing the flag quilt, her sister Kathleen Cooney, a nurse at Children's Hospital in Washington, D.C., who lives in Greenbelt, Md., telephoned.

"I asked her if they needed any baby quilts for children of the tragedy," Mrs. Froli said. "She told me there were no child survivors."

When her sister asked what she was doing, Mrs. Froli told her about the flag. Her sister replied, "You know, Marty, what would be

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Marty Froli, front, leads a group of flag-making quilters including, clockwise from top, Zetta Hanna, Jean MacMillan, Judith Nybakken, Vickie Mahan, Marty Froli and Diane Eardley. At left, details from two of the quilts.

Quilters pitch in with patriotic gifts for victims' families

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nice is if you could get some of the quilters out there to stitch up some flags and we could distribute them to the families of victims."

Mrs. Froli immediately went to local quilting friends and to the 275-member Coastal Quilters Guild. In just three weeks, area quilters turned out dozens of 16-by-24-inch red, white and blue comforters.

"We have sent 127 so far," said Mrs. Froli. "We are shooting for 300 from our guild."

Moreover, with her pattern going on the guild's Web site and word passed along on quilters' bulletin boards, Mrs. Froli heard from quilters in 18 states and Australia about how to make the quilts and where to send them.

The number of states "grows daily," she said. As a result of the tremendous interest in the quilt project, "It expanded beyond people we originally were going to give them to."

Flags are now destined for firefighters, police and rescue workers. Mrs. Cooney gave the first quilt to the Greenbelt Fire Department early this month. Burly firemen had tears in their eyes, reported Mrs. Cooney, who is coordinating East Coast distribution, including working with Rep. Lois Capps' Washington office. Mrs. Capps, D-Santa Barbara, also received a quilt.

Nearly two dozen brand-new quilts were shown off by Mrs. Froli and fellow guild members Wednesday at a local quilting store. Equally touching was the quilt backing material, which included pictures of firefighters and Americana scenes. Youngsters in Mrs. McNee's first-grade class at Monte Vista School printed their names on the back of one quilt. A somber backing depicted the skyline of New York, including the now-fallen Twin Towers.

"You find backings very diverse," said Judith Nybakken of Goleta. "They speak to each individual. We can't move the bricks. Our caring can be in our hands."

She also makes up kits of red and white stripes and blue fields for other quilters. "It's fun and it's thera-

peutic."

"It's hard being on the West Coast. We wanted to be part of it," said Vickie Mahan of Goleta, displaying a sheaf of flags she made.

"All our feelings can be put on a quilt," said Jean MacMillan, also of Goleta.

To determine her design, Mrs. Froli went back to high school math to calculate the proportion of the flag's blue star field to the red and white stripes. The blue field, she suspected, would be the biggest problem: "I know quilters. I knew they were not going to applique 50 stars. I decided to use blue fabric with stars."

Don't try to find blue material with white stars around town. It's sold out — and word of a new shipment spreads like wildfire.

As the quilts multiplied and the reality of shipping costs set in, Mrs. Froli started to call local shippers to see if they might join the project.

"The first person I called was Chuck Baird at Mailboxes Etc. on Calle Real," she said. Even before she could give her prepared speech, he said OK. Now the packaging — and shipping — are free.

Mrs. Froli is reeling from the overwhelming response.

"If someone had said to me, 'Coordinate a nationwide project,' I would have said, 'No, thank you. I'm too busy.'"

Now, she said, "It's a labor of love."

Get involved

- Blue Island Quilts in Magnolia Shopping Center has flag patterns which may be picked up and a sample flag on display. Patterns may also be downloaded from the Coastal Quilters Guild Web site: <http://coastalquilters.org/>.

- If you know of anyone who should receive a little flag quilt, contact Marty Froli at mafrolli@home.com or 968-4781.

- Monetary donations may be sent to: Coastal Quilters Guild, P.O. Box 6341, Santa Barbara 93160.

- Donations of material for flags are welcome.