



Victoria's Quilts Canada founder Betty Giffin hugs one of the quilts made by her organization.

Photograph by: Bruno Schlumberger, The Ottawa Citizen

When she joined Victoria's Quilts Canada in 2003, Ulana Perovic never expected to be treated to the warm gift she and fellow volunteers were making for others in need.

After a cancer she thought she'd conquered returned in 2006, Perovic arrived home from treatment in Montreal to a quilt made by the very people she volunteered with. "Just to think that people that I worked with wanted to give me this quilt was tremendous," said Perovic. "It's a feeling you're not alone."

The Ottawa-based organization began delivering hand-crafted quilts to cancer patients across the city in October 2000, and has since expanded its reach throughout Canada.

This takes funding and founder Betty Giffin was thrilled to receive a \$10,000 donation in 2009 from Maxwell House's "Brew Some Good" campaign that helps fund community groups.

"We were just delighted that they thought what we did was worthy of financial support," Giffin said. "We'll be able to make between 300 and 400 more quilts."

Over 1,000 volunteers in Newfoundland, New Brunswick, Quebec, Ontario, Manitoba and Alberta are involved in a group that has produced around 18,000 quilts since its inception.

The quilts are usually requested by family members or friends of people who have cancer, Giffin said, noting that after her organization received some publicity in 2001, her waiting list surged from 17 to 178. As a solution, she started a Quilt-A-Thon, now an annual event.

"We started it out of necessity. We had some publicity at the time but I had no idea what it would do," said Giffin.

Everybody responds differently to the gifts but each reaction is a positive one. "They can feel the love and hugs that went into making the quilt," Giffin said. "For people who have lost a loved one to cancer, the quilt serves as a remembrance."

For Perovic, it's a sense of community, both as a receiver of a quilt and a volunteer. "It gives me a creative outlet. It means I'm giving back to the community in a way that's meaningful for me," she said. "It's my sanity."

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