

LOCAL

Making blankets a warming project for volunteers

Area knitters and quilters craft blankets for children in need

By **DAN KELLEY**
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AMBLER — If one were to spread all the blankets the Montgomery/Bucks counties chapter of Project Linus has donated to children in need onto a football field, it would stretch past the 60-yard line.

That's a lot of warm kids.

Started nationally in 1995 — the national chapter expects to give out its one millionth blanket this summer — and locally in 2001, Project Linus has delivered 2,500 handmade blankets to children in hospitals and local shelters.

Named for the blanket-tot-

ing cartoon character from Charles M. Schulz's "Peanuts," the group will donate to any child in need, but most blankets will go to hospitals and shelters.

Knitters and quilters from all over Montgomery and Bucks counties spend their free time making blankets for children in hospitals.

At Shriners Hospital in Philadelphia, the blankets are used to keep children warm and to create a positive atmosphere for the parents.

Barbara Epstein, a coordinator of the local chapter of Project Linus, said colorful quilts and afghans are much more comforting for caregivers to see as a child comes out of surgery.

For many of the volunteers it is a way to indulge their hobbies long after they have

made blankets for everybody in their immediate family.

"This has become one of those things where, if you've made blankets for so many people in your family that you don't have anybody to give them to, now you give them to somebody else," Epstein said.

Most of the volunteers purchase materials themselves, though the project volunteers do accept donations of unused yarn and fabric.

At 1 p.m. Feb. 12, Project Linus is holding a "Hugs for Linus" tea at the Senior Adult Activity Center, 45 Forest Ave., Ambler.

The event is free. They do ask people to bring blankets or yarn to show support.

Project Linus organizers usually deliver 40 or 50 blankets at a time. They coordinate their efforts by calling

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around to see which hospitals are in need.

Loretta Zvarick of Collegeville said the group anticipates a greater need for volunteers as they expand delivery to emergency squads and fire companies.

They don't slow down in summer either.

When winter ends, they gently remind their volunteers to make lighter weight blankets.

As for the football field, they're on target to cover the next 40 yards by the end of the year.

That's a lot of blankets.

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