

outreach:

Change for Children

Success Story: Sewing Seeds of friendship



Bears and mittens are among the handiwork donated to needy children.



Sew Nice: Myrtle Bice (far left) leads a Tazewell District ministry that provides hand-stitched items for charities far and near. The sewers are Round Mountain Circuit members.

Photos by Gene Lovell, Tazewell District

On Wednesday nights in the basement of New Hope United Methodist Church, a group of women gather for devotionals and snacks before they get down to some serious stitching.

BASTIAM, Va.— The 12 sewing enthusiasts come from Round Mountain Circuit's three congregations – New Hope, Green Valley, and Pine Grove— each with fewer than 25 in average worship attendance.

For three years now, "Sewing Seeds of Friendship" has provided heaps of hand-stitched goods for charitable organizations including Samaritan's Purse, Guideposts Sweater Project, Mary's Cradle, and local nursing homes.

"Sewing Seeds" is a pet project for Myrtle Bice, a New Hope member and retired worker from a local sewing factory. "She had the talent, ambition and supplies to start this ministry," says Green Valley member Lisa Walker. On her pastor's suggestion, Bice invited members from each church to join her on Wednesday nights, while she scouted for organizations needing sweaters, quilts, caps, and teddy bears.

The Tazewell District group has received grants from the conference's Change for Children committee and Redwine committee as well as other Holston groups and individuals. Many of the women have full-time jobs yet they work on projects in their spare time, rendering boxes and boxes of goods that Bice distributes as quickly as she can.

Now, the Rev. Alan Ashworth's goal is to help the group become more self-supporting, placing one of their handsome quilts on the auction website, Ebay, to generate funds for supplies. "We also hope to get more people involved in the ministry from outside the circuit," said Ashworth, Round Mountain pastor for six years.

In the meantime, Bice, who lives alone, delights in picking up a needle and thread as much as she enjoys finding new outlets for the group's handiwork.

"Whenever I get discouraged, I think of the person who will be wearing the sweater that I'm making, and I pray for them," she said. "That always makes me feel better." ■ ③

Kid ministries:

Final 2001 Change for Children grants awarded

Topping off a year in which more than \$38,000 has been awarded to child-centered ministries in Holston, the Change for Children committee recently presented final 2001 grants to two medium-size congregations.

St. Paul's UMC, in the Cleveland District, received a \$750 grant for its Kid's Clubhouse ministry. Located in Etowah, Tenn., St. Paul's provides snacks and a Christian program to 20 children from the church and community.

St. Mark UMC, in the Oak Ridge District, received a \$2,500 grant for its Angel Tree and back-to-school ministries. For two years, St. Mark has provided school supplies, clothing and Christmas gifts for underprivileged families in Anderson County, Tenn.

Change for Children is a conference grant program supported through congregational offerings. "Everybody does it differently," said Bill Daugherty, conference missions coordinator. While

some churches pass Change for Children baskets to the entire congregation on a monthly basis, others collect through Sunday school or vacation bible school projects.

Some churches invite members to contribute 25 cents for every year past on their birthdays.

Half of all Change for Children gifts is applied toward kid ministries in Holston, while the other half goes to Hope for the Children of Africa.

Grants will be again awarded to select children's ministries in spring 2002. "We have many churches that are requesting grants for creative and new ministries within their communities," said the Rev. Chris Carter, Change for Children committee chair. "At the present, we do not have the funds to help make their visions come true."

Send checks (made out to "Holston Conference" and marked "Change for Children") to the conference treasurer's office at P.O. Box 2506, Johnson City, TN 37605. For grant information, contact Carter at (423) 245-3033. ■ ④

