

Pillowcase dresses called 'God's work'

By Tanya Chilton
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STATE ROAD — Making pillowcase dresses for children is an expression of God's love at work in people's lives, said a group of women at Poplar Springs Baptist Church in State Road.

The passion for making the dresses has only increased since the church group WOM3 began making them in November of 2012.

The group's mission was first inspired by a newspaper article about pillowcase dresses discovered by WOM3 Vice President Dana Sloop.

Sloop said she believes "it is our mission to help others."

Almost 940 dresses later, the women have helped clothe children all around the world. The ladies said God has chosen the path the dresses eventually take.

Through the help of mission groups, the stunning hand-designed dresses have left America to uniquely clothe children in all regions of the world, including Haiti and Nicaragua. They have clothed children also in the United States in orphanages and on American Indian reservations.

Shelby Gilmore, president of WOM3, said after Sloop brought the newspaper article to the group, they believed it was something they

could do together. Since starting, God has blessed the work and them, said Gilmore.

Former WOM3 President Betty Caudill led the first dress assemblage by implementing the first parsonage assembly-line format at Poplar Springs Baptist Church.

It was efficient at the start. The line was complete with sections of cutters, sewers and designers, utilizing portable sewing machines. The dresses were ironed on a donated ironing board.

The first designer pillowcase dresses materializing from the efforts of the hands of love and teamwork of the State Road ladies continued to multiply. They now have a goal of a 1,000 dresses by the year's end.

The group said it is appreciative of all fabric and pillowcase donations it has received from the congregation and any others.

They still welcome donations of any fabric, trim, ribbon, elastic, scissors, cross appliques, findings and are in hopes of getting more portable sewing machines. For donations, contact Poplar Springs Baptist Church in State Road at 336-835-7244 or visit www.mypoplar Springs.com. Poplar Springs Baptist Church address is 193 Fellowship Way, P.O. Box 38, State Road, NC 28676.

The women said the



Tanya Chilton | Elkin Tribune

Pillowcase dresses made by women of Poplar Springs Baptist Church are displayed across the sanctuary and dedicated in prayer before going to their destinations.

room is filled with great excitement each time they match up new colors, trimming and findings for a dress that will go to a child in need.

In the dress making quest, they like to make sure no two are exactly alike. Dress appliques range from simple to complex. They include beads, buttons, piping, trims and lace, allowing for more variety, said the women.

Each dress has the applique of a cross sewn or attached.

The teamwork seems to turn the simple pillowcases into works of art and their own form of designer dresses.

They said people have experienced reactions of amazement when they first see the beauty of the hand-made dresses.

WOM3 member Patsy

Hooper, nearly in tears, marveled as she recounted how a young girl in an orphanage received a pink pillowcase dress brought by granddaughter, Ellie Hooper, while on a mission trip.

The young girl became overjoyed when she discovered the dress was pink...like her Barbie doll's dress, said Patsy Hooper. Hooper said the little girl told granddaughter, Ellie, she had been praying for a pink dress.

"See what I mean?" asked Patsy Hooper. "God is in everyone of these dresses."

Gilmore added, "You can't out-give God." No matter what, God has shown he will make a way, said Gilmore.

Hilda Newman, a group sewer, is known by the group for making personalized ruffles and other unique items from scratch.

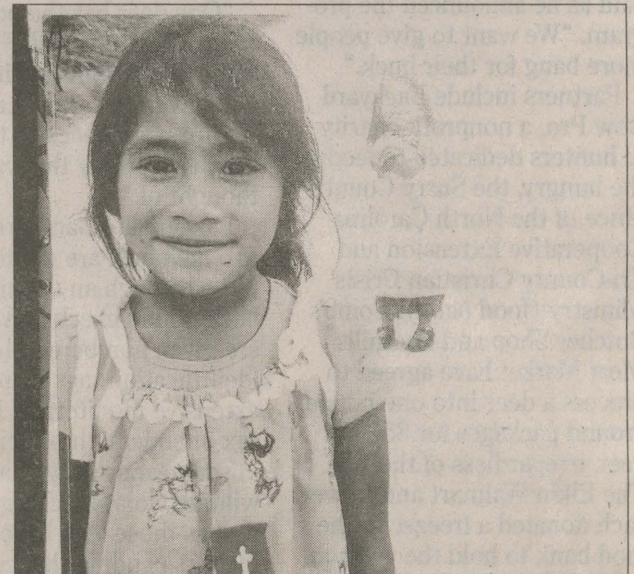
Newman said the ministry also had blessed her from the perspective of being able to spend time with her church friends. "We all like to come together," said Newman.

Lisa Snow agreed. Snow said the women had grown very close — like sisters, they said — since starting the pillowcase dresses. She called the time spent together "blessed."

Snow said she likes knowing kids will have something to wear that is pretty and unique.

Jean Nixon said she has always enjoyed organizing and doing church mission work. She said it is important to her that the dresses have the crosses sewn onto them as all of them do.

Nixon said the cross



In this photocopy, a young girl smiles as she shows off her pillowcase dress with a cross, found on all designs.

lets kids know they are loved and acts as a form of protection.

In fact, the women said they believe the dresses show kids everywhere, "no matter what, someone, somewhere, cares about them."

Lynn Hagwood called the blessing they have received from making the dresses "just plain overflow." Hagwood said she hoped to see others form a pillowcase ministry, adding it can be done anywhere.

The group already has taught some who are interested and worked with Elkin High School students to learn the skill. They said they would be happy to help teach anyone.

They explained the easy utility of the pillowcases, because they already have seams, they said. They said simply cutting holes for the head and arm areas are all that is required to get the pattern started. Elastic is sewn into the circle for the head area, and trim is sewn around each arm hole with ends long

enough to tie the dress at the shoulders.

On Friday, the women's group thoughtfully browsed packages carefully made up with cut fabric, color matchings, thread, ties, elastic and cross appliques.

The packages are now ready to go into the hands of the group sewers and designer including Polly Freeman, Holder, Hagwood and Newman.

Freeman said what began as a goal "ended up being a great mission."

The women said they look forward to their weekly meetings to not only sew the dresses but to enjoy lunch together and will continue as long as there is a need for the dresses.

WOM3 members are Snow, Whitaker, Hagwood, Freeman, Holder, Newman, Wanda West, Linda Richardson, Margaret Mason, Sloop; Hooper, who is secretary; Nixon, who is treasurer; and Gilmore.

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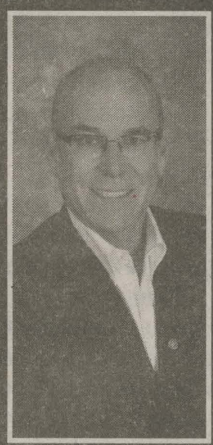


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