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# "We're all supposed to do our part: Saginaw's Rose A. Bedenbaugh helps keep families warm

by Sue White | The Saginaw News  
Saturday June 27, 2009, 3:38 PM

When Habitat for Humanity homeowners first step across their new threshold, Rose A. Bedenbaugh has a warm welcome waiting for them.

For the past five years, or maybe even six, she said, the 54-year-old Saginaw woman has crocheted a king-size afghan for each family.

"See the line across my finger," she said, holding out her creased index finger. "That's from the yarn. Most years, I have nine or so to do but we only have four this time.

"We're all supposed to do our part, God says, and that's what this is all about."

It's also a perfect example of how people can help Habitat for Humanity, even if they don't know how to swing a hammer, said Cameron Brady, the organization's development manager.

"Rose's generosity is something else," Brady said. "It's a great partnership for us, and offers a personal gift, conveying a sense of warmth and security to our families.

"She gives so selflessly. We couldn't do this piecemeal; we couldn't give one family a gift and leave everyone else out. And in everything, we insist on quality. Rose is the same way. Her work is beautiful; her afghans are something else."

And now, he added, she could use a little help. Anyone wishing to donate yarn can leave it at the Habitat for Humanity Saginaw offices at 315 W. Holland.

Bedenbaugh says her doctor tells her the crocheting is therapeutic for the arthritis that freezes up both hands, but health problems forced her to leave her job as a cook at the Cracker Barrel restaurant in Bridgeport. And in early June, she lost her husband, Paul, after a lingering illness.

"It probably takes about 12 to 18 of the eight-ounce skeins of yarn for an afghan," she said, "but I can use bits of leftover yarn, too, for the ones I call a coat of many colors."

Brady and Bedenbaugh have witnessed the families' emotional responses to her gift.

"I still get Christmas cards from some of them," Bedenbaugh said. "It all started when I was reading the Bible, and realized we all have to do what we can. I'd crocheted about 30 years -- I only know the one stitch, a two-and-a-half (cluster) stitch -- and so I made the afghans and showed up at the Habitat for Humanity picnic.

"Another time, my son came with me to the dedications, and the people hugged me and thanked me. Later on, I dropped some off at the homes they built in Carrollton. Every time I can deliver it in person, I do. They're always so happy."

And she's handed out a few others, too, to former Saginaw mayor Wilmer Jones-Ham, for one, and to the 12 people who with her first opened the doors on the Cracker Barrel in Bridgeport. But it's the Habitat for Humanities families, making a new beginning, that leave her choked up.

"The last one, I went to the ceremony where they say the prayers, and it really pulled the heart-strings," she said. "They really appreciate it."



Jeff Schrier | The Saginaw News

Saginaw resident Rose Bedenbaugh knits afghans for all Habitat for Humanity families so they have a new blanket for their new homes. She is seated on the front porch of her home.