



Community Stories

EACH (AND EVERY) STITCH COUNTS

By Lynette Levitt



"A smile is like psychological first-aid"

I am part of a local community group that has been making scrubs for the local hospitals, I call them crazy scrubs as we have been using brightly coloured fabric from children's duvet covers to make garments. These scrubs are hand made in our community and we've distributed them to local hospitals. The Arthur Rank Hospice, Royal Papworth, and Addenbrookes have all received them; one set even ended up on Elephant Ward at Great Ormond Street and another went to a local care home. Our crazy colourful hand-made scrubs became famous and featured on the BBC News – including the Thomas the Tank Engine and Friends set!

This isn't a group that even existed before the lockdown, it really just evolved due to a need. It started with a call out on Facebook from the East Anglia Children's Hospice saying that they urgently needed scrubs, and this request was passed to me by a friend. The hospice and its works are very close to the hearts of people in this village and I wanted to help so I put out a further call to my area and a small group of people responded. This has become our group.

To make the scrubs we needed fabric and patterns. We asked Emmaus in Landbeach via a friend to see if they had any brightly coloured children's duvet covers that could be used for fabric. That was the beginning and we ended up with plastic sacks of duvets being delivered, very carefully to the end of my driveway –

even with the uncertainty around their own charity they wanted to give and help. It was like a circle, sacks of duvets donated by the Cambridge community were being used to make scrubs for use in the community. Print-Out in Histon were also enormously helpful, they printed the professional scrubs pattern for virtually nothing.

People were sewing that we had never met before, in the end you realise how complex it all really became. We had fabric coming in from Emmaus, Milton and further afield. We had makers in Milton, Waterbeach, Landbeach, Chesterton and near Addenbrookes. We then distributed the scrubs to different hospitals.

One of the things that has happened is that there has been a sense of joy in all of this – it has lit up people's lives. I think that it has helped people feel involved, printing patterns, driving stuff around, labouring over scrubs making. Something real for those who wanted to help but felt powerless out in the community. By being a part of this it is almost like we've been able to be part of something that is shining a light into people's lives, those making the scrubs, the recipients of the scrubs and those who are in the care of those wearing the scrubs. They became 'the medicine of good cheer' – something the whole world needs at the moment, not just those working on the COVID front line.

In a strange way the scrubs have been a vehicle of communication, the colourful fabric made into garments, made lovingly in the community for complete strangers who are working in a horrendous setting to look after people who are so terribly ill. The garment itself has become a gentle communication of touch from the hands of the makers to the recipient – all in a time when we can't touch each other. I coordinate the group (with help!) and have been delivering the sets of scrubs to the recipients. I have the privilege of seeing the faces at the hospitals when the scrubs were received. Seeing their faces light up and hearing their voices change when they saw our joyful scrubs made with love. Our group name, that also really evolved with the group reflects our journey and even more the impact of our scrubs - ***Each (and Every) Stitch Counts.***