

December 19, 2005

One stitch at a time, angel offers hope, love

Woman crochets uplifting items for those facing troubles

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Checking an Internet Web site for names and addresses of people in need of being cheered up is part of Roberta Thornton's daily routine.

On a recent morning, Thornton, 66, of Webster learned that the members of a family in Colorado lost their father in a car accident.

She crocheted an angel for the family.

Thornton also learned of a man in North Carolina suffering from brain cancer.

She crocheted a butterfly for him.

And with accompanying notes expressing sympathy, she sent out both packets.

"It is something that I can do to make someone feel good," said Thornton, a retired factory worker who now spends about three hours a day crocheting as a volunteer member of Angels for Hope.

The group, which is based in Palmyra, Pa., sends crocheted angels, butterflies and smiley faces to those in need of hope.

Since she volunteered her services almost a year ago, Thornton has crocheted about 600 angels and butterflies and sent them out.

"She is very dependable. She never turns down a request," said Cindy Gabner, who is the volunteer head of Angels for Hope.

Thornton is one of about 700 volunteers — almost all in the United States — who crochet for the group.

The names of the people to be on the receiving end of these gifts are obtained from submissions to the Angels for Hope Web site.

Once a week, Gabner assigns each volunteer the name of a family or a person who has been recommended for a crocheted angel, butterfly or smiley face.

But since Thornton wants to do more, she goes to the Angels for Hope's "special angeling" Web site to get additional names and addresses.

The responses that Thornton has received from some of the recipients range from "Your prayers have been a blessing" to "Thanks to all the early angels."

Thornton began crocheting for her children 45 years ago,

She has made afghans for her children and grandchildren — and future great-grandchildren.

A family tragedy turned her talents to charitable work.

Thornton's 16-year-old grandson, Sam Alimentato of Greece, died of cancer five years ago.

Afterward, Debbie Alimentato, who is Sam's mother and Thornton's daughter, received a crocheted angel from an Angels for Hope volunteer.