

A wing and a prayer

Local crafter, as part of an International non-profit organization, spreads a message of hope "one stitch at a time."

By Shari Friedel

Tribune Staff

Thousands of messages of hope are taking flight, and offering comfort to people in need, in the form of hand crocheted angels sent through the mail.

Angels for Hope, a non-profit organization, is responsible for spreading the uplifting messages to thousands of people worldwide with chronic illness, injury, or who are struggling emotionally with life circumstances. In 2004, the organization touched the lives of nearly 40,000 people in need of emotional support.

Several hundred crafters in 45 United States, Australia, Canada, England and Ireland crochet the angels that are sent upon requests directed to the organization's headquarters. Everything is handled over email.

The angels are sent anonymously, and free of charge. They include an uplifting message and can include the name if requested by the sender.

The idea piqued the interest of Grant's Sherry Erlewine, who heard of the project on an internet website.

Erlewine is an avid crafter who had learned to crochet from her grandmother. Last year, she became one of nine Nebraska women who craft

angels for the organization.

Since then Erlewine has raised the spirits of over 50 people who have received her handiwork.

A teacher at Perkins County Elementary, she finds crocheting a relaxing break from correcting school papers, and a good time to meditate and pray for the person who is to receive the angel.

Each angel takes about two hours to complete from directions that are downloaded from the website, once membership is established. The design was created specifically for the project, and all materials are donated.

No one profits financially from the venture.

Erlewine receives about one angel request a week, which she is not obligated to complete.

Color and yarn are chosen by the crafter, but each angel must wear a shiny red heart and red bow.

Erlewine grabs time whenever she can to do her crocheting, especially traveling to and from school activities out of town. She was even able to finish a

couple of angels by candlelight during the recent power outage.

She feels that it is a rewarding, relaxing hobby, and feels good about being part of an organization that spreads a positive message.

More information on the angel project can be found at www.angelsforhope.org.

