



## ***DECEMBER NEWSLETTER***

December 16, 2013

Today's topics:

- We delivered 3,000 comfort scarves in November which made our total for 2013 12,000 and our total since we began at the end of 2008 almost 55,000. Incredible, isn't it!
- Comfort scarves reached **ALL** the shelters in S. CA from San Diego all the way to San Luis Obispo
- Handmade's volunteers are outstanding
- Yarn companies continue to donate generously
- The shelters appreciate comfort scarves
- The Free Holiday Store at 1736 Family Crisis Center does a great job
- News from our affiliates
- Reasons for more domestic violence during the holidays
- Looking back on 2013 and getting started on 2014

And now for the details:

We delivered 3,000 comfort scarves (as well as numerous hats and baby blankets) in November. I always wonder if we will meet our goal of making 12,000 comfort scarves and delivering them to all our shelters, but no problem this year. I am happy to report that scarves poured in from everywhere and we reached our goal! We didn't have to short any shelter and we were able to complete shipping in November. Good job to all of us. What's even more amazing is that since we started Handmade at the end of 2008, **we have made and delivered almost 55,000 comfort scarves.**

This astounding statistic is due entirely to Handmade's outstanding volunteers. Here we are at our holiday party at Judith Solomon's home.



Our core group of volunteers meets every Wednesday evening at **Concepts in Yarn** in Torrance. Many in this group not only make scarves, but also make kits, wrap scarves, pack boxes, and support Handmade in all kinds of ways that don't show in the finished scarf. Members of this group include, but are not limited to: **Ann Nye, Barbara Stach, Bea Abshear, Chris Fung, Ernestine Moran, Evelyn Dow, Janet Schoenfeld, Judith Solomon, Karen Chan, Kathy Allen, Maria Denzel, Nancy English, Patty Torrance, Toni Fournier, and Toshi Erickson.** Other outstanding local volunteers (who don't attend our Wednesday evening meetings at Concepts in Yarn) open boxes, cut novelty yarn, make kits, make scarves, and wrap finished scarves prior to shipping. They include: **Chris Needham, Emma Buechs, Mary Barton, Paula Weiner, the Prince Family, Su Wooley, and Therese Shafer.**

In addition to the above volunteers, several local groups make scarves for Handmade. They are: the **Knitting Club** at the **Culver City Senior Center**, the **Mad Hatters, Needles & Knots** from Northrup Grumman, and the **Presentation Learning Center.** Thanks as well to these groups.

We have many outstanding volunteers and donors throughout CA and the US. "You" know who you are, but I will list a few. These scarfers work on yarn or kits we send them: **Betty Watts** (Bellflower, CA), **Emily Gutierrez** (Carson, CA), **Judy Brown** (Carmichael, CA), **Janet Deininger** (Bryan, TX), **Joanne Garlick** (Sunnyvale, CA), **Kate Witting** (Jacksonville, FL), **Marlene Segal** (Henderson NV), **Sue Appelbaum** (San Francisco, CA), and **Wendy Holton** (Baconton, GA). They not only make the scarves, but they donate \$\$\$ to cover the shipping of kits to them and sending finished scarves back to Handmade. They are very generous with both their time and money.

Many individuals and groups make scarves using their own stash. Some of them are: **Cindy Gilkey** (Laguna Hills, CA), **Donna Moon** (Woodgate, NY), **Janet Walsh** (St. Peters, MO), **Lana Kapchinsky** (La Mesa, CA), **Lonna Webster** (Bonita, CA), and **Penny Ripley** (Oceanpark, WA). Members of the **AT&T Fiber to the World Yarn Club** in Washington DC also donate scarves they make from their own stash.

It takes a lot of people to make the huge number of scarves we distribute. Thanks to all who participate. I want also to mention the support of **June Grossberg**, owner of **Concepts in Yarn, Handmade's** sponsor, and my mentor. From the start, June encouraged Handmade's activities by offering us a meeting place at her shop. As Handmade grew, she provided bins so customers and scarfers could pick up kits (free yarn) and drop off finished scarves. June's support and advice have been essential to Handmade's success. Thank you, June.

All our volunteers are different, but here's what they have in common: They want to help abused women change their lives, they are willing to give generously of their time (and sometimes their \$\$\$ as well), and they are dedicated to Handmade. They demonstrate these attributes in the beauty of their finished scarves, their attention to detail, and their determination to get their completed scarves to Handmade in time for important shipping deadlines. **Each contribution is important whether you send one scarf or ninety. We reach our goal one scarf at a time.** I appreciate each and every one of "You," no matter how many scarves or \$\$\$\$ or time or advice "You" contribute!

Without yarn, we cannot make comfort scarves. In November and December, **Knitting Fever** donated 8 huge boxes containing about 300 pounds of yarn. Thank you **Sion Elalouf** and **Tymon Warda**. Their donation helped us finish making kits for holiday scarves. **Susan Druding**, owner of **Crystal Palace Yarns**, donated a 25 pound box. Thanks you, Susan. Both their donations will launch 2014 kit making.

Shelters love our scarves. No surprise. They recognize the love and care that goes into the making of each one of them. I have lots of letters from our 60 shelters expressing their appreciation. In one photo below, you can see a few samples from directors of the shelters. The other photo shows thank you letters from the women themselves. I am particularly moved by one who wrote: "These make me feel like they look: One of a kind" and one who wrote "I am homeless but your scarf makes me feel like I have a home." Notes such as these keep our needles moving!



Every holiday season, **1736 Family Crisis Center** turns its administrative offices into a “**Free Holiday Store**” where their clients “purchase” gifts at no cost. Moms come and select gifts for their kids and kids choose presents for their moms. Moms select from a room filled with dolls and stuffed animals or one crammed with books, games and puzzles. Volunteer “guides” take children who come with their moms to the Mom’s Store, where the children make their selections. That’s where our scarves are on display. Children proudly pick out the perfect one for their own mom. Then they go to the wrapping room, where teen volunteers wrap the gifts they have chosen. The “**Free Holiday Store**” is a beautiful idea and I am very proud that Handmade contributes to this event.

Our affiliates are rolling along. In December, **Vicki Ringer**, organizer of our San Fernando Valley group, donated 80 scarves to **Haven Hills** (Canoga Park CA). That brings her total for the year to 325 scarves! Vicki has encouraged members of her church to get involved. Not only do they make comfort scarves, but they also donate gift cards to **Haven Hills**.

**Renee Hoffman** delivered 40 scarves to **Interval House** (Long Beach CA). Renee leads a dedicated group of knitters which includes the **Slipt Stitchers** of the El Segundo Knitting Guild.

**Susan VanWinkle**, leader of our **San Diego** affiliate, delivered 10 scarves to **Women’s Resource Center** (Oceanside CA) and 50 to **Becky’s House** (San Diego CA).

**Ann Miller**, in Pueblo CO, donated 13 scarves to the **YWCA Crisis Shelter** there.

Since October, 2010, **Barb Kochuba’s** group (Pittsburgh PA), has donated almost 8,500 comfort scarves and other items to 10 shelters throughout Southwestern PA. She continues to be amazed at the growth of her group, the need for scarves, and the generosity of her volunteers.

We welcome **Frances Sadler** (Bronx NY) as a new affiliate. Frances organized volunteer scarfers from 3 library-based knitting circles, 3 churches and a disabled women's group. She plans to donate to 3 long-term transitional shelters for battered women that are operated by a city-wide social housing group. Each facility has 32 beds, and residents can stay 364 days for therapy and life skills training. Her group has made 31 scarves so far. They are off to a good start.

Our affiliated groups make and distribute lots of comfort scarves. I do not include their numbers when I say Handmade donated almost 12,000 comfort scarves in 2013. Just think of what the total would be if I did. Wow!

When I started Handmade in October, 2008, I was very committed to helping abused women. Even though I knew that 15% of abuse is done by women against men and that senior citizens and children are also victims, I chose to focus only on women who are the victims of abuse by men. They are the most underrepresented group politically. Every time there are budget cutbacks, money for them is cut first. Something rang true about this decision because everyone

I talked to about domestic violence empathized with what I was saying. After all, domestic violence occurs in every social, economic, educational, religious and ethnic group.

Since that time, our participants have asked certain questions about abuse again and again. So I've spent some time doing research to find the answers. In this Newsletter, I will discuss why there is more abuse in December. In the next Newsletter, I will address the question of why women don't just leave their abusive situations. Another topic up for discussion is the effects of abuse on children and the methods shelters use to overcome these negative effects.

As many of you know, when I write thank you letters at the end of the year, I always mention that there is more abuse in December than during other months and as a result, our shelters are jam-packed in January. You probably think I write this just to keep you motivated, which, yes, I do, but it is also true. Why is there more abuse in December? To understand the reasons for this, we need to explore the characteristics of the abuser.

The abuser is a man who wants to control every aspect of his relationship with his domestic partner. He engages in abuse not because he is out of control, but because he has found it a successful tactic to maintain control. He needs to control his partner due to his own low self-esteem, his own jealousy, his difficulty in regulating his own anger, even due to traditional religious or social beliefs he holds that allow him to feel he has the right to control his partner, and/or that women are not equal to men.

During the holidays, a man may feel an even greater sense of his own powerlessness (low self-esteem) when he sees the contrast between what society in general expects him to provide and his personal inability to do so. He is bombarded with advertisements promoting the joy of season because of elaborate gifts, meals, vacations, etc. As a result, he feels even more inadequate when he cannot provide these for his family.

The holidays imply celebrating with friends, relatives, neighbors, religious and other community groups. This means the abuser and his victim get out into the world where others can witness the abuse, see its effects (such as black and blue marks), or cause situations which provoke abuse (another man talking to the abuser's partner). More social contact threatens the abuser's ability to keep control of his partner.

Increased religious and social contacts reinforce traditional views that a man is master of his home, that he has the right to control his partner, and that women are inferior to men. Coupled with the above feelings of inadequacy and sense of danger to his status, the abuser may use this sense of entitlement as license to exert control over his family.

Abuse, whether it is physical, psychological, sexual, is a tactic the abuser has used successfully in the past, so he resorts to it even more during the holidays. As a result, at this time of year, life is not good for women in relationships where spousal abuse is the basis of the relationship. Yes, we must redouble our efforts to keep our shelters supplied with comfort scarves in January. Our

scarves counter the desperation of the women fleeing from their abusive relationships by seeking the protection of a shelter.

Handmade accomplished a lot in 2013. We made almost 12,000 comfort scarves and delivered them 60 shelters in CA, and more if you count the donations of our affiliates in other parts of CA and the US. Our participants have increased too. In 2013, I wrote 600 thank you letters to all our donors for scarves, yarn and \$\$\$ compared to 550 in 2012.

What's next for Handmade? We have been "too big" to continue operations in my house for a long time. I love when everybody comes to make kits on Tuesdays and wrap scarves every other Thursday but my house is not a proper workshop. In addition, we need a place to store our yarn that is not a volunteer's garage or storeroom. We definitely need a place where we can receive yarn and scarves, store yarn, make kits, and wrap and ship scarves. Recently, we have explored a few places and even found one that would do the trick for what we need. But the landlord is not satisfied by a tax write-off. He wants to charge rent! That means we need \$\$\$.

We need \$\$\$ not only to pay rent, but also to cover shipping, our biggest expense. Our holiday shipping cost almost \$600! Luckily, we have several generous donors who contribute specifically to defray shipping expenses. But their donations are never enough. What we really need is a patron who will cover the rent. Please someone, come forward.

I love Handmade's success. And its growing pains. I am thrilled that we have made and delivered so many comfort scarves. At the same time, I feel very sorry that there are so many abused women who benefit from receiving them. I look forward to another year working with good people in all walks of life. There are many ways to help in the community. I'm glad that so many of you have chosen to support Handmade as your way to give back. I depend on you. And so do the abused women who receive the scarves that you make or make possible. Many thanks.

If you want to donate scarves or yarn, please mail them to:

Handmade Especially for You c/o Leslye Borden  
30065 Grandpoint Lane  
Rancho Palos Verdes CA 90275

If you want to donate money, please mail a check to the above address or use PayPal. There is a link on Handmade's website. [www.handmadeespecially.org](http://www.handmadeespecially.org)

Thanks in advance.

Leslye Borden, Founder,  
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