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Knitting for Peace

When I first learned I was required to volunteer for college writing and research I was less than thrilled. I did not understand why I had to do volunteer work for a *writing* class, it did not make sense to me. So, I thought about my options and what I could do to volunteer, since it was mandatory. After brainstorming different options, I finally came up with a unique activity, which came close to my heart, and came out through my hands. Suddenly, volunteering did not seem unnecessary, but an experience that would touch my heart and no doubt, that of many others.

Nine years ago a girl named Isabelle Rose Werner was born. She was a full term, healthy baby, but 24 hours after birth, her mother and father knew something was wrong. Isabelle was diagnosed with hypoplastic left heart syndrome, which required surgery on her heart only 11 days after birth. In order to correct this condition, three heart surgeries have been performed on Isabelle; all of which have gone successfully. Isabelle is not a girl I read about in a magazine, but the sister to Ray, my boyfriend, and Ivy, Rays other sister. Isabelle has become a very close friend of mine over the last three years and each day I am able to spend with her, I am shown what it means to *really* live life. Isabelle and her family went through an emotionally battering time in the first three years of Isabelle's life and comfort was given to them by many people. I am so thankful to be able to know Isabelle Rose Werner. I know there are other girls like her being born with this heart condition, so I am knitting a comfort blanket to be donated to a family

of a girl with a heart condition, to bring them comfort, so they can take comfort knowing their baby is loved and cared for by someone who does not know who she is, and wants to see her live life to the fullest. Take comfort, and know love.

The pattern I am using to make the comfort blanket is a modified fan-and-feather stitch, and the color of yarn I chose to knit with is pink, purple, and red variegated. It is a very simple pattern which comes from the Knitting for Peace book, under the Project Linus Security Blanket page. This book was given to me from Isabelle's mother, Robin, for Easter last year. Within this book, there are many patterns that can be knitted for personal use, but also donation is a large part of this book. Contact information is provided, so when knitting projects are completed, they can be sent to the designated chair-persons for each section. Conveniently enough, the Project Linus Security Blanket drop off location is at a local quilting shop called Crazy to Quilt, in Cedar Falls. When I drop off the blanket, I will leave a note with it saying the specifics of where I want it donated to. From there, it will be picked up and taken to a family with a girl suffering from a heart condition.

It was relatively easy for me to contact the local drop off location, and while buying my yarn and needles to knit the blanket, by chance I ran into the owner of Crazy to Quilt. She talked about how her shop hosts quilting retreats and certain retreats are used for comfort blankets that are given to hospitals, homeless shelters, women's shelters and other organizations that are in need of blankets. Blanket donations are always welcomed, and they can never have enough.

I know I will participate in an organization like this again, whether it is for Project Linus, or another organization where my knitting ability and efforts can be used, I will make it a point in my life to contribute. I am so fortunate to have a loving family that has a warm house to sleep

in every night. It is the least I can do to provide that warmth in other ways to show those less fortunate than I, they are loved.

When I first started knitting the blanket, I thought it would be just like any other article I had knitted before. I was wrong. I found myself thinking about what it would be like for me to have a child that was born with a potentially fatal condition, and it scared me a lot. Blankets are so simple, but to a person who is scared, sad or confused, it may mean the world to them to know there is hope and love in people. Even as I sat down to write this paper, I started crying as I thought about how life would be so different if Isabelle not been as strong as she was to make it through her surgeries. I love Isabelle, and her whole family. They all mean the world to me and if I can knit to show someone else I care, it may mean the world to them.

My volunteer choice was a perfect fit for me. I am not a naturally social person, and by doing this, I was able to contribute to society in my own quiet way. I love knitting and it is an extremely relaxing activity for me to do however; it is also a time consuming activity. I have worked on the comfort blanket for over 8 hours, and only 4 of the 36 inches of the blanket are completed. If every 4 inches equals 8 hours, I have 32 inches to go, and 64 hours of work ahead of me. I am okay with that, and I know it will take time, but my time is worth it because I know what this blanket will mean to the people who receive it.