



NEWS



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Spirit of Giving Alive at McLean County Health Department *Last winter's hat knitting project furthered by community support*

BLOOMINGTON – The *Noontime Knitters* are back in action at the McLean County Health Department, using their needles to provide a different kind of protection than the ones used by the nurses in the clinics, these *knitting* needles are being used to provide warmth to children who come to appointments at the health department without hats, scarves, or mittens to protect against the cold winter temperatures. And in this, their second year of weekly lunchtime knitting sessions, the group is receiving help from kind hearts in the community.

According to Vera Price, accounting specialist and one of the original organizers of the Noontime Knitters, “We started receiving donations of yarns last winter when word got out about what we were doing. We actually have enough yarn now to knit without worry for quite some time. We’ve also been surprised by the thoughtfulness of fellow knitters in the community. We’ve been given hand knit items to add to the supply we have for the children who use the health department services.”

In addition to hats, scarves, and mittens, local knitters have dropped off blankets and even crocheted toy animals paired with children’s books. All those who have donated have requested to remain anonymous – like guardian angels. Another source of hand knit cold weather accessories has come from a local group called the Bloomington-Normal Night Time Knitters. Last winter, this group chose the health department as a benefactor of their knitted pieces and donated 201 children’s items. This winter, it looks like that generosity will continue.

The health department group is well ahead of where they were last year. Currently there are approximately 100 knitted hats in various sizes, colors, and shapes; as well as 8 scarves and 30 pairs of mittens in the ready for the arrival of more winter-like conditions in the county. There are even a few blankets that would fit nicely into a baby carrier. Says Cathy Dreyer, finance manager and fellow organizer of the knitting group, “We didn’t begin meeting last winter until after the New Year and about half of our participants had either never knit before, or hadn’t knitted in years. Our experienced knitters divided their time between knitting and teaching new knitters. To be ready for the demand this winter, we formally began our weekly meetings in September.”

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Though regular participation in the knitting group has dropped from last year, you can still count on a core group of four knitters using their lunch hour every Tuesday to socialize and knit to help assure little heads, hands, and necks stay warm this winter. The Noontime Knitters plan to continue knitting until March and hope that by then their efforts will have helped spread the warmth throughout McLean County.

The McLean County Health Department is dedicated to the prevention and control of disease through health promotion, early intervention and health protection within our county. Information about the health department or any of the services provided can be found at <http://health@mcleancountyil.gov>. You can also follow us on Twitter (@McLeanHealth) and “Like” us on Facebook (Facebook.com/McLeanHealth), for information about public health affecting you.

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