



Photo by Travis Johnson

This "peace quilt" was constructed by 22 local citizens and will soon be sent to a small town in Siberia.

From Eugene to Russia, with love

By Marianne Chin
Of the Emerald

While world leaders hold summit meetings in search of world peace, a group of area citizens is working for the same goal with a needle and thread.

A quilt bearing the message "The world is one country and all people its citizens" will soon be on its way to a small town in eastern Siberia, the gift of a group of creative and concerned individuals.

"It's an individual effort to make an expression of peace and effort to the Soviet Union," says Natasha Cottrell, one individual who contributed to the making of the peace quilt and who has displayed it in Eugene-area schools and churches.

The idea of constructing the quilt as an expression of world peace and unity was conceived last August in Monroe, Ore., a town of about 470 people about 25 miles north of Eugene. The resulting colorful five by six foot wall-hanging made of 20 individualized, handmade squares will be sent to the people of Neran, Siberia, where about 1,000 people live.

About 22 people contributed their creativity and effort to the construction of the quilt, which is full of rainbows, birds and messages, such as "Home Sweet Home" and "Tomorrow

in our Hands." The project included men and women from Monroe, Alpine, Eugene, and Corvallis. One embroidered square was sent from Buffalo, New York.

The project stems from an organization called the Pairing Project, "a nationwide program of grassroots outreach from the people of the United States to the people of the Soviet Union," according to a pamphlet on the group. The program has matched about 1,000 U.S. cities with cities of similar sizes in the Soviet Union.

The non-partisan group, also called The Ground Zero Pairing Project, wants to establish lines of communications through education and bridge-building projects, according to its informational booklet. The organization also is concerned with the nuclear arms race.

The quilt project was organized by Monroe resident Loretta Rivard, who wanted to do something helpful about the nuclear arms situation.

Rivard was asked to do a square for a peace quilt organized by others, but when that project fell through, she thought of organizing her own project.

"I feel real good about it," Rivard says. "It's gone beyond what I hoped for as far as reaching people."

Through the Pairing Project, a "Community Portrait," a collection of messages and contributions from the town's churches, schools and a letter from the mayor of Monroe, was mailed to Neran. The package was mailed in November, but Cottrell says the group has received no reply.

"They (the Pairing Project) told us that we may not get a response the first time because the Russians are cautious about doing anything official," Cottrell says. "After the second or third try they get bolder and usually respond," she says.

"It pulls everyone into the feeling of sharing, brotherhood and peace that people over there won't have that same feeling," Cottrell says.

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