

# 'Healing quilt' to help repair torn community

*Esther Hunter believes a quilt will help people express their feelings after Thurston*

By Michael Burnham  
Community Editor

It tore us apart. The range of emotions expressed throughout the community since the May 21 shooting at Thurston High School have differed greatly.

Some have felt anger. Some have felt shock. Some have felt sadness. Some have asked why it happened here.

But as members of the community grieved and started to heal in different ways, the question remains as to how the community can be stitched together again.

Eugene resident Esther Hunter decided she would try and make the first stitch in her own version of community healing: a quilt.

Although Hunter said she is not a quilter, she decided this was the best way for her to try and bring the community's patchwork of emotions together.

"I just basically felt a need to do something to put some positive energy back in the community," she said. "I wanted to create something everybody could do."

Hunter's project, which has been dubbed the "healing quilt," will consist of 10-inch squares on which community members can write messages of remembrance and support. Individuals may use their own fabric or obtain cloth from a number of local fabric and quilting stores that are donating

the materials, she said. However, the squares will be joined with half-inch seams on all sides, so designs on all squares should be kept within a 9-inch-square area.

Hunter, who said the idea has blossomed on the community level since she first conceived it, now has a number of businesses, artists and other volunteers working on the project.

She said she hopes to have the healing quilt done for a late-summer display at the Springfield City Hall. The quilt will also be shown at the Eugene Celebration from September 18 to 20.

The deadline for all square submissions is July 20, but Hunter said the challenge will be in sewing the pieces together. She said she thinks it will take more than a month to sew all of the squares together, although a local fabric store has offered to help in the process.

One community member who has already begun to design a square for the quilt is Loretta Dukes of Eugene.

Dukes said she went by the Thurston High School fence after the incident and saw the flowers, letters and other materials the community placed in the wake of the tragedy.

She said she has been working for the past four days to try and stitch her visual image of the fence on her quilt square.

"It's something I can give ... from my heart," she said. "It's something you can do when you really can't express your feelings to other people. We all have different ways of seeing things."

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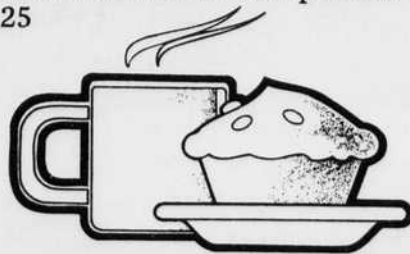
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