



Project Linus members include Margaret Burke (front) and (from left) Carole Leaverton, Melanie Tehan, Anneliese Otto, Susie Russell, Vivian Preble, and Geri Marchese. (Photo provided by Melanie Tehan)

Just like its namesake, Project Linus provides warm comfort with blankets

By **CHRISTINA HILL**
Correspondent

No matter the season or the weather, children can always use a comfortable blanket to snuggle up to, especially in times of need.

Recognizing this need was the primary reason that a chapter of Project Linus, a nationwide, nonprofit organization, was formed in Josephine County nearly six years ago.

"We crochet, knit and quilt blankets for children from babies through age 18 and donate the blankets to just under 30 organizations in Josephine County, who then distribute them," said Grants Pass resident Karen Knittle. She is co-coordinator with Judy Baker, of the Josephine County Chapter of Project Linus.

"We started with 17 members and three blankets," Knittle said. "But now we have close to 98 people in our membership. About 30 of those members come to our monthly meetings, but all together we bring in 60 to 70 blankets every month," she added.

Knittle estimates that each blanket takes approximately 20 hours to complete. To date, the chapter has donated more than 5,000 blankets in Illinois Valley and throughout the county.

Once finished, the child-sized blankets are folded, wrapped in yarn, beautifully decorated with a special poem on a tag and then finally stamped with the Project Linus logo.

The stamp also includes the first name of the person who made the blanket.

"Charles Schultz was aware of the founder's efforts to supply children with blankets, so he wanted to put his comic strip character, Linus, on the stamp," said Knittle. "The character

really does epitomize what Project Linus is -- the little boy with the blanket and his thumb in his mouth," Knittle explained.

According to her, the blankets are donated locally to several organizations including American Red Cross, Great Beginnings, WIC, I.V. Safe House Alliance, Women's Crisis Support Team, Lovejoy Hospice and four different departments at Three Rivers Community Hospital, including the birthing center.

The blankets are made thanks to numerous donations, but still, most members have to buy most of their own materials, including yarn, fabric, batting, sewing machines and so on, Knittle said.

According to Knittle, a handful of members are from Illinois Valley. One, who can't put a price on the blankets, is a Selma resident, Melanie Tehan.

Tehan, who has been a member for all six years of the chapter's existence, said that the stories they get back of children who received their blankets, are priceless.

"We say we make hugs for kids in the form of blankets," Tehan said.

"Our blankets sort of give the children a big hug and make them feel a little better," she said. "One time I got a 'thank you' letter from a gentleman whose son was admitted to the hospital, and the boy was screaming and hollering and wouldn't settle down.

"Somebody got him one of our blankets and wrapped him up, and he calmed right down. Stories like that just warm our hearts," said Tehan, who is also a member of the Deer Creek Family Community Education (FCE) chapter.

Tehan retired to Illinois

Valley from Southern California and wanted to learn how to quilt.

"That was going to be my hobby," she said. "I saw an ad in a newspaper for a group wanting to start up, so I went to the first meeting and I've been with Project Linus ever since.

"I had some experience quilting before I joined, but all the ladies are very willing to share ideas and help others to learn new techniques," Tehan said.

She added that her primary reason for joining Project Linus and FCE was to do more community service, as she "wasn't able to do that before she retired."

"A small group of local Project Linus members met at Carole Leaverton's house for a "Make-a-Blanket" day on March 3," she added. "We completed three pinwheel quilt tops, which will be sewn into quilts and turned in at the next meeting on Monday, March 28.

"Carole graciously hosts our make-a-blanket days, usually two or three a year, and we have those who help measure, mark, cut, press and sew.

"There's always an opportunity to learn something new, share patterns, and contribute to the community in a meaningful way," Tehan stated.

Next month, the Josephine County chapter of Project Linus will celebrate its sixth anniversary. Their next meeting will be held Monday, March 28 at JJ North's in Grants Pass at 11 a.m. Members meet on last Mondays at the same place and time, except they meet a week earlier in May because of Memorial Day, and they don't meet in December.

For more information on Project Linus, visit www.projectlinus.org or phone Knittle at 479-8598.

than \$2,000 "in drug money" and more than "\$2,700 worth (3 ounces) of finished methamphetamine product."

Investigators also found "a substantial amount of meth packaging material, scales and user paraphernalia."

'Crystal meth' seized by JOINT in Grants Pass

A quantity of "crystal meth," believed more potent than the powdered form of methamphetamine usually found in the area, was seized in rural Grants Pass.

Josephine Interagency Narcotics Team (JOINT) also identified the suspect, John Michael Szody, 49, as a meth dealer. He was taken to county jail on charges of delivery of a controlled substance, and possession of a precursor substance, both related to meth.

During the JOINT search warrant service at 198 Pinwheel Lane on Tuesday, March 15, officers also found Betty Jo Morse, 37. Charges against her were to be referred to the district attorney's office.

On Pinwheel Lane, JOINT officers seized more

Building new fire stations on time

By **SHANE WELSH**
Staff Writer

The permit process for building new fire stations in Cave Junction, O'Brien, and Selma is finally complete.

A bond to fund the project was approved more than two years ago. After battling several problems obtaining permits, Batzer (the Medford construction firm that successfully bid for the contract) now has the green light to complete the new Illinois Valley Fire District (IVFD) stations.

During an IVFD Board of Directors meeting Thursday night, March 17 at administrative headquarters, Chief Harry Rich detailed work completed on each station so far.

"Understand that all project timelines are tentative," said Rich. "Right now, Batzer is ahead of schedule.

"We did have some change orders, such as the ADA lifts that have to be added to stations 1 and 2 (Cave Junction and Selma). We also had to add a shower facility for our crews upstairs," said the chief.

Rich presented a computer slide show while providing details of photos taken during various construction stages.

"At Station 1 in Cave Junction, (Batzer) removed a fill placed there when the district bought the property," Rich said. "It was not compacted; it was not tested, nor was the soil sampled.

"They had to remove all of the soil (from the rear of the property) and replace it. They brought in 1,245 tons of shale so we would have a solid foundation to build our station on," he said.

Besides the soil replacement photos, Rich showed views of a new 1,000-gallon septic tank, tree removal, and dismantling of an old shop at the CJ site. He also praised the work of local subcontractors and expressed appreciation for community support.

According to Rich, the construction project is moving on schedule.

"When Batzer started, they began putting up the inside walls first because the materials for the outside hadn't arrived yet," said the chief. "Now, the second floor (for Selma station) is almost complete. You can't appreciate how big these buildings are until you're there," he said.

After showing several photos of the heavy steel construction used in Station 3 in O'Brien, Rich noted, "If these aren't earthquake proof, I don't know what is. We did real good in buying

these buildings.

"I can't be more pleased with Batzer. They are right on schedule," he said.

Scott Heroux, Batzer project manager, addressed the board to answer questions and present a tentative project timeline.

"The original schedule had the completion of the station in Cave Junction at the middle of August, and Selma the last week of July," said Heroux.

"Our contract had a

scheduled duration of 150 days after the permit process had been completed," he said. "We had our designs far enough along that we were able to start the ground work in December (2004)," he said.

Heroux indicated that current projections for project completion at the O'Brien station is June 30; the Selma station is estimated at July 1; and the Cave Junction station should be complete by July 21.

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