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Quilts of Valor: Cindy Hoover wraps the gift of love



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State Quilts of Valor Coordinator Cindy Hoover in her sewing room at her Lacey home in Panorama.

PHOTO BY SHIRLEY STIRLING.



Posted Friday, January 27, 2023 5:55 pm

By Shirley Stirling

Cindy Hoover explained that the quilts she and her group make are labors of love and that they wrap this gift around active service members and veterans touched by war.

“Notice that I say, ‘wrap;’ we literally call it wrapping the quilts, when we award them,” she told me. Her volunteers meticulously plan, cut, piece, and stitch quilt tops using their own sewing machines. The quilt tops are then matched with batting and a backing, quilted in overall patterns

using longarm machines, then bound. The stitching patterns are said to be as lovely as the pieced fabric.

A label on each quilt shows who created it and the name of the recipient. These volunteers have a slogan, Quilts = Healing. This is the work of the Quilts of Valor Foundation (QOVF), a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization founded in 2003. Worldwide, by the end of 2022, they have awarded 336,061 quilts, according to Hoover. Of these, 1,260 were awarded to service members in Thurston County!

45 local quilters of valor here

Cindy is the coordinator of the Washington State Quilts of Valor, but a member of the local The Thurston County group, named the Stars and Stripes. It was organized by Linda Schmitt in 2009 and is now led by Sherry Houser. They have 45 members; of the 1,260 quilts awarded to date, 75 were awarded last year. The group meets for a monthly business meeting plus a sew-in day each month.

In 2022 they received community service awards for their volunteer work both from the Washington State Department of Labor & Industries, and from the Sacajawea Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution. Also, the Stars and Stripes group was recently approved to receive a \$10,000 grant from the Nisqually Indian Tribe for their work throughout Thurston County.

Awarding the quilts personally is important to QOVF members. In the past, volunteers did not often receive the feedback that means so much. The quilts were sent to distant locales such as military hospitals or bases. Now applications may be filled locally for service members and veterans, giving volunteers the opportunity to express their appreciation in person and receive feedback from those who receive quilts.

Quilts may be awarded to a veteran or service member in their own home or at a public ceremony for one or more awardees. The largest ceremony conducted by the Stars and Stripes Group was to veterans who were residents of Drexel House II in Olympia, with 46 quilts awarded in 2017. Other groups include law enforcement (Olympia police, Lacey police, Thurston County Sheriff's office), VFW, and Panorama. Cindy commented, "It is such a joy to award our quilts to veterans. I think that we receive much more than we give."

How did Cindy arrive at this moment?

Cindy Hoover shared her home and sewing room for this article. She lives in Lacey at Panorama with her husband, Alan. She first helped locally with quilts for veterans on an informal basis and then joined the group in 2014, eventually becoming Washington State coordinator in November 2021.

Cindy and her husband are retired educators. He was a teacher and school principal. She has worked as a teacher at all levels and served as a high school counselor for 15 years, and later consulted with educational service districts and the state senate. They are a couple with high energy, have worked hard in their professions, raised three children (and now have six grandchildren), ran an antiques business, and pursued many additional interests and hobbies, from raising horses to Master Gardening. She took to quilting and became a skilled quilter and quilting teacher.

Alan served as a Navy Corpsman with the Marines in Vietnam. Their son served in the Marine Corps between the two Gulf wars, and her brother served in the Air Force in Vietnam as an advisor and sharpshooter. "I have a strong connection to the military and I feel that making comforting patriotic quilts is a worthy way to use my skill and spend my time," she explained.

Washington State has 21 groups, about 450 members, and awarded 1,000 quilts last year. As state coordinator, her duties include public speaking, consulting with quilt groups, helping them get the materials they need, and operating the state organization. In the last year, four new groups were organized. She exclaimed to this writer, "I don't have as much time to sew now! I used to make five or six QOVF quilts per year, and now I am down to three or four!"

National Sew Day & the National Block Drive: February 4

Once a year, on the first Saturday in February, QOVF volunteers and the public can participate in a nationwide event called National Sew Day. On that day, participants will receive cut quilt pieces to sew at machines provided on-site at selected venues. In Olympia, this is scheduled for Saturday, February 4, , from 10 a.m.to 3 p.m. PM at [Quality Sewing and Vacuum](https://www.qualitysewing.com/location-olympia) (<https://www.qualitysewing.com/location-olympia>), 1200 Cooper Point Rd SW, Unit 108, on Olympia's west side.

This free event is part of the National Block Drive, to encourage the sewing of quilt blocks in QOVF's annual quilt block pattern. Each year a new quilt block is promoted for QOVF quilts. In 2023, it is the Split Back Star Block. In 2022, over 6,000 quilt blocks were sewn for this project.

To participate, [click this link](#)

(<https://qovf.app.neoncrm.com/np/clients/qovf/eventRegistration.jsp?event=977&&publicNologin=1>).

Photobook fundraiser

Cindy explained that quilting is an expensive hobby.

The QOVF uses only high-quality fabric and thread, and pays professional quilters for the who use longarm quilting machines for their services. Some donations are received, As a fundraiser, the QOVF offers its own coffee table book featuring quilt photos and 25 quilt patterns. The book, [All-Star Quilts of Valor: 25 Patriotic Patterns from Star Designers](#), is \$24.99 and all proceeds from the books purchased directly from QOVF or QOVF groups will support the mission of awarding Quilts of Valor. Interested? Email Cindy Hoover [using this link](#) (<mailto:cindy.hoover@qovf.org>)

Shirley Stirling, of Lacey, writes about good things people in Thurston County are doing. If you'd like to nominate someone to be profiled, contact her at shirley@theJOLTnews.com (<mailto:shirley@theJOLTnews.com>) or comment below.

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 **Sehouser**

Thank you, Shirley, for writing this beautiful article about our Stars and Stripes group and Cindy!

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