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Flying Needles collects 293 handmade items for homeless

WILLIAMSBURG, VA, August 30, 2017 – The Flying Needles, a Local Yarn Shop, collected 293 handmade items from its Handmade for the Homeless event, which ended Aug 12.

For two months, The Flying Needles collected handmade items, like, mittens, hats, scarves, socks, etc., to donate to the Harbor, a day center for the homeless located at the Williamsburg House of Mercy. The Harbor is a collaboration between Williamsburg House of Mercy and Greater Williamsburg Outreach Mission, united to serve the homeless.

During the Handmade for the Homeless event, The Flying Needles raffled off the **GRAND PRIZE**, a \$350 value, sponsored by Bryson Distributing, Yarn Rep Toni Lipe, and Virginia Hand-dyer Natasha Laity of Unplanned Peacock. Everyone who donated a handmade item was entered into the drawing.

The timing of the **Handmade for the Homeless Project** is perfect, said Williamsburg House of Mercy, Executive Director Shannon Woloszynowski. “We’re coming into the Winter Shelter season, and people don’t really think about his until November. To have these items in September as we gear up for Winter Shelter is ideal.”

“Those who knit, crochet and use fibers to make things have huge hearts,” said The Flying Needles Owner Susan Dickerson. “This Handmade for the Homeless Project was a vehicle to channel those compassionate souls in a fun and meaningful way, but we had no idea how generous The Flying Needles community could be. Our hearts were overwhelmed with joy at how many handmade items our inaugural year produced!”

House of Mercy continues to collect items for the homeless and here's how YOU can help. Winter is fast approaching, and the following items are needed: hats, gloves, scarves, and socks are a great need as the weather starts to turn colder. Other items in great demand include: men's underwear (new), laundry cards, laundry detergent pods, bus tickets, diapers, new 2 or 3 person tents, new sleeping bags, wipes, toilet paper, razors, deodorant, toothpaste, and small-sized shaving cream.

Socks are among the most needed items at homeless shelters, yet among the least-often donated. "People don't think to donate socks," Woloszynowski said. It's such a problem, that shelter groups tend to end up purchasing socks for those in need. Even regular donors of clothing such as coats and pants will usually wear their own socks until they have holes and then throw them away. Because of the shortage, the nation's homeless population is constantly at risk of serious foot disease and, during winter months, in severe danger posed by the cold.

And interestingly enough, for those interested in making hats and mittens, the homeless population tends to hang onto their hats and mittens longer. "I've had guys come back a year later with the same hat. They just wear them longer."

The homeless population in Williamsburg consists of men, women, and many times, children. Numbers ebb and flow throughout the year, but late fall and winter are particularly difficult as seasonal jobs begin lay-offs and employment becomes increasingly hard to find.

PHOTO CAPTION: The 8-foot table was laden with bags and bags of handmade items donated for The Flying Needles' Handmade for the Homeless Project, which ran from June 10 to Aug. 12. The Flying Needles customers also brought purchased items of coats, new underwear and socks for children, men & women, diapers and personal toiletry items. The Flying Needles Handmade for the Homeless Project collected 293 handmade items and donated them to the Harbor, a day center for the homeless located at the Williamsburg House of Mercy. The Harbor is a collaboration between Williamsburg House of Mercy and Greater Williamsburg Outreach Mission, united to serve the homeless. Watch for The Flying Needles' second Handmade for the Homeless event, which will kick off in June 2018. From left are: Marsha McAlister, Janey Janson, Candice Michalik, daughters of Williamsburg House of Mercy, Executive Director Shannon Woloszynowski, and Shannon, The Flying Needles Owner Susan Dickerson, Kathy Michel, Amy Anderson and Trish Whisnant. Additionally, Michel won The Flying Needles' Grand Prize, a \$350 value, sponsored by Bryson Distributing, Yarn Rep Toni Lipe, and Virginia Hand-dyer Natasha Laity of Unplanned Peacock.