Using Your Creativity To Help Those in Need

Description

A finger puppet from Craft Hope's project with Country Woman magazine

Last week on the blog, I wrote an introduction to craftivism, an international creative movement that I started in 2003. As I noted last week, within craftivism, I created three different tenets to help illustrate whether something falls under that umbrella:'Â 1) donation (creating items for others in need), 2) beautification (improving your local environment with handmade items), and 3) notification (making items that bring awareness to a cause, illness or issue).

As each of the three tenets will be receiving its own post here, this week's

post is about donation. People have a wide-range of feelings about donation. Some can't get enough of it. Others want to write a check for the cause instead. However, most people tend to agree that, in general, donation is a good thing, which is great, because tangible items are needed for all sorts of situations.

Even though programs like this have always existed, when I started writing about charity craft projects in 2003, there were very few of them noted on the web. Therefore, I'm happy to report that a Google search for charity and sewing turned up 1.5+ million results! How exciting! Sometimes in the face of tragedy or loss it's hard to not feel totally helpless. And in some cases, giving money is the best, most helpful thing you can do. However, in cases where tangible items are needed, making something can do a lot, too. Here are a few examples of just some of the ways that people have used their craft

skills to help others.

One of the bags Cinnamon Cooper made and gave to a local Chicago charity

Cinnamon Cooper'Â

Cinnamon Cooper, a craftivist from Chicago, makes chic bags for sale on her site, poise.cc. In an email interview, she notes that sewing is her craft medium of choice for her craftivist work because it gives her the chance to make items "faster and sturdier" than other avenues.

Along with creating bags for sale, Cinnamon also makes them for local organizations. When I asked why she did this, her response was amazing: "Åmaking shoulder bags for local organizations that support young mothers

makes me feel like I'm making the life of a young parent a little easier, and a little prettier. Preparing satchels for back-to-school events makes me feel like I'm making the lives of children a little easier, making it easier for them to get to and from class makes it easier for them to learn."Â

One of the bags Cinnamon Cooper made and gave to a local Chicago charity

What I like about Cinnamon's work is that she is connecting with the need all of us have to feel special and noticed. By sharing her work with people in need, she is sharing the notion that whatever our circumstances, we are all worthy of well-made and aesthetically-pleasing things. One of the things I hear over and over again when it comes to recipients getting handmade

items is that they feel “special.” I love how our craft skills can gives us the change to make someone in a disaster or rough situation feel that way, despite whatever else they may be going through.

Craft Hope

On the other hand, Jade Laswell, who started Craft Hope in 2009, collects handmade donated items for various international projects. Her blog explains why she started Craft Hope better than I ever could, “Åfrom time to time people ask me how I started Craft Hope. I always respond with, it started with a dress. Twenty-nine pillowcase dresses to be exact. I started this little blog and named it Craft Hope. I probably had twenty followers and they were all blog friends. I said, ‘let’s make pillowcase dresses for orphans in Mexico’ and they said ‘okay.’ And the rest is history.”Â

Quilts collected by Craft Hope to send to the charity We Are Kenya

Since that humble beginning, Craft Hope projects have donated more than 170,000 handmade items to people in need around the world. I think it is the time and care and empathy that people put into their donated items that I find the most magical, all those stitches, done with either hand or machine, made for someone else to receive.

Women crocheting on the steps of the Helsinki Cathedral from Flickr user timelessriver ‘Â ‘Â© COPYRIGHT Ann L Andersson https://www.flickr.com/photos/timelessriver

Blankets at the Helsinki Cathedral

In 2011, several Finnish groups decided to get together and see if they could: 1) break the Guinness World Record for the largest crochet quilt and 2) collect 1,000 quilts for charity. Over all, they ended up collecting 7,800 quilts to donate to a local organization. This particular project, while it didn’t break the world record, due to its size and volume of color, got much attention in international media.

Photo of some of the 7,800 crochet quilts laid on the steps of the Helsinki Cathedral by Flickr user'Â timelessriver 'Â 'Â© COPYRIGHT Ann L Andersson https://www.flickr.com/photos/timelessriver

I love how much the colors pop when put together!

For those of you already making things for others, what have you made or whom for? There are so many incredibly projects and organizations out there, I always love it when people share their favorite places to help out!

[The slider's photo of the quilts is by Flickr user 68797416@N06.]

CATEGORY

1. ART AND CRAFT
2. TEXTILES IN COMMUNITY

POST TAG

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