



## 4-H Quilts of Valor Challenge-Lessons Learned



2011 is the first year of a two year Nebraska 4-H Quilts of Valor Challenge where youth are being challenged to make quilts for U.S. soldiers who have been “touched by war.” University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension challenged 4-H youth to create Quilts of Valor – resulting in over 40 quilts created by 4-H youth and volunteers. The quilts were presented to the National Quilts of Valor Foundation on September 3, 2011 in a formal presentation at the Nebraska State Fair. Quilts of Valor representatives Sara Kenny and Julia Schroeder indicated that all of the 4-H quilts will be donated to the Nebraska National Guard. Sara says, “I would like to tell you that we don’t need 40 quilts for wounded Nebraska soldiers, but we do.”

Some of the Lessons Learned from this first year of the QOV 4-H Challenge includes:

### **Developing the Challenge:**

- Nebraska Extension staff worked closely with the National Quilts of Valor Foundation to create and organize this two year Challenge. Phone calls and phone conferences were held to develop the structure of the Challenge.

### **Promotion and Publicizing the 4-H QOV Challenge:**

- Mass emails were sent through the University Extension system to give QOV Challenge details
- Instructions, guidelines, and other information was placed on the UNL 4-H Website <http://4h.unl.edu/>. In the center column of the website, scroll down to the Quilts of Valor logo and paragraph.
- Phone contacts were made with the Nebraska State Quilt Guild to ask for their endorsement and promotion. The State Guild then promoted it and sent word across Nebraska and to local quilt organizations.
- Promotion of the Challenge was also through the Nebraska Independent Quilt Shops who sent information to their membership.
- Newspaper coverage was promoted through the University Media Department and sent to newspapers across the state.
- Local Extension staff worked with local media (TV, newspapers, radio etc.) to promote the Challenge and give publicity about local workshops and accomplishments
- Multiple emails were sent to Extension staff throughout the year with promotional pieces offered.
- A portion of the “State Fair Webinar” to update all Extension staff about the upcoming Nebraska State Fair included information about the Challenge and plans for the formal presentation of the quilts.
- Local Extension staff gave programs to local Rotaries, Chambers of Commerce, Quilt Guilds, Legions, etc. about the 4-H Challenge. Individuals and or organizations donated fabric and/or monetary gifts to purchase fabric for the quilts.
- Individuals donated long-arm quilting – or quilted the QOV at a reduce cost for 4-H youth.
- Adults volunteered to help youngsters make quilts.

### **Fundraising:**

- In some cases, individual 4-Hers/families purchased fabric and paid for the expenses of making the quilt(s).
- As a result of publicity and promotion, organizations such as quilt guilds, Rotary etc. donated fabric and/or monetary donations to cover the costs of making quilts.
- Quilt makers in the community donated a variety of amounts of fabric to be made into QOV.
- Local businesses donated toward the project. For example, in Hastings, NE local Extension staff was approached by the manager of the Dairy Queen in Hastings. The manager offered

to have 4-Hers work a two-hour shift during the busy summer supper time and help take orders and do whatever else needed to be done. When talking to customers, 4-Hers were encouraged to tell about 4-H and the special project they were working on and trying to raise funds for. The manager gave the group 10% of the profits for the evening shift. Julie's group raised about \$200.

### **Creating Quilts:**

Extension Staff created the Guidelines for the Challenge using recommendations from the National Quilts of Valor website. Remember, we are honoring our military personnel who are protecting our freedom, so we want the quilt to be of good quality.

- 4-H Quilts of Valor were made by individual 4-H members and/or volunteers.
- In some cases, a group of 4-Hers worked together to create a quilt with staff or volunteer supervision.
- In workshop settings, 4-Hers created QOV quilts. Extension staff organized the workshops and suggest the following:
  - Use a quilt pattern that is easy for sewers to complete in workshop settings.
  - Find one parent/volunteer for each youngster sewing if they are beginning or middle level sewers
  - Use 4-H fabric and a fabric that identifies your state (Husker fabric for Nebraska) for personal touches. Soldiers love the personal touches.
  - Allow more than sewing time to complete the quilt.
  - Follow safety procedures during the construction of the quilts.
  - Have 4-H youth write a story about their quilt and quilt making that can be included with the quilt as it is given to a soldier.
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### **Document the Quilts of Valor Project:**

- 4-Hers/Volunteers took digital pictures of youth working on quilts.
- Extension staff collected pictures from across the state of youth involved in the Challenge and used free computer software (Microsoft PhotoStory) to create documentation that can be shown at a variety of events including at county/state fairs. The pictures were emailed to one staff member who organized and created the Photostory.
- National QOV would like to see video documentation of youth creating quilts and the finished product.
- TV stations and newspapers interviewed youth about their projects.

### **Exhibiting Quilts of Valor at County/State Fairs:**

- Quilts of Valor were entered at county/state fairs within the project guidelines of Citizenship, Design Decisions and Quilt Quest in Nebraska.
- Quilts not entered at the State Fair as an exhibit, were collected in the Quilt Quest project area and displayed with other quilts. A special recognition certificate was given to each youngster who was a part of making a Quilt of Valor.
- At the Nebraska State Fair, the quilts were folded in thirds/fourths and hung on pipe/drapes in the same manner as many quilt shows.

### **Presenting Quilts of Valor to the National Organization:**

- Extension Educators held a conference call to plan the Quilt of Valor Presentation at the 2011 Nebraska State Fair.
- The presentation event was held on Saturday of Labor Day weekend in the 4-H building at the Nebraska State Fair on one of the stages in the building

- Stuart Shephard, Director of the Nebraska 4-H Foundation hosted the Nation Quilts of Valor Foundation representatives and the presentation event.
- 20+ 4-Hers attended the presentation along with family and friends. Others filled the stage area for the morning presentation.
- Jana Kruger, Chair of the Nebraska State Fair Board welcomed those present to the State Fair presentation.
- The presentation was publicized in advance and Extension offices invited 4-H youth/volunteers to attend the celebration event.
- The Quilts were individually shown on stage and the name of the maker(s), quilter and the county that it came from was read during the presentation. Youth in the audience who created a quilt were asked to stand as their quilt was shown on the stage.
- The Nebraska 4-H Foundation hosted a lunch for Quilts of Valor representatives and staff to discuss the first year of the Challenge and planning/promotion for the second year.