



Darla Brink has sewn 11 Quilts of Valor for injured soldiers.

Quilts comfort injured soldiers

[Jo Colvin, Lifestyle Reporter](#)

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The sewing room is Darla Brink's haven. It's a peaceful, soothing place where she escapes to stitch her cares away.

But she knows that some people aren't so lucky. Instead of the steady hum of the sewing machine, they hear the whirs and clicks of monitors. Instead of recalling fond times making warm quilts, they flash back to times of war and feel cold with fear. And instead of feeling relaxed, they feel pain.

The room they are in is a hospital room.

And from Brink's own haven in Alexandria, she is trying to create one for them.

An avid quilter, Brink saw an article in a quilting magazine about a program called "Quilts of Valor." Through the program, volunteers make quilts that are distributed to service members who have been injured in the war on terror and are in military hospitals around the world.

"This is something I can do," Brink recalled thinking. "I can make a difference in someone's life. They [the troops] do so much. What's making a quilt?"

Brink immediately got to work on her job as a "piecer," in which she sews the top and back to the quilt. When complete, she mails it to a "longarmer," a person who applies the batting and does the quilting.

The longarmer then sends the quilt back to Brink. She binds it, makes and attaches a label, and sews a matching pillowcase.

She then mails the finished quilt to a military hospital, where it is presented in a ceremony to an injured soldier.

At first, Brink planned on making six quilts. But she was hooked. So she thought, "no, I'll do 10."

"I quit saying that and decided I'll just keep making them," Brink said. She is currently working on her 12th quilt since she started in November.

"My original goal was to deplete my fabric supply," she said with a laugh. "It didn't work out that way. I've been buying it by the bolt."

Along with each quilt she sends, Brink includes a personal message to the unknown recipient. She does sign her name to the letters, but does not expect a reply.

That's why she was shocked one day when she picked up the phone and the man on the other end said, "I'm calling about the most precious gift I've ever gotten. It will be with me always."

"I was completely speechless," Brink said.

As she flipped the pages of her meticulously recorded Quilts of Valor scrapbook, she pointed out the most special page – a letter from another recipient of her gift from the heart.

"Thank you so much for the lovely quilt," he wrote. "It is very reassuring to know there are many faithful patriots in the country who support the troops as they come home from war. I can't tell you how much this means to me...God bless and keep you."

Knowing she has made a difference, no matter how small, is worth every minute Brink stitches away in her special room.

"Hopefully, it brings a little cheer to someone," she concluded.

And along with the cheer, a safe place, a comfort – and a haven of their own to blanket their road to recovery.

Editor's note: For more information about Quilts of Valor, visit the Web site www.qovf.org.