

## HANDS of LOVE BLANKET

by Mary Ann & Ana Ka'ahanui

In 2008, as my sister Barbara Zetts Cantrell was losing her battle with brain cancer, she transitioned into a nursing home where she would spend her final days. As a family we wanted her to know that we were with her in spirit at all times. Inspired by something I must have seen in a quilting book, I set about tracing the hand of each member of the family including Barb's. With the assistance of my daughter Ana, we made our first **HANDS OF LOVE BLANKET**. Positioning Barb's hand in the center, we placed our parents underneath and her husband and three children above. Each of the four siblings occupied a corner with their spouses, children and grandchildren and we added the words **LOVING BARBARA**. The blanket, a visible reminder of the abiding love and prayers of her family, remained on her bed each day until her passing.

Our parents have now moved to Assisted Living. Even though we all visit as often as possible, we wanted them to have a constant affirmation of the love and support of their children and grandchildren. And so, again with the assistance of my daughter, I made a similar blanket for them. It has thirty hands including Barb's and a dog's paw, so I like to call it "150 Fingers and a Paw of Love!"

There are probably as many reasons to make a blanket like this as there are methods of making it. Students could express appreciation to a teacher, team members to a coach, club members to a leader and so forth. Here are the methods we used and the lessons we learned.

### BARB'S BLANKET:

- Store-bought plush blanket approx. 60" x 70"
- Assorted felt
- Bonding material such as Wonder Under
- Fabric for hearts
- Scissors
- Pinking shears
- Iron
- Paint pens
- Paper for tracing the hands – be sure to write the name on each paper and if it is a child's hand note the year or their age at the time.
- Light box or window and sunlight



1. Trace the wrong side of each hand onto the bonding material. Following manufacturer's directions, bond each hand to a piece of felt and cut out.
2. Iron bonding material to the wrong side of the fabric(s) you will use for the hearts. Cut out hearts with pinking shears. Be sure to make extra.
3. Write the name of each person with a paint pen on a heart. It helps to write the names on paper first so that you can see how to center the names on the hearts.
4. Bond each heart to the palm of the hand.
5. Arrange the hands and words and bond into place. You may want to pad a table with blankets or towels and do the bonding there, rather than using an ironing board.

## MAKING LETTERS:

1. Select a font that has thick capital letters that will show up well. We really liked *BERLIN SANS FB DEMI*. Determine the letters you will need and enlarge them to 300 pts. You will have to manually enter 300 in the size box. This should make the letters approx. 3" high.
2. Print out the letters, trace the wrong side onto the bonding material, fuse to felt and cut out.

## LESSON LEARNED:

Bonding will not hold up well on the pile of a plush blanket if the blanket is routinely washed. Eventually the edges of the hands begin to come up. I went back later and hand stitched everything down.

## ZETTS FAMILY BLANKET:

We used the same hands for the adults on Barb's Blanket but got new tracings for the children who are now 6 years older.

- Store-bought plush blanket approx. 60" x 70"
- Assorted felt
- Fabric for hearts
- Scissors
- Pinking shears
- Iron
- Permanent Marking pen
- Freezer paper
- Embroidery thread
- Old thread for basting
- Paper for tracing the hands – be sure to write the name on each paper and if it is a child's hand note the year or their age at the time.
- Light box or window and sunlight



1. Trace the wrong side of each hand onto the freezer paper. Iron each hand to a piece of felt and cut out. (Save the freezer paper hands because they can be re-used.)
2. Trace hearts onto chosen fabric. Cut out hearts with pinking shears. Be sure to make extra.
3. Write the name of each person with a permanent marker on a heart. It helps to write the names on paper first so that you can see how to center the names on the hearts.
4. With 2 strands of embroidery thread stitch each heart to the palm of the hand with a running stitch.
5. This time each hand and letter was hand-basted into position then hand-stitched down with a running stitch along the edge using a strand of my mother's embroidery thread. It helps to start at the base of the middle finger and then work around the hand. You will find that the hands puff up a little because of the thick pile of the blanket.

If you have an occasion to make a **HANDS OF LOVE BLANKET** we'd love to hear about it. Please send your story, the methods you used to make the blanket and a photo to [MaryAnn@DollmakersJourney.com](mailto:MaryAnn@DollmakersJourney.com)

