

## INDIVIDUAL PROJECT/ PROGRAM/ EVENT:

**Note:** Any program since last year's deadline of March 15 is eligible.

**Category:** (Please circle or highlight the category for which this program is being submitted.)

- Women - Education - Community - International - Cultural - Diversity

**Title:**

*Quilt Project for South African Children*

**Describe your project/ program/ event in 150-300 words. Be sure to include:**

- **how the project addressed AAUW's mission** (15 points)
- **branch goals** in doing this program (10 points)
- **specific action steps** in planning this program (15 points)
- **involvement of other community groups** (if any) (10 points)
- **number of members** (5 points) and **nonmembers** (5 points) **in planning and in putting on the program**
- **steps taken for community visibility** (10 points)
- **number of members** (5 points) and **nonmembers** (5 points) who attended or benefited
- **number of new members** who joined (if any) (5 points)
- **measurable impact on the community** (10 points)
- **lessons learned** for future programs/ projects/ events (5 points)

**Attach copies** of newsletter and newspaper articles about this project/ program/ event.

(No more than 4 pages maximum)

Mail or email the original of your entire application with supporting materials to:

- Peggy Kelland, AAUW-NYS Program Vice President
- 13 Susan Lane, Poughkeepsie, NY 12603

[smkell45@aol.com](mailto:smkell45@aol.com)

Questions? (845)297-0507

## Adirondack Branch

### Description

Every other year, Karen Brackett and other staff members of Skidmore College take twenty students to a school and orphanage in South Africa. All of the orphans are HIV positive and most of their parents died of AIDS. The college students teach lessons and plan activities for the students and participate in outings that the children can rarely enjoy because of financial restraints.

One year Karen was looking for something that students could take to present to the children. She noticed that the only blankets the kids owned were brown, scratchy ones that weren't very warm. Even though we think of Africa as being hot, the evenings get cool and they do have a winter season when covering is necessary. The students even take a covering to school since there is no heat in the buildings. Thus, the idea of quilts was born. In the past, they donated seventy-five quilts.

This year, there are 129 students in the orphanage. Karen's goal is to have 140 quilts completed by mid-April. She isn't able to start the project with her students until October when the new school year is underway. No pressure there!!! She found a fabric supplier in New York City who gives her a decent price for African print fabric. She supplies the African print and the seamstress provides an American print for the other side and the batting. Patti Estabrook, owner of Patti's Quilt Shop at 485 Glen Street in Glens Falls, provides machines and an additional place for students to work one evening a week and on Saturdays.

Being a seamstress myself (not a quilter), I happened into Patti's on a Saturday when both Karen and Patti were deep into a planning session. I was first drawn to the colorful bolts of African prints and then to the love that Karen exuded for the children. Adirondack Branch had just finished a project so, thinking of all the quilters and quilt groups in the area, I asked Karen if she could use some help. I ended up taking all the African material she had with her. I presented the idea of quilt-making first to my AAUW book group and then to the entire group at a meeting. The idea was accepted enthusiastically. Even those members who didn't sew, knew someone who did.

Planning Steps      April, 2008 – March, 2009  
Goal

Karen liked the idea that she would start the school year with a stash of quilts and we liked the idea that we had plenty of time and could work the quilt making into our own schedules.

My first session was at the Queensbury Senior Center on April 14<sup>th</sup>. Karen was there with a multitude of trifolds. Linda Campopiano was able to get an article published in the Post Star, but we only had about 20 people there. Karen is extremely intelligent, but she also has a great sense of humor and a warm personality. We had the promise of 10 quilts on that first day as people chose the patterns they wanted.

I decided to stay at Q Senior Center to use the huge tables for cutting fabric. It was all 50" wide and Karen decided that 70" long would be fine. That was also convenient since batting comes in 50X70" precut bolts. I cut all of the African fabric and stacked it into canvas carryalls. I had another bag of scrap fabric since no two bolts were the same length. Our clever quilters even worked the scraps into gorgeous quilts (but I guess that's what quilting is all about). I ended up with fifty-five pieces of African fabric. It sounded like a lot of quilts...but that became our goal.

- Create and donate 55 quilts
- Draw community members and quilt groups into the project
- Invite new contacts to become members
- Warm the body and heart of an African child
- Support the Skidmore College students

Patti let me use one of her trifolds for future presentations. After hearing Karen's explanation and stories, I was primed. I obviously needed quilters, so I went to two of the best, Joyce Smith and Mary King. They gave me names of several groups and offered to speak to the ones they were involved in. They went in armed with fabric and were very successful. Word spread quickly. Throughout this project, showing finished quilts was the best motivator along with the trifold of photos of the children.

### Community Involvement

Mary King took fabric to **Northern Lights Quilters** in Brant Lake and came back for more. Joyce Smith presented the idea to the **Tuesday Quilters** and a dozen more pieces of fabric were gone. I took the trifold to my church group the **Presbyterian Quilters** and eight more pieces were gone. Five employees at **JoAnn Fabric shop** were quilters. One of them took four pieces herself. AAUW member Kathy Black worked at the shop part-time, so it was easy to keep track of progress and she also is a neighbor of Patti Eastabrook. Several community members at the **Queensbury Senior Center** took ten pieces.

At our April AAUW Scholarship Brunch I did a brief presentation, displayed some of the finished quilts and handed out fabric to **members**.

I have to add at this point that there was a sister of a church member who took fabric home to Colorado with her and mailed the finished quilt. An AAUW member took fabric to her winter home in Florida and mailed a beautiful quilt back. Another member broke her sewing machine working on a quilt. She took the fabric with her when she visited her sister in Texas and finished it there. After six quilts, my machine also gave out. I miss it, but I'm bonding just fine with my new Husqvarna.

Patti's Quilt Shop is the collection center for our quilts. Every time I had a plastic bin stuffed full I would drop it off. I had given my two phone numbers and address (centrally located off exit 19) to people so that they could drop off there or call me to pick up.

### Members and non-members who benefited # who joined

Only about five AAUW members were members of the quilt groups. The quilt groups have about 20 members in each, so we reached approximately 100 quilters. We had seventy members in our branch. Obviously, not all of our members sew. There were about fifteen members who took material to sew and another five who took some pieces for friends to make.

Karen Brackett spoke at our September meeting at Wiawaka where we proudly displayed thirty-seven quilts and invited perspective members to join in our pot luck dinner. We gained five new members as a result of that meeting.

### Measurable Impact on the Community

Adirondack Branch completed its goal of contributing fifty-five quilts which is nearly one-third of Karen's total goal of 140.

I wish I could watch the children in the **Orphanage** when they select their own quilts. They have lost what little they had in life. If our quilts bring a bit of happiness to the children's dark lives, we will feel blessed. Karen has promised to share pictures and stories when the college students return in May.

## Mission

Bring members and non-members together for a common cause  
Support college students to complete their goals  
Link knowledge between South African children and American students  
Promote children's welfare

## Lessons Learned

This was a fun project with few negatives. Although I coordinated it, once the material was distributed, I simply gave reminders, issued lots of "ahs" and "wows", displayed quilts throughout the year and turned in filled bins. Every seamstress was an equal leader in reaching our goal. I was the lucky one—I got to see all of the creative finished products. (Now I want to travel with them to see the children.)  
Some of us also learned that we have a lot to learn about quilting!—but we did improve.

Some creative quilters even stitched a hidden pocket on the back in which was a book of beautiful fairies, NASCARS, a monkey—whatever object corresponded to the American print.

## Closing

The prominent remembrance I take from this project is the multitude of stories of the children and their pictures. We never wanted Karen to stop telling us of their experiences. These children receive nothing—so when they are presented with a beautiful quilt of their very own, they don't even believe it's real. There are donations and grants which will help to provide school supplies and a few other needs, but the quilts are truly appreciated.

*Respectfully submitted,*

*Kathy Hoelzel  
Adirondack Branch  
March 8, 2009*

Karen Brackett  
Skidmore College

## **Journeys & Reflections An Educational Study Program to South Africa**

The Education Studies Department at Skidmore College has an ongoing exchange since 1996 with the Edendale Primary School in South Africa. This exchange initiated by Karen Brackett of the Education Studies Department at Skidmore College and Rina Prenzler of Edendale, has allowed for several visits by administrative faculty and teachers from both programs over the last several years. In 2001 and every other year thereafter, a short-term abroad educational study program has been offered for course credit to fifteen college students. A few teachers from local community schools have also joined the group. Research endeavors include an oral history study across ethnic groups focusing on apartheid and post-apartheid eras and a study looking at reading, as well as writing practice at different grade levels. This work has been presented at conferences offered by The National Association for the Education of Young Children and The Association for Childhood Education International. History of the exchange can be accessed at [www.skidmore.edu](http://www.skidmore.edu) under the Educational Studies Department.

The Edendale Primary School was established during the "apartheid" years when there was a need for good education for children of all races at the lowest possible cost. It is located in the lovely rural area between Mamelodi, Ekhangala, and Cullinan, 30 km. out of Pretoria. The school started as a Lutheran mission school in the early 1900s, which almost a century later became the campus of the Promat College. In the 1960s it became a farm school. In 1992 it privatized and has grown to one of the best schools in the Gauteng area. The school currently has an orphanage on site for children with parents who have died of Aids.

The Journeys & Reflections: Skidmore Educational Study Program in South Africa is designed to expose Skidmore College students to the history, culture, geography and education system of South Africa. This experience helps students think globally and provides them with a powerful non-Western cultural experience. During this study abroad program students meet South African primary teachers and their students in a variety of school observations.

Local public school teachers who join us on the study tour have been involved in numerous projects. We had a teleconference in 2003 between children at Edendale and children at the Schuylerville Central School District. In 2005, we had a teleconference between the Edendale Primary School and schools in the Saratoga Springs School District. In 2007, three teachers from the Saratoga district have been invited and will participate in the next journey. Plans are under way to continue the work sharing children's stories across borders.

For the upcoming May 2007 journey several new projects are under way. One project involves working with Patti's Quilting Shop in Glens Falls to create quilts for children at Makhulong Children's Village and in other orphanages in the Pretoria area as well as, for children in the Lesotho area. Skidmore College students and the professional team participating in this journey will work with staff at Patti's on several Wednesdays and Saturdays before departure to create forty quilts (20 for infant children and 20 for preschool age children). African fabric will be used in some way in each quilt so the children will feel a sense of cultural comfort surrounding them. The finished quilts will be packed in our suitcases and delivered to the children while on route May 20-June 15, 2007. The group will also develop a suitcase program with South Africa curriculum that can be used in local schools in classroom settings or for enrichment experiences.

Newspaper Article  
and Posters distributed

## QUILT PROJECT

Skidmore College hosts an educational study program about South Africa. **Karen Brackett**, a teacher at Skidmore, has become involved in the program in a very unique way. She travels with students, faculty and friends to elementary schools in Africa every two years and takes handmade quilts to the students.

The schools involved in 2007 were the Makhulong Children's Village on the Edendale Primary School Campus, the Mahau Center in Atteridgeville and the Children in Lesotho.

Karen provides the material for the small quilts (there are two different sizes) and she is willing to give a talk to a group of seamstresses who are interested in helping to provide quilts. Do we have seamstresses who are willing to help???? Karen is coming to the **Queensbury Senior Center** on **April 14<sup>th</sup> at 2:00 PM** to explain the program and to give directions on assembling the material. They are quick and simple—an African print on one side and an American print on the other. Come and join in the fun and help the children at the same time.

Kathy Hoeltzel  
American Association  
of University Women

Adirondack Glimpses  
April 2008 —  
October 2009  
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### QUILT PROJECT UPDATE

Karen Brackett from Skidmore gave eleven women at the Queensbury Senior Center vivid images of the children of South Africa and wonderful pictures of both the students and the country itself. She explained how the quilt project started, informed us of the activities planned by the Skidmore staff and students and the selection process involved to get into the program. Karen's bright, generous spirit was apparent as she spoke about the friends she has made on former trips.

So far, there is material distributed for thirty quilts and Karen brought enough material for another twenty. I've had no trouble finding people who are willing to sew a small quilt. If you would like to participate, let me know...792-1996.

Kathy Hoeltzel

### QUILTS FOR AFRICA PROJECT

I have received many positive comments about Karen Brackett's presentation about the South African children. We had twenty-seven quilts on display - quite an array of colors and fabrics. Karen was delighted to receive them. We still have twenty-seven more quilts that need to reach me by the end of March. Karen and her crew will start packing in April for their trip to Africa in May. So, start your engines ladies - the end is in sight.

Kathy Hoeltzel

# Adirondack Branch

Dinner meeting at Wiawaka on September 11<sup>th</sup> 2008  
Karen Brackett and Patti Eastabrook explain activities  
from a former trip to South Africa.



Past president Kathy Hoeltzel and current president Jan Ritter display quilts turned in at the Log Jam dinner meeting.



A tri-fold showing classrooms and living arrangements of South African orphans.



Kathy Hoeltzel  
and Joyce Smith  
display finished  
Quilts at the  
Scholarship  
Brunch in  
April, 2008

