

WHAT'S QUILTING GOT TO DO WITH IT?

I wanted to do something for the university students...and help SGI President Ikeda's dream," says Stacey Minkoff, who lives near the Soka University of America, Aliso Viejo campus. Thus was born a quilting project that encompasses the local SGI-USA Orange County community and ultimately will include members from all over the world.

"I chanted to take President Ikeda's guidance to heart—to act locally and think globally," Minkoff says. "My idea for a quilting group came out of my daimoku. We are going to make quilts for each of the students who enter SUA and for President and Mrs. Ikeda. The goal is for 105 quilts by May 3, 2001."

"I wanted the students to feel welcomed by the community," she continues. "The students are living away from home for the first time [and] can bundle up in homemade quilts."

The Orange County quilting meetings ring of early America, with plenty of room for the traditional sharing and bonding that goes with quilting bees of old. Children play in the background as the women—and a few men—gather around the table to sew.

Quilting is an American art form that dates back to colonial times. The quilting revival of the last quarter century includes a wider artistic expression of forms, from wall hangings to the national Names Project quilt, memorializing those who have died of AIDS.

For the SUA quilts, each 12.5 x 12.5-inch block is made of 100 percent pre-washed cotton materials stitched with ornamental designs that vary from embroidered figures and appliqués to cloth patterns sewn together. People who don't know how to quilt have donated materials such as cotton sheets for backing, or are meeting with the quilting groups to learn the craft.

Each child in the local Boys and Girls Group made one block with fabric paints as one of their group projects, and friends of the SGI-USA from around the world have donated their handiwork as well. As the blocks are finished and signed by the artists, they are pieced together and hand-quilted.

— KATE LLEWELLYN