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Lena Dearborn sees everything in life now as a possible quilt.

"Quilting has become such an art form that it can be interpreted into anything that your mind can conjure up. It's like a painting but in fabric and it mirrors the world around us," said the retired Belleville hospital employee and member of the Quilts Guild.

"Your imagination is your only limit."

Dearborn's Lower Massassauga Road home is filled with creations she has completed since her first quilting class six years ago. The decor includes her first completely hand-quilted quilt, wall hangings, jackets and other clothing items.

Each quilt is special to her but some upcoming projects will have even more significance.

She is among approximately 15 guild members who will, for the first time be making "friendship quilts" to alleviate some of the pain for individuals who have gone through such traumatic experiences as house fires or auto accidents or who simply are in need.

The quilters have received donations of fabric, batting and other supplies from the guild's 80 members as well as the public to help with the initiative.

"This gives us an opportunity to make our quilting more meaningful for the lives of others," said the 64-year-old Dearborn.

She has been "hooked" on quilting since taking it up just before her retirement in 1998. As a guild member, she has helped organize quilt shows, bus trips and other events.

"Quilting has been a whole new adventure," she said without hesitation. "It keeps your mind active because you're always designing something in your head."

Dearborn is so keen that wherever she travels, she makes a point of visiting fabric and quilting stores "to keep my stash built up."

Her other big adventure in life has been the former Belleville General Hospital.

Dearborn spent 31 years as an executive

assistant to three hospital administrators — Phil Rickard, Ray Krock and Brian Steinburg — before retiring six years ago.

She has just completed a five-year term as president of the BGH Pathfinders Retirees Association and remains on the executive as past president.

"Belleville General Hospital was part of my life through many major personal events — the growing up years of my children, the marriage of my daughter, births of three grandchildren, the deaths of my parents and grandmother, operation of a part-time antique business, my husband

got his private pilot's licence and bought his first motorcycle, we became boaters, we got into stained glass, joined the curling club, and travelled to Cuba, Mexico and Venezuela," she said.

The Point Anne native was a young 16 when she started working full-time.

The Belleville Collegiate Institute graduate spent some time with city lawyer Richard Barrett and then joined the office staff of the Canada Cement company which was located just a short walk from her family home.

She married Ray (a longtime Northern