



## COMMUNITY

## COVID can't cancel the click of knitters and crocheters

Lynda Chessman overwhelmed by commitment of area residents when it comes to supplying goods for children

By **Catherine Whitnall** Kawartha Lakes This Week

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In some instances, the COVID-19 pandemic has had a silver lining.

For Lynda Chessman, that lining is warm and fuzzy.

Close to five years ago, Chessman - a member of the Cambridge Street Baptist Church's Hooks and Needles group - spearheaded a new project to make vests that reduce the risk of African children developing pneumonia. The project blossomed

into a phenomenon beyond her imagination. Before long her list of volunteer knitters had grown from five to more than 500 and includes baby beanies and blankets.

Chessman's efforts also included taking roughly two tons of knitted items, clothing and fresh fruits and vegetables, supported by LaMantia's Country Market, to the Golden Lake Reserve's seniors' residence and knitting finger puppets given to children in developing nations to reduce the trauma of getting a needle.

When the COVID-19 pandemic hit, Chessman worried how it would impact the group's efforts.

"I thought we'd lose the group because the church closed and we haven't had a meeting since March," said Chessman. "But it's just incredible how people have really come together. It's just been crazy."

Chessman's husband David helped choreograph a well-oiled machine of contactless drop offs and wool donations from their Lindsay home's front porch. As of December, 5,148 items have been shipped overseas through Canadian Food for Children and more than 1,700 beanies were sent to Ghana through missionary doctors.

Items have also been donated to the Lindsay Crisis Pregnancy Centre along with lap blankets and socks for local nursing home residents.

In fact, residents of three local nursing homes have each been given their own lap blankets.

"This just blows my mind," said Chessman, who is routinely impressed with the generosity of others.

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That includes a Meaford resident who spent several months collecting items and knitting. The Chessman's met up with her last fall to pick up more than 350 items to

be donated to King Albert Public School.

"I think that's what's getting me through all of this," said Chessman, who is once again waging a battle with cancer in addition to dealing with the pandemic.

"When you think that COVID stops so much and people are in such despair... then you see things like this. It just warms the heart."

Anyone interested in helping out with any of Chessman's projects as a knitter or donate wool is asked to call [705-328-4431](tel:705-328-4431) or e-mail [lyndachess70@gmail.com](mailto:lyndachess70@gmail.com).

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