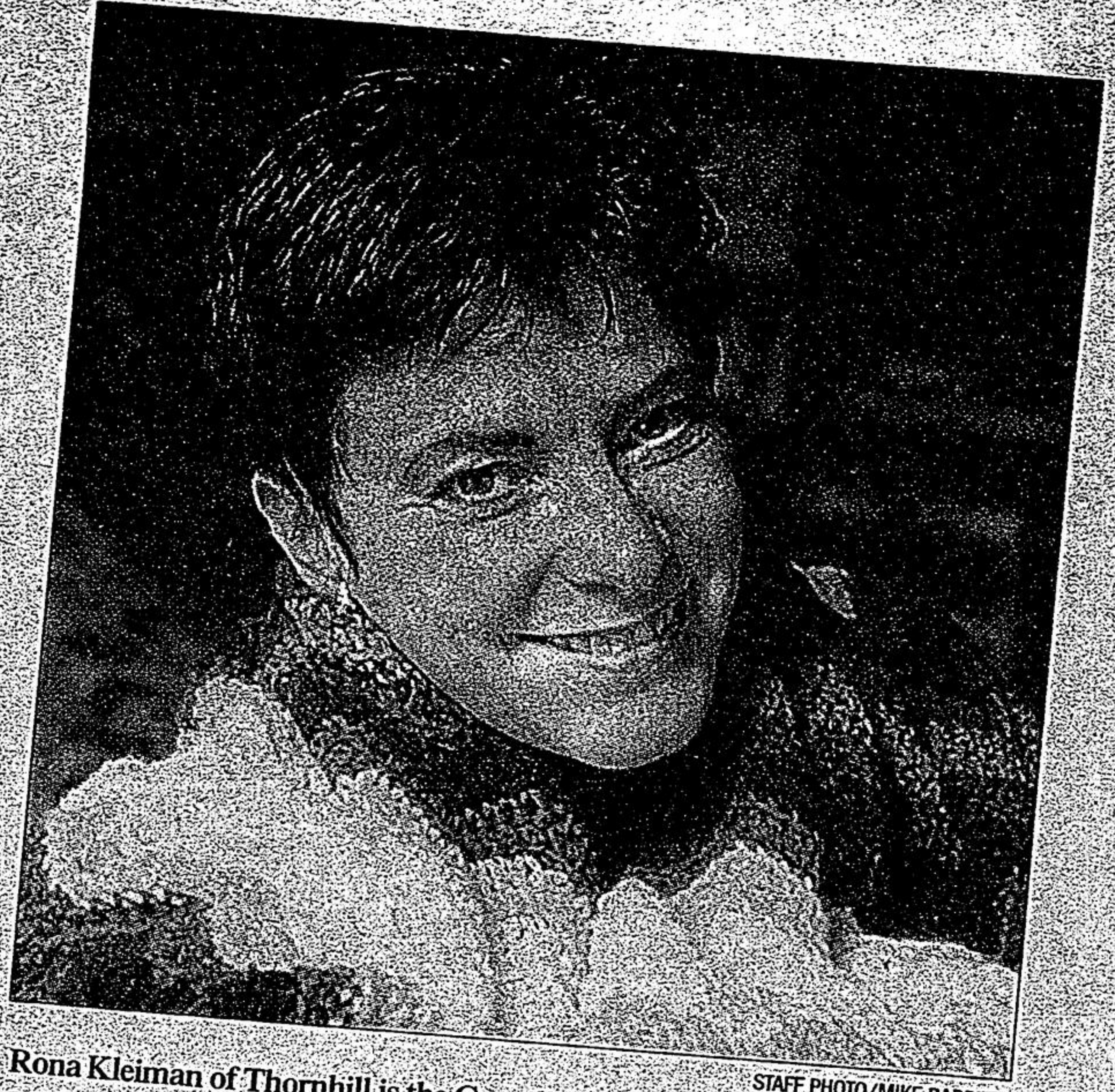


# LIVING



STAFF PHOTO/ROB ALARY

Marie Lindgren of Holland Landing is the Project Linus York Region co-ordinator. She bundles up blankets for delivery to all three York Region hospitals — York County, York Central and Markham Stouffville.



STAFF PHOTO/MIKE BARRETT

Rona Kleiman of Thornhill is the Canadian co-ordinator for Project Linus, a program that wraps traumatized children with love by providing them with soft, hand-made blankets.

## Blanketing children with love

*Project Linus volunteers hard at work to provide security blankets to kids who need a hug*

BY VIVIAN HARROWER  
CORRESPONDENT

**T**hey're out to blanket kids with love. From seasoned quilters and knitters to schoolchildren, caring people are sending "security blankets" to children who need a hug, according to Rona Kleiman of Thornhill, Canadian co-ordinator for Project Linus.

The organization takes its name from the Peanuts cartoon character Linus, who always carries his blanket with him, and had the blessing of the cartoon's creator, Charles Schulz.

The movement to wrap traumatized children in love has expanded beyond children with cancer to include those recovering from severe injury, other diseases and children in shelters for abused women, says Kleiman.

She brought the American-born project to Canada last year and is now working with

co-ordinators in seven provinces. The Canadian group is also seeking status as a registered charity in order to provide donation receipts.

Kleiman got involved after reading about Project Linus in a craft magazine. Remembering her own childhood when she was hospitalized for long periods, she knew the importance of a blanket for emotional comfort.

But Kleiman doesn't dwell on her own experience. Once a month, she delivers blankets to the Hospital for Sick Children and Scott Mission in Toronto, Variety Village in Scarborough and two local women's shelters. She speaks to quilters' groups, school children and individuals.

Marie Lindgren, York Region co-ordinator for Project Linus, works closely with Kleiman. In addition to deliveries to Sick Kids, she takes blankets to York County Hospital, York Central in Richmond Hill,

Markham Stouffville Hospital and Bloorview MacMillan Centre.

Some hospitals keep Project Linus blankets in the emergency room for children who come in "terrified". Because of the good response to her call for blankets, Lindgren has added deliveries to Yellow Brick House shelter in Aurora, Sandgate women's shelter in Sutton, the Children's Aid and Canadian Red Cross.

A caretaker with the York Region public school board, Lindgren set up a drop-off point at the board office on Wellington Street West in Aurora and collects donated materials from stores. She takes yarn to a woman with lupus and visits the elderly. She picks up finished blankets, ranging in size from those for newborns to youngsters up to 18.

Lindgren's volunteer knitters number "into the hundreds". One woman alone has made approximately 180 blankets. Louise Wood of Aurora describes herself as "a real

hoarder." When she learned of Project Linus, she thought of all the balls of yarn she had in a cupboard. She sometimes makes two blankets for premature infants in a day at her knitting machine in the basement, then crochets in front of the TV in the evening.

"I have good days and bad days. On bad days I think there's people worse off than me," Wood says, recalling some of the sad stories she and her husband heard from teenagers when they were foster parents with Children's Aid.

Could there ever be too many blankets? Wood doesn't think so. "With preemies and young mothers looking after their own babies, I don't think there will ever be too many," she says.

She once told Lindgren that a thank you note and a photo from the mother of a "preemie" made her feel as if she had another

See BLANKETS, page 14.



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