Soft clothes, soft hearts guide group

Mike Latona/Catholic Courier

For somebody suffering from cancer, or for grieving parents whose baby has died at birth, 'tis the season to be something other than jolly.

In the eyes of The Handiwork Ministry, these are the folks who most need to be remembered with loving gifts - at holiday time and throughout the year.

Now in its fourth year, the Avonbased ministry pools its talents and abilities to create clothing for people in need from Livingston and surrounding counties. Items are distributed through Catholic Charities; facilities; hospitals; nursing Birthright; hospice care; domesticviolence programs; and other crisiscare agencies.

The ministry, which totals approximately 10 regular members and several contributors, meets once a month at St. Agnes School in

"You don't have to have any kind of religious affiliation, just an interest in needlework," said Julie Flanagan, who belongs to St. Agnes Parish and is a charter member of The Handiwork Ministry. Flanagan said the ministry is always hoping to expand its membership base and has taught its needlework skills to area

Members collect donated materials for knitting and crocheting, and often supply their own goods as well. These are transformed into such items as baby clothing; caps for people undergoing chemotherapy; and slippers for patients to wear during chemo treatments.

More often than not, The Handiwork Ministry targets people that mainstream society may have forgotten. "Life does have value, and it's up to us to see it and find it," Flanagan stated.

One special project — making



Corinne Schillinger knits a hat Oct. 29 at Avon's St. Agnes School during a meeting of The Handiwork Ministry, which creates clothing for people in

hats for cancer patients - began af-

ter a friend of Flanagan's had lost

her hair due to chemotherapy and

asked for something to cover her

bare head. Another notable effort

occurred last year when the min-

istry made blankets for babies who

were stillborn or died within a few

days of being born. Some parents

buried the babies in the Handiwork

Ministry-produced clothing, and oth-

er families kept the items as me-

parents have left the hospital, hold-

ing on to the blankets," Flanagan

"We wanted to acknowledge the

baby would remain bright in their

memories," said one member, Corinne Schillinger, who originated

"We've had nurses tell us that

mosphere guides the ministry "We all bounce ideas off each other," Schillinger said. However, Schillinger describes Flanagan as "our fearless leader" who goes above and beyond with record-keeping and other organizational work. Flanagan, in turn, said she's grateful for the close friendships she has gained with fellow Handiwork Ministry members. "I've been disabled for four years,

and these people have been such a source of support and encouragement to me," said Flanagan, who has struggled with a back injury and a hip replacement.

EDITOR'S NOTE: For details about The Handiwork Ministry, call 585/538-6431, 226-6108 or 226-2510.

That they need is food, medicine, and clothes, and, most of all, lots of love — the love of Jesus."

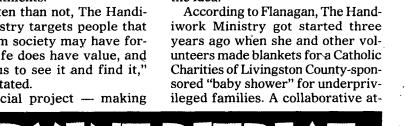
Angela and Kisse are two of the orphans lovingly cared for by Sisters in Tanzania. Their parents died from the AIDS

virus. Other children in the Missions are left orphans from war or civil strife. Some parents are so poor they need help caring for their little ones.

Sisters throughout the Missions reach out with the love of Christ to serve the needs of these children, offering them the great "Good News" proclaimed by the angel that first Christmas: "a savior has been born for you."



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