



Members of the Northwest Suburban Quilters Guild made the quilts shown here. Front row, from left: Bonnie Stevens, Gail Gregory, Lynn Rice, Marcia Brown, and Joan English. In back, from left: Debbie Meyer, Heidi Olson, Becky Reeve, and Karen Rantis.

A Warm Thank You

QUILTERS PIECE TOGETHER GRATITUDE FOR OUR NATION'S HEROES.

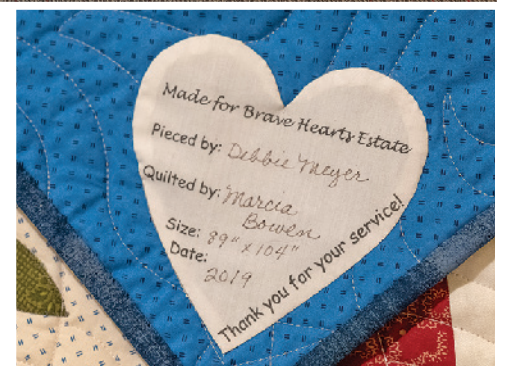
A SENSE OF SATISFACTION rushed over Lynn Rice as she looked at the 19 patriotic-themed quilts on display at Community Church of Barrington. She and her fellow quilters, who spent a year working on the project, admired them and carefully packaged the quilts for delivery to the Brave Hearts Estate.

A 238-acre ranch just outside of Pellston, Michigan, Brave Hearts Estate was donated by a patriot to the non-profit organization Operation Injured Soldiers, to provide lodging for our disabled Veterans and their families while they participate in the many hunting, fishing, sporting, and racing events that the non-profit holds for them throughout the year. Rice learned about the

ranch from her son-in-law Ty Ratliff, who works for the Little Traverse Conservancy, a land trust in Michigan. The Conservancy allows disabled Veterans to participate in the Independence Hunt, by pairing them with a guide and allowing them to hunt on Conservancy property. After Rice learned that participants stayed at the Brave Hearts Estate, she decided donating quilts for the twin and queen-sized beds at the ranch would be a nice way of thanking our heroes for their service.

A GROUP EFFORT

Many of the quilters who participated in the project are members of the Northwest Suburban Quilters Guild and were customers of A Touch of



Each handmade quilt has a sewn-on label with details.

Amish, the quilt shop Rice operated in Barrington for three decades before she retired. Rice is quick to note that the project was not a guild activity. "It was something that grew out of friendship," she said. "That is the way quilters are: nice, sharing, caring kind of people."

Everyone donated their time and materials. "It wasn't long since the shop had closed," Rice said of the business she operated from 1986 through 2016. "I still had fabric, friends, and ideas." After getting the go-ahead to make the quilts from the



Each quilt is unique. This one carries the flag.

caretaker of Brave Hearts Estate and not committing to getting it done in a specific period of time—not having a deadline took away any pressure Rice would have imposed on herself—her creativity started to flow. Word got out and other quilters enthusiastically volunteered to help out in different ways. Some quilters did the entire process themselves, while others handled specific aspects of it, working alone, and passing down the quilts in assembly-line fashion, at monthly informal gatherings, referred to as Bees, for the next person to pick up where they left off.

A SHOW OF APPRECIATION

The patriotic-themed quilts are red, white, and blue. Rice said one quilt has an eagle quilted in it, some have stars, and several have wiggly lines stitched on them to give the impression of a flag waving in the wind. Rice put binding on many and appliqued on heart shaped labels—an homage to

Thanks to the Community Church of Barrington for their space to lay the many quilts for photos.

the ranch's name—with the date the project was completed: summer of 2019. "I wrote along the edge of the heart, "Thank you for your service," Rice said. "If they look at the label, hopefully they realize that people care."

An extra special part of the year-long journey for Rice was having the quilts photographed at Community Church of Barrington, where she and her husband of 51 years, Art, worship. "Pastor Dr. Zina Jacque has become a personal friend and incredible support to me and my family, as well as the community," said Rice, a grandmother of eight and mom of three adult children. "To see the quilts photographed there, seemed to close a circle on this project for me."

ONTO THE NEXT PROJECT

Now that the quilts have been dedicated and delivered, the volunteers are in talks about another project: making small scale quilts for the children of Veterans to take home with them, following their stay at Brave Hearts Estate.

"Recently, someone asked me if quilters are still around, as if it was a dead art," Rice recalled. "I said, 'Oh yes, very much so.' That is what I want people in the area to know. That we are very much alive and loving this art and expression still."

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ABOUT LYNN RICE

Lynn Rice has lived in Barrington for 51 years. She is the former owner of A Touch of Amish, a local quilt shop. Originally, Rice partnered in the business with her friend Susan Harris, bringing custom quilts from the Amish to Barrington. "I had the quilting knowledge and she had the Amish friends," Rice recalled. They sold quilts at flea markets and fairs, but it was not for Rice.

Less than a year later, she bought a building to house the business. When they were ready to open, Harris had to move out East with her husband, who was transferred for his job, leaving Rice to take over. "I probably wouldn't have had the courage to do it alone," Rice said with a laugh, of operating the place where quilters met, learned, and had fun. "I had such great employees. They were friendly, helpful, and sincerely interested in quilting." After three decades in business, Rice retired and closed the shop, but she never gave up the love of quilting.