



RGVQG News

October 2026

President's Threads That Bind

Hopefully everyone has had time to cool off from the Guild Meeting Not operating Air-conditioned Sanctuary. The guild was notified the night before the meeting - and I wish to thank everyone for their cooperation to speed along the meeting. WOW! Where has the year gone - we are already in October headed to November 14th and the Annual Guild Business Meeting. There will be a full slate of Business that must be handled, so please attend in person or via Zoom. Thanks to all of you in advance for taking the time to assist in the future of the Guild.

"He who works with his hands is a laborer. He who works with his hands and head is a craftsman. He who works with his hands, head and heart is an artist." Saint Francis of Assisi

The October Program by Kathy Turner, sharing with us all her quilts were works of art. Many of the quilt blocks shown were recognized by members and guests as blocks they have on their bucket list or have done. So little time with so much on that bucket list. What an awesome idea to have scary Math already calculated with Deb

Tucker rulers as shown in the Friday Class. YES, there is a learning curve but not so unsurmountable.

I know that many of our members will be at the Houston Quilt Festival during the November Meeting, so I am in hopes that some may be able to attend via Zoom. All who will be in Houston, have an awesome time and Travel Safely.

Those of you traveling back to the Valley, May the Angels be with you all the way and keep you out of harm.

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(Cont)

I, personally, cannot wait to construct my quilted jacket in the November Class and show it off during the November Meeting. Maybe prior to the Zoom December Meeting, many of us will be able to complete more of those UFO's that are just laying around needing attention.

Happy Halloween to all and see everyone at the November 14, 2026, Guild Meeting - REMEMBER, Annual Business Meeting.!

Blessings to all,
Kathe Letulle - President@rgvqg.com



Military Service Quilts

Rosemary Kramer and Nancy Malmin

The Military Sew day on September 26, 2026 was a big success. Cutting, binding, sewing and fun was on the program. Thank you to Kathy Stevens and her team that made it all happen. A great big thank you for a wonderful and productive day. Can't wait to see all the quilts come in.

Sunshine and Shadows

by Jackie Landon/Kathe Letulle

If you know of someone who needs cheering up, is ill, or personal and/or family issues, please advise us by email to sunshine@rgvqg.com so a card can be sent.

Schoolhouse Classes

by Dale Shafer and Nancy Malmin

Basic Schoolhouse Class info: with a few exceptions, we have classes on the third Thursday of each month. They are held at Pharr South, 1402 S. Cage. In Pharr (just past the big HEB at Ridge and Cage). We meet from 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 or 3:00 p.m., and you can bring your lunch or go out to one of the fast-food places nearby. Class cost is just \$20, but sometimes a pattern is required, to avoid copyright infringement. We hope you find a fun class or two in our 2026 lineup!

Schoolhouse Classes

Thursday, November 19th

Fidget Quilts

Joy Paugh

Thursday, December 17th

Featherweight Maintenance

Diana Wolf

Please call me with any questions. Dale Shafer
956-330-5261

Membership Information

by Lynne Johnson, Membership Chair

We had a **great year for our 2026 membership!** We ended the year with **249 members**, up from 236 in 2025! 🦎

Here's the breakdown:

- 199 renewals
- 37 new members
- 11 returning members

Thank you all for helping make this such a successful year! Let's keep the momentum going and make 2027 even better!

We also had a wonderful turnout at our last Guild meeting, with **66 members attending in person, including 2 returning members, along with 2 guests.** An additional **7 members joined us on Zoom!**

Thanks for your continued support and participation. Looking forward to seeing everyone next month!



Aloysius alligator

Look for me on our webpage!
Click on me and I'll take you to the **Members Only** page.

Remember what I am. I'm also the keeper of the directories. Please add a two-digit year to open a directory.



Members Only

page -

The Members Only page is protected by password. Aloysius alligator is the keeper of the password for the page and the directories. The Members Only page contains the following information:

- Directory
 - Current

- Past
- Class Registrations Information
- Board Meeting Minutes
- Library Books
- Patterns
- Retreat
- RGVQG Bee Information
- Rio Grande Valley Quilt Guild
 - BYLAWS
 - Standing Rules
 - Treasurers Reports

Social Media Expansion

by Laural Powell

We have expanded our social media presence!



For some time, the Guild has had a

closed Facebook group, as Rio Grande Valley Quilt Guild. This means you must answer some questions and then be allowed into this group.

The Guild Board has voted to keep this group to members only. This is to provide a space for our members to post and comment where they will know it will only be seen by Guild members.

The Guild Board also understands some may want to share what our guild is doing with their friends. Then others are introduced to our guild through our quilt show and/or community service efforts and want to know more about our guild. So, we created a **Facebook page at Rio Grande Valley Quilt Guild Texas.** This page can be viewed and followed by anyone interested in our guild. Additionally, we have reactivated the Guild's **Instagram account**, which anyone can follow at **Rio Grande Valley Quilt Guild or @rgvqgtx.**

So, now anyone can follow the Guild on our Facebook page and Instagram account, while Guild members can have privacy by joining the Guild's closed Facebook group. If you need help accessing any of these, contact me at joinfb@rgvqg.com.

Informational SMS (text) Messages

Informational SMS (text) Messages
We can send text messages to all our current members. If you are no longer a member of the guild, you will not get any text messages from RGVQG. The text messages will be short messages asking you to check your email for additional information or gentle reminders. You can reply STOP to opt out of any text messages from RGVQG.
Please add +1 833-935-5165 to your contacts as RGVQG. These text messages will be from the Rio Grande Valley Quilt Guild.

RGVQG Emails Update

We are now using Google Workspace mail merge service to send 2-4 emails every month to all our active members. Please add rgvquiltguild@rgvqg.com to your contacts to ensure your email goes into your inbox.

Guild Emails -

The guild webmaster usually sends out at least two emails a month to everyone and reminder notices for Schoolhouse and Program Classes.

- RGVQG Newsletter (after the meeting)
- RGVQG Meeting Notice (Thursday before the meeting)
- RGVQG Schoolhouse Class Notices (attendees only)
- RGVQG Program Class Notices (attendees only)

Friends of the Guild

Now visitors and friends can sign up for more information about the Rio Grande Valley Guild. A link is available on the home page of our website just below the Welcome message.

Limited emails will be sent to these individuals.

An initial email will have information on our website, Facebook pages, and how to become a member. An email will be sent just prior to the Quilt Show as a reminder. Possibly an additional one as needed.

Do you know someone or want to share this link with them?

[Become a friend of the Guild](#)

Retreat News

by Kathe Letulle - retreat@rgvqg.co

LOOKING FOR A FEW LADIES TO SIGN ON THE WAIT LIST! Life happens and so do cancellations.

Final Retreat Payments are due by January 9th, 2027.

Last day to receive a refund for a cancellation is January 31, 2027.

Dates for 2027 Retreats:

Friendship Star - March 8-12, 2027

Bluebonnet Friends - March 14-18, 2027

Be sure to sign up on the Wait List - as Life Happens and vacancies happen.

There is a grand time at the John Newcomb Tennis Ranch at New Braunfels, Texas. An experience of a lifetime with members who are willing to assist with any project issue. We are here to help - just ask those who have attended a retreat.

Come have fun with us!

LOST AND FOUND!

The list is growing!!! Are you Missing ITEMS from the quilt show and/or monthly meeting? If these items are not claimed by February, they will be added to the Quilt Show Boutique for sale. Call Kathe Letulle to claim!

956-272-2377

DESCRIBE and will be RETURNED TO RIGHTFUL OWNER!

1. Together in one Bag - Large 2026 Quilt Show T-Shirt and XL Denim Jacket
2. 25 oz Tumbler by CAMELBAK
3. Umbrella has been placed with the rightful owner

Community Service

by Chris Cowan

It's great to be part of such a generous group! Remember you can report online or print a donation form to bring to a meeting and/or mail it to me. [Click for On-line form](#)
One thought to keep in mind, you can donate anywhere and report to us, as long as the receiving location is not also claiming it.

October 2026

242 items; 1870 hours; \$13,557.50 value

Treasurer Report

The Guild's Revenues and Expenses are currently in-line with the projected 2026 budget.

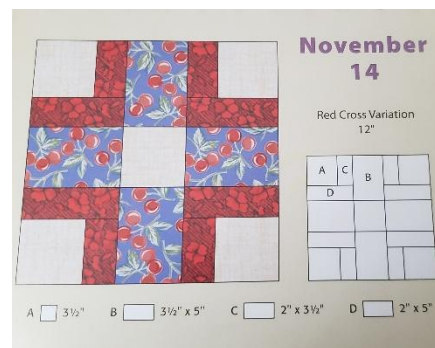
The evaluation of Quicken's bookkeeping software for potential adoption for both Guild and Show use is currently in progress.

You can view the actual revenue and expense data and other treasury documentation by: Accessing the rgvqg.com website. Click on the "Members Only" tab Enter the appropriate password Scroll down to the bottom of the page Click on "Treasurer Reports" Click on the appropriate document. For any questions or comments, I can be contacted at Cell # 740-398-4142 Email rgvqg.treasurer@gmail.com or treasurer@rgvqg.com

Submitted by Mike Hall

Scrap Block Draw

by Chris Cowan



Under my community service umbrella/hat each month I'm going to specify a block pattern, colors and size. Blocks collected will be made into a donation



quilt.

For October the block is RedCross, November 14 from the Block a Day Calendar. For patriotic version make pieces C&D in red. For community service C&D should read solid and coordinate with the B pieces. Both versions should have white or white on white for the A corners.

RGV Quilt Show

by Laural Powell and Joy Paugh

45th Annual Rio Grande Valley Quilt Show - Rhythm in Blues - A Sapphire Celebration



The 2027 Quilt Show is taking shape, and every Guild member has an important part to play in making it a success. As our Guild's primary fundraiser, the show helps sustain the programs we value throughout the year—including inspiring speakers, military service, community service, and education. When you support the show, you directly strengthen our Guild and the work we do together in our community.

Our greatest need is quilts—and no quilt show would be complete without yours! Rhythm in Blues: A Sapphire Celebration will showcase the creativity of our members. Each of you is an artist, and guests are eager to experience the patterns, colors, arrangements, and personal interpretations that make every quilt

unique. Please register your quilts today at rgvqg.com or with Bonnie Hall at a monthly meeting. Bonnie is also happy to attend your BEE meeting and register quilts for your members. Together, we can fill the show with beautiful work and make it truly memorable.

We are delighted to welcome Carly Mul as our teacher and lecturer. This is a wonderful opportunity to learn from a nationally known quilt artist whose work is modern, expressive, and free. Sign up to explore a new technique, spend time with Carly, and share the experience with a friend!

The Killer Bees have challenged the Guild's other Bees—as well as local small businesses—to join them in sponsoring one of the sixteen \$100 Blue Ribbon categories. Thank you, Killer Bees, for leading the way! We invite others to accept the challenge and help us honor outstanding quilts while supporting a successful show.

At every monthly Guild meeting leading up to the February show, you can choose how you would like to take part: volunteer, purchase Opportunity Tickets, order T-shirts or tumblers, sign up to make a tote, or register a quilt. You can also complete these activities through the Guild website.

Please join us in the fun and bring your creativity, enthusiasm, and Guild spirit. Together, let's make *Rhythm in Blues: A Sapphire Celebration* a joyful and memorable show—one our entire Guild can be proud of!

Joy Paugh
Chair, 2027 Quilt Show — Rhythm in Blues: A Sapphire Celebration



Opportunity Quilt Update

This year's Opportunity Quilt prizes are: 1st Place: 71" x 71' Blue Pickle Dish Quilt;

2nd Place: 24" x 35.5" Guitar Wall Hanging;



3rd Place: Big Katahdin Tote with 4 inside pockets

and a zippered top made using the same fabrics as the Blue Pickle Dish quilt. Made by Joy Paugh.

Ticket envelopes contain 24 "Business Card size" blue entry tickets with a line for Name and a line for Phone Number be sure to write legibly, 2 each prize information business cards that can be used as a receipt if needed and 1 double sided prizes picture card.

Ticket sales receipts as of 9/12/2026: \$830
Harlingen Sam's Club Opportunity Quilt Showcase & Tickets Schedule:

Saturdays, Oct. 17th & 31st

8am - 3:30pm

NEED VOLUNTEERS

Two people per time slot

8:00am - 10:00am (2 hr)

10:00am - Noon (2 hr)

Noon - 2:00pm (2 hr)

2:00pm - 3:30pm (1 1/2 hr)

You can dress in costume on Oct. 31st. 🧸

Each guild member is politely asked to sell or purchase at least one envelope of tickets.

Ticket prices are: \$1 each; 6 for \$5 or 24 tickets for \$20. We accept cash, checks, and app payments using either Cash App or Zelle. Some guild members prefer to just donate \$20 and not sell or purchase any tickets and some choose to pay \$24/envelope because that's the value if each ticket was to be sold separately.

We currently have 254 paid members for 2026. At \$20/envelope of 24 tickets, if each member sold or purchased one envelope, we would gross $254 \times \$20 = \$5,080$.

*****Please note monies are to be turned in when the tickets are turned in. Prepaid tickets can cause confusion and bookkeeping mistakes.*****

Quilt Showing Schedule: By August Guild meeting I hope we will begin to assemble a calendar of dates and locations where the quilt will be displayed and tickets will be sold. I know Sam's in Harlingen is already in the works. If you know of a place where you think the quilt could be displayed safely and tickets sold, please contact (me) Kathy Stevens: 972-467-4269 or Joy Paugh 913-226-6781. I do not answer unknown numbers, so either text me or if you call, leave a message and I'll return your call asap.

The **Totes and More** headed up by Marilyn Hensz will look somewhat different. Marilyn has asked that individuals or even Bees donate a bag. The donors, whether they are a Bee, friends, or a single member, can choose to donate the bag only or fill the bag as well. The

tote bag criteria: Approximately 17" Wide x 15" Tall x 6" deep. This is an average size. It can be larger or smaller; but keep it close to those dimensions. The tote also needs to be able to stand up on its own, therefore some stabilizer may be needed for the sides., As always, we want the totes to be very attractive so that guests will want to purchase raffle tickets to win their favorite bag.



2027 T-Shirts and drink Tumblers carry the logo that Laural designed for this show. The 32oz Tumblers are \$25.00. Your name put on the back for an extra \$5.00.

The Tshirts will be short sleeve V-neck and Crew necks, long sleeve Crew necks in white and blue. Small through Extra Large are \$25.00 and 2X & 3X are \$30.00.



There will be an option on the Guild Website under the Quilt Show page to purchase these two items. Orders processed will be available at the following Guild meeting.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

Publicity Distribution Team for the 2027 Rio Grande Valley Quilt Show

Help us spread the word across the Valley!

We are looking for enthusiastic volunteers to assist with distributing posters and promotional materials throughout the Rio Grande Valley, and surrounding counties during

January and February of 2027. We would like to have at least one person for the Upper Valley and one person for the Lower Valley. This is a wonderful opportunity to support the Guild and help make this year's Quilt Show a great success.

Volunteer Responsibilities:

- Deliver flyers and bookmarks to fabric shops, museums, libraries, community centers, and local businesses
- Keep a simple list of locations visited
- Represent the Quilt Show in a friendly and positive manner

What We're Looking For:

- Reliable transportation
- A friendly personality
- Love for quilting and community involvement
- Ability to travel within the Rio Grande Valley

Flexible scheduling — you can choose routes and times that work best for you.

Be part of the team that brings the Valley together through quilting!

For more information or to volunteer, please contact:

Laural Powell

qspublicity@rgvqg.com

Boutique

by Carmen S. Garza

The B-zzy Bees are pleased to run the Boutique this year. We are excited to make it a successful one. We need your help! To create a Boutique that you and visitors to the show want to purchase from, we are asking that you fill out the survey found below. Let us know what items you think would be good sellers.

[Boutique Survey](#)

Additionally, the Boutique can only be successful with your generous donations. Please fill out the [Boutique Pledge Form](#) and bring your donations to one of the Saturday Guild meetings. Thank you in advance for helping us have a successful Boutique!



Guest



Featured Artist

We're thrilled to welcome Carly Mul, as the guest speaker and teacher at the 2027 Rio Grande Valley Quilt Show!

Carly Mul is a nationally recognized quilt artist known for her vibrant colors and inspiring creativity. Carly taught the Scissor Collage class for the Rio Grande Valley Quilt Guild a few years ago.

Whether you are an experienced quilter or just beginning your quilting journey, you won't want to miss the opportunity to learn from this talented artist. Stay tuned for workshop and lecture information!

Rhythm in Blues Quilt Show Classes

This year our featured quilt artist, Carly Mul, will be teaching 2 classes for our show.

Friday, the Agamy Stripe class will be a 6 hour class. **Saturday**, the Broken or Mended class will be 4 hours.

Both will begin at 8am. The doors will be open at 7.30am to accommodate the students.

I invite you to look at Carly's website, carlymul.com.

The class registration and class supply list will be posted soon.

Sponsorship Info

See page 13 for updates

General Meeting Vendor Tables

During the May General Meeting, guild members gave their approval to continue allowing a Vendor table at the monthly Guild Meeting. Prospective vendors can sign-up for a table for the June 2026 - February 2027 meetings on first come - first serve basis via an email request

treasurer@rgvqg.com.

Please reply to this message or use "Vendor Table Registration" in the Subject Line. The vendors will be contacted in the order of email receipt and offered their choice of the available dates. Any questions may be directed via email to: treasurer@rgvqg.com or to Mike Hall @ 740-398-4142



a

to:

The Harlingen Arts & Heritage Museum has invited the RGV Guild to exhibit quilts every year from January - March. Please contact contact Jani Shoemaker, janishoe@yahoo.com, 720-635-3890 to schedule your opportunity to show your beautiful work and promote your bee plus the guild. Quilts that have been shown at other shows/exhibits can be used or encourage your bee to find a theme and get started today. An open house will also be scheduled at the Museum for a meet and greet the quilter.

Current schedule includes 2027 - Queen City Bees and B-zzy Bees, "We've come a long way baby"

2028 , Q-Bees, theme to come later

Thank you

Jani Shoemaker

Bee News

Fiber Arts Bee

We're a warm and lively community that gathers on the 2nd and 4th Monday of each month from 10 AM to noon at The Upper Valley Quilt Guild in Mission. Come join us and let your creativity shine in a fun and friendly atmosphere! We can't wait to see what amazing things you'll make! Don't miss out on the fun!

The Mission Bee gathers every 1st and 3rd Monday at the Upper Valley Art in Mission, where they passionately craft military quilts, stunning pieces for the Quilt Show, and heartwarming baby quilts destined for the Children's Hospital.

Queen City Bee

We are always very appreciative of your scrap donations that help us continue to help our community. We will continue working with the B-zzy Bee at the Weslaco Library. Plans are on the way to have our second 8 week class at the Weslaco Library for new participants during the months of June and July.

Programs

By Heather Nelson

Thank you, Kathy Tucker, for a very informative class and trunk show. The Deb Tucker rulers are certainly time savers once you get the knack of using them.

We are starting this season out with a bang. In November, Patty Roebuck will be here to demonstrate a way to preserve a vintage quilt or use one of your own to create a one-of-a-kind jacket. What great time to take this

class, you will be sporting a new designer jacket for the holidays.

We do not have a class in December, but Jean Impey will be with us on zoom during Saturday's meeting.

Starting off 2027 with a bang, Michele Markey will be sharing the use of acrylic markers on fabric. She has gone out of her way to offer something for everyone. First, you'll choose one of the four designs. Next, you have to decide whether you want to do a quilt block, tote bag or denim shirt. Lower valley guild members you won't have to drive so far. This class is being held in Harlingen. Check out all the details on the Programs page of our website.

Finally, it's time for the quilt show. What a treat we have in store for us this year. Carly Mull, we are offering not one but two different classes and don't worry you don't have to bring your machine since it won't be needed.

Now I need the talents of our wonderful members. I am needing guild members willing to a program during one of our summer months next year.

For those of you who have never taken a class before it's time to take that leap of faith and just do it. You have wonderful selection to choose from. Don't wait to long since classes are filling up as we speak.

Previews of coming attractions, all I'll say is we have some heavy hitters coming in next fall.



RGVQG General Meeting Minutes

By Linda Damon

October 10, 2026

The October meeting began with a program by Kathy Tucker, certified Studio 180 Design instructor and developer of several quilting tools, the Wing Clipper, Tucker Trimmer, Rapid Fire Hunter's Star, and Rapid Fire Lemoyne Star. In each quilt she modeled, she pointed out how various tools were used in each one. Beginning with her quilting philosophy she shared her quilting journey including collaborations with Deb Tucker, Studio 180 founder; Laura Heine; Fons & Porter; Jackie O'Brien of If These Threads Could Talk blog focusing on One Block Wonders; and Heidi Chase, Ellen Cicak, and Kathy Webb of Running with Scissors Quilters of Owego, New York

The business meeting was called to order at 9:45. A quorum was present. Minutes of the September 12 meeting were approved and filed. The Treasurer's report is available online. The Treasurer requested a motion to approve renewing the facilities use contract for 2027 with the Rio Life Community Church. Heather Nelson made the motion. Sue Worrell seconded the motion; the motion passed unanimously.

Committee reports

The proposed 2027 Operating Budget will be voted on by the membership at the November 14 General meeting. Members will receive the proposed budget via email on Friday October 30 for their review before the November meeting.

Edna **Butler** announced Friendship Day, January 2027 at the First Church of the Nazarene, Harlingen. More details will be available at the November and December meetings.

The nominating committee, Glenna Lou Nelson and Ann Alexander, presented the slate of officers for 2027: 1st Vice President (Membership) - Lynn Johnson; 2nd Vice President (Community Service) - Chris Cowan; and Treasurer - Michael Hall. Official voting will take place at the November 14 meeting.

Lynn Johnson reported on 2026 membership statistics: 249 members, 199 renewals, 37 new members, and 11 returning members after varied absences. Attendance at the meeting was 66 members, 2 guests, and 7 zoom attendees.

Heather Nelson announced that the November 14 program is a lecture and trunk show by Patty Roebuck, Bobbins & Threads. Patty's class quilted jackets is on November 13. Heather Nelson also asked for ideas and volunteers for summer programs.

Dale Shafer announced future Schoolhouse classes - miniature quilts, fidget quilts, Featherweight maintenance (Diana Wolfe emphasized the need to maintain a Featherweight every year), and mastering your Stripology ruler.

Kathy Stevens announced that \$910 worth of Opportunity Quilt tickets have been sold. The quilt will be exhibited at

Sam's Club, Harlingen, on October 17, 8:30am-4:00pm in 2 hour shifts. Please contact Edna Butler or Michael Hall if you can volunteer. Kathy also thanked everyone who participated in the Military sew day.

Chris Cowan said she would have updated community service information in the newsletter. The suggested block for patriotic or community service donation quilts is RedCross, November 14, from the Block a Day Calendar.

Joy Paugh announced that four SPI hotels have quilt show blocks of rooms. The hotels are listed online; registration for Carly Mul classes is open online, quilt registration is now open, and a description of the South Padre Island Artists Challenge.

Jan Baethke announced that totes are available to individuals or groups interested in donating themed collections.

Carmen Garza announced that the Quilt Show Boutique is still accepting donations. The B-zzy Bee is sponsoring a Weslaco sew day. Small items to be sold at the Boutique will be made.

Announcements

There is a \$10 fee for guests attending national speakers.

Adjournment: 11:25am

Next meeting: November 14, 9:30am

Day 1 Bags

If you would like to participate for next year, let Bonnie Hall or Alyssa Gonzalez know. You can contact Alyssa, **text (best) or call her cell phone at (956) 578-3352** or via email agonzalez@nplexusrgv.com.



The image shows a business card for "Quilters This N That Korner". On the left side, there is a logo consisting of a red circle with the letters "T", "N", and "T" stacked vertically inside it, and a red ribbon-like shape looping around the bottom. Below the logo, the text "Quilters This N That Korner" is written in a stylized font, with "Mercedes, Texas" in a smaller font at the bottom left. On the right side, the text "100% Cotton Fabric Cotton and Wool Batting Notions" is written in a serif font. Below this, the address "1001 Segovia Llano Grande RV Resort Mercedes, TX 78570" is listed, followed by the phone number "(956) 272-2377" and the email "quilterstntkorn@gmail.com". The owner's name, "Kathè Letulle - Owner", is also present. At the bottom right, it says "Call for an appointment".

Quilt show Sponsorships

This year we are focusing on sponsorships for our show. The Sponsorships categories are listed here.



The Legacy of Nifty Fifty Quilters Continues

By Teresa Drummond

May, 18, 2026

In 1995, I casually flipped through a quilting magazine looking for inspiration and stumbled across a small ad for a one-on-one United States quilt block exchange. That tiny ad sparked an idea much bigger than I ever imagined — a centralized quilt exchange where every participant would receive a quilt block from all fifty states, not just from the organizer. What began as a dream quickly grew into organizing fifty quilters to complete a total of 2,500 quilt blocks.

At the time, none of us realized that we were creating something far more meaningful than quilts. We were building friendships, sharing our life stories, and stitching together a community that would span the entire country.

The early days were not always easy. After receiving a discouraging letter from one participant, I nearly gave up on the project entirely. Thankfully, my friend Wendy Smith stepped in beside me, and together we began mailing letters to quilt guilds across the country seeking participants. As the Internet slowly emerged into everyday life, Wendy began posting notices on quilting bulletin boards online, and little by little we filled all fifty states.

Participants shared history forms explaining their blocks and the meaning behind them. Fabric samples were mailed to ensure colors would coordinate. Soon the project became much more than a block exchange. The stories, creativity, and compassion of the quilters transformed it into a nationwide friendship quilt.

One of the most touching moments came when my son Sean used the signature blocks from the exchange for a fifth-grade project. Quilters added charms, buttons, appliqué, and heartfelt messages to their blocks. Sean thanked participants by mailing fossilized shark teeth from his Potomac River collection, and one quilter even sewed a special pocket into her quilt to hold his gift.

Over the next several years, the Nifty Fifty Quilters continued to grow far beyond that original exchange. What started with one group eventually expanded into thirty completed quilt swaps, including themes like, southwestern, patriotic, Civil War, 9/11 memorial, state flowers and many others that connected quilters across the United States through shared creativity and storytelling.

Our Twenty Plenty International Quilt Exchange was created after the first few Nifty Fifty quilt swaps were completed. What began as a national friendship quilt project soon expanded across the world, bringing together quilters from over forty countries through a shared love of quilting and cultural connection. Participants exchanged quilt blocks representing countries from North/South America, Europe, Asia, Australia, and Africa. Like the Nifty Fifty groups, Twenty Plenty became much more than a quilt exchange. It formed lasting friendships between women from different backgrounds and cultures who may never have otherwise crossed paths.

The exchanges also supported charitable causes. Participants created additional quilts for breast cancer fundraising efforts and quilt museums. We hosted gatherings in Stafford, Virginia, where quilters from across the country came together to sort blocks, sew quilts, laugh, and form friendships that lasted long after the final stitches were sewn. Our Nifty Fifty 1 breast cancer quilt had collected signatures from across the country of those affected by breast cancer. It was donated to the Michigan State University Museum. The quilt was featured in the book *Quilts and Health*

by Marsha MacDowell, Clare Luz and Beth Donaldson.

<https://niftyfiftyquilting.com/charity>

Some participants faced difficult life events during the exchanges — illnesses, divorces, job changes, and even the loss of beloved members. Yet the quilting community always rallied around one another. One guild completed blocks for a member who passed away during the exchange, reminding all of us of what quilting has always represented: compassion, connection, and shared kindness.

One of the most meaningful stories to come from our quilting community was *Brenda's Wish Quilt*. Brenda Neily, a breast cancer survivor from Massachusetts, became deeply involved in our Nifty Fifty and Twenty Plenty swaps after attending one of our quilting gatherings in Virginia. Inspired by the friendships and spirit of the groups, she went on to host several NF swaps while also helping organize breast cancer charity quilts. Sadly, Brenda's cancer returned during this time, yet she continued working tirelessly on the quilting groups for as long as she could. Before she passed away in 2000, Brenda began planning a surprise friendship quilt for me using a beautiful Hoffman fabric she had carefully chosen because she knew it was my favorite. After her passing, Marjorie Young and many Nifty Fifty quilters from across the country completed Brenda's vision by creating blocks and sewing the quilt together. The finished quilt became far more than fabric and thread for me— it became a lasting symbol of friendship, love, generosity, and the deep bonds formed through our quilting community. Brenda's story continues to remind us that quilts often carry the hearts and memories of the people who create them.

Then life moved forward. Families grew, careers changed, and eventually the groups went quiet. After thirty completed swaps, Nifty Fifty Quilters took a fifteen-year pause.

But quilting friendships never truly disappear. Nifty Fifty Quilters is beginning a new chapter. We have relaunched our quilting community with a brand-new website: Nifty Fifty Quilting at www.niftyfiftyquilting.com

The website showcases the history of our exchanges along with more than 70,000 quilt block photos created throughout our many swaps over the years. Our goal is to build a strong quilting community by connecting quilters through online chat rooms, shared projects, and new creative tools. The new site also includes software that allows quilters to visually design their quilt blocks and entire quilts online by uploading their own fabric samples, experimenting with sashing and borders, adjusting colors, and resizing quilt layouts. It combines the tradition of quilting friendships with modern technology to inspire creativity and connection for quilters around the world.

Even more meaningful, we are beginning Nifty Fifty 31 — *A Healing Quilt Swap*.

<https://niftyfiftyquilting.com/swaps/nf-31-journey-into-the-light>

This new exchange represents healing, friendship, encouragement, and renewal through quilting. Much like the original swaps, the goal is not simply to exchange blocks, but to create connections and support one another through creativity and kindness. Quilts have always told stories, comforted hearts, and carried love through every stitch. NF 31 continues that tradition. Our swap will be creating three charity quilts to raise awareness for: Breast Cancer, Suicide Prevention and Domestic Violence.

Looking back over the journey from that first 50-state exchange in 1995 to today, I am overwhelmed with gratitude for every quilter who helped make Nifty Fifty Quilters what it became. Thousands of blocks were exchanged, countless friendships were formed, and together we created

a quilting legacy stitched together with generosity, laughter, resilience, and heart.

As we begin again with NF 31, we welcome both returning members and new quilters to join us in continuing this beautiful tradition. Because quilting has never only been about fabric and thread. It has always been about the people behind the stitches.