



In a self-proclaimed "helping-people, team-building opportunity," GM engineers make Christmas blankets for the Detroit Rescue Mission.

'GM-Engineered' Blankets Keep Needy Detroiters Warm

by Jim Stickford

It seems an engineer can never not be an engineer, even when making blankets for the less fortunate.

Just ask Silvia Karlsson, engineering business manager, Thermal/HVAC at GM.

Karlsson and her colleagues for the past several years have been making blankets around Christmas for the Detroit Rescue Mission (DRM). The blankets are given to the less fortunate.

"We are the Thermal SMT," Karlsson said. "It is our job to keep the passengers and our powertrains 'comfortable,' temperature-wise.

"We love making blankets at this time of the year to donate to the Detroit Rescue Mission in our effort to help 'keep Detroit warm.' We know how much charities around us struggle all year, but especially at this time of the year, to meet the demand and help so many people in need.

"Making blankets not only pairs well with our daily work as we also need to make sure our vehicle passengers are warm in their vehicles during the winter, but it gives our team an opportunity to help people while we spend some time together. It would be easier to simply collect money and send a check, but we

would miss out on the team-building opportunity."

Karlsson said a special chili-and-soup cookout fundraiser helped bring in money to buy the material for the blankets.

"I went to Jo-Ann's a couple of times to get it on sale, so the money would go further and also various people in the department donated extra material," Karlsson said. "It takes two, two-yard cuts of fleece to make a blanket.

"We have a small department and we are located in various facilities, but we got over 30 people to stay after the holiday potluck to help make blankets. We made 20 of them (that would be 2 x 20 x 2 = 80 yards of material) and they were delivered to the DRM last Thursday afternoon (Dec. 12)."

Once the engineers got together,

er, Karlsson said, they were able to produce about 20 blankets. They were made at the Tech Center's VEC building in Warren.

"We plan on doing this next year as well," Karlsson said. "We do all the work in one day. This year it was on Dec. 3."

And when you get engineers together, Karlsson said, it's only natural that they try to make the "manufacturing" process more efficient. At any one time, there might have been five people working on one blanket.

They also try to mix up what kind of blankets are made, Karlsson said. Some blankets had a serious look appropriate for adults. Some designs were more

whimsical and aimed at children.

But, Karlsson said, the main thing is that she and her colleagues were able to put their skills and talents together to help people at a time of year when blankets are really needed.

Beadwork Anyone?

The Warren Public Library is offering a course called "Beadworking for Beginners" starting on Thursday, Jan. 16, at 6 p.m.

The class, to be taught by Jan Peck of the Great Lakes Beadworkers Guild, will be held at the Warren Civic Center Library's conference room.

Supplies will be provided. Those interested in attending should call 586-574-4564 to reserve a spot.

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Art Van Furniture Hosts Red Cross Blood Drive

'Tis the season of giving, and the public is invited to give one of life's most precious gifts at a community blood drive sponsored by Art Van Furniture, FOX 2 TV and the American Red Cross on Friday, Dec. 27. The fourth annual event will be held from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. at Art Van Furniture in Warren, 6500 East 14 Mile Road.

"Whenever there's a need in the community, our wonderful employees and guests are the first to step up to do their part," said Gary Van Elslander, president of Art Van Furniture. "Donating blood is a simple, selfless way to help save a life. It's the ultimate gift that keeps on giving."

Donors at this year's community blood drive will receive a complimentary copy of Mitch Albom's new book, "The First Phone Call From Heaven."

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