



*We Help.
We Care*

OCCOA

OTSEGO COUNTY COMMISSION ON AGING

120 Grandview Blvd., Gaylord, Michigan 49735



Submitted by
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**RESEARCH &
VOLUNTEER
COORDINATOR**

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QUILTS MADE FROM THE HEART!

OTSEGO HAUS COORDINATOR EVIE RIOZZI, LPN. CUT UP MEMBERS BARBARA MANROW AND JOYCE HEMPENSTALL, OTSEGO HAUS CLIENT DARLENE, CUT UP MEMBER MARY MURRAY, OTSEGO HAUS CLIENT SHARON, OTSEGO HAUS NURSE, DIANA FIX, LPN, AND CUT UP MEMBER BARBARA MURRAY (BL).

Sometimes these individuals and groups go above and beyond what is typical. One such group, the Wolverine Quilt Group – The Cut Ups, have donated countless hours this past year to brighten the lives of the Otsego Haus clients with their bright, cheerful handmade items and joy-filled visits. Formed around 2007, the group consists of 13 dedicated and very creative quilters, mostly from the Wolverine area.

I recently had a chance to visit with one of the group's members, Barbara Murray, or BL, as she likes to be called. She shares that the group has been hard at work since last summer making various items for the Otsego Haus.

When asked how the group landed on volunteering for the Otsego Haus, BL notes that many of the Cut Ups' members have family members and friends touched by memory loss. Another group member, Barbara Manrow had come across something called a "fidget" quilt when she was downstate on a visit. (In some places, these quilts are known as sensory activity quilts.) Fidget quilts, as the Cut Ups call theirs, are designed to hang over the laps of persons living with memory loss. The quilts often have a theme and might have such objects as beads, buckles, flaps, ribbons, lace, bells, zippers, buttons, and pockets sewn into the tops of the quilts.

In one of their meetings, Manrow presented her idea, and the group decided they would like to bring some fidget quilts to some organization or facility in the area whose clients were living with memory loss. BL recalls, "After calling around to different places, I came across Evie Riozzi at the Otsego Haus." Riozzi, the program coordinator, arranged a meeting with BL and another member to discuss the group's proposal. BL notes, "Evie provided a lot of guidance on the colors to use and types of objects to attach to the quilts."

Riozzi shares, "People with memory loss often get restless. The fidget quilts are great because they help our clients to focus their attention on the objects that have been sewn into the fabric. Fingering these objects provides tactile stimulation and exercise for their hands." She adds, "They are also entertaining and often a springboard for reminiscing."

BL notes that the Cut Ups meet twice a month to learn various quilting techniques, socialize, and show off some of the items that they have been working on. The items that have been donated to the Otsego Haus are made on the members' own time.

So far, the group has made and donated several fidget blankets, placemats, and wall hangings. Some are themed for the different seasons of the year. One member made windsocks for clients to enjoy in the warm-weather months on the Otsego Haus deck. Another member made hand warmers. BL explains, "They are kind of like of scarves, except they have a place for clients to put their hands into on each end."

Of course, the greatest joy for the Cut Ups is to see the happiness and excitement on the faces of the Otsego Haus clients and staff when they drop off their items. Whenever schedules permit, members stay and visit with the clients and staff. BL shares, "We enjoy talking to everyone and sharing laughs." She adds, "Our goal has been to brighten up the place with everything we've been making." She emphasizes, "Everything we make is donated and comes from our hearts."

Volunteering from the Heart!

Since it was established by the Otsego County Commission on Aging in 2000, the Otsego Haus Program's mission has been providing quality care for older adults in a safe, homelike environment. The Otsego Haus is designed to serve older adults who may require increased social opportunities, supervision, and/or assistance with personal care or other activities of daily living. The agency's experienced, dedicated staff is trained in the care of persons living with Alzheimer's disease and other forms of dementia. Clients who spend their time at the Otsego Haus stay socially engaged in a safe, secure, friendly, and home-like facility and are treated like family. To date, the program has served over 266 families!

Throughout the year, the Otsego Haus staff and clients receive visits and assistance from several individual volunteers and groups.



THE WOLVERINE QUILT GROUP - THE CUT UPS!
SOME MEMBERS RECENTLY ENJOYED A VISIT WITH OTSEGO HAUS CLIENTS, DARLENE (SECOND FROM THE LEFT) AND SHARON (SECOND FROM THE RIGHT).

TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THE OCCOA'S OTSEGO HAUS PROGRAM, PLEASE VISIT THE AGENCY'S WEBSITE AT WWW.OTSEGOCOUNTYCOA.ORG OR CONTACT OTSEGO HAUS COORDINATOR, EVIE RIOZZI, LPN, AT (989) 732-4121.



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