



Kids' Community

4-H Youth Makes Blankets for Russian Orphans

(NAPSA)—Twelve-year-old Natasha Swanson puts a little bit of herself and America into every blanket she makes for her friends in the Russian orphanage she and her sister left behind.

As a 4-H project, Natasha is creating fleece blankets, one for each of the 30 young people who remain at the orphanage. Her new grandma showed her how to make the blankets.

"The children in Russia see a lot of snow. It's really cold there in winter, and it's cold even in summer. It doesn't ever get warm like it does here. I wanted to make the blankets for my country where I lived and that I love," Natasha said.

Two years ago, Matt and Kim Swanson adopted Natasha and her eight-year-old sister, Ira, from the orphanage in a small village near Petrozavodsk. Natasha and Ira now live with their new brothers, 11-year-old Philip and 10-year-old Andrew, on the Swanson's small family farm near Ames, Iowa.

Natasha makes the blankets out of two complementary pieces of fabric about one yard each. She carefully cuts the material so that each piece is even, pins the pieces together and cuts fringe into the top and bottom. Her sister and brothers, who also are 4-H members, then help her tie the square knots that hold the two pieces of fabric together to finish it.

An American couple who are adopting children from Natasha's orphanage will deliver the blankets.

Natasha paid for the blankets through donations from family



Natasha Swanson makes blankets for the Russian friends she left behind.

friends and church members. The Swanson Family initially approached a few with a letter asking for assistance for Natasha's project. Donations grew as word of mouth spread, and a small grant matched the individual contributions.

Natasha says she will continue to make blankets for Russian orphans as her 4-H project as long as she has the resources.

"I want to make the blankets for the friends I left behind. I want to help them out. I want to keep them warm," Natasha said.

Natasha and her family are part of 4-H, a community of young people across America who are learning leadership, citizenship and life skills. Learn more about how you can join the 4-H adventure at www.4husa.org.