

AMERICA'S BEST

Using A Colonial Craft To Comfort The Families Of Fallen Patriots

(NAPSA)—A young woman has revived an old craft to show her appreciation for the ultimate sacrifice made by members of the armed forces and their families.

At 19 years old, Jessica Porter of Hudson, Fla., has spent countless hours in her family sewing room on a mission to stitch patriotic quilts for the mourning American military families who lost a loved one in Iraq.

When she began Operation Homefront Quilt in May 2003, the count was less than 150. Now, it's more than 350 and, unfortunately, rising weekly.

"It's all about sacrifice," said Porter. "Those soldiers have sacrificed everything to protect us. I just wanted to give their families something respectful in return. People my age just don't understand sacrifice. But they are beginning to. I'm making a quilt now for a widow, age 20, just one year older than me."

Porter was spending 12 to 15 hours a day working on each quilt and producing 16 tailor-made pieces, with over 300 more to go, when a national quilting company got wind of her plight. It "sent in the troops" and provided Porter with a long arm quilting machine that cut her production time in half.

American Professional Quilting Systems—APQS—flew its Millennium Long-arm Machine to Florida and the owner, Jeff Jochims, helped set up the innovative machine in Porter's sewing room.



Operation Homefront Quilt sends quilts to families who have lost a loved one in Iraq.

Porter was elated with the gift, and impressed with the efficiency and quality that could be incorporated into the Operation Homefront Quilt project.

"I cannot believe how much time the long arm is saving me," stated Porter. "It's unbelievable. When I was quilting before, it would take me all day to quilt one. Now I can quilt five a day, with time to spare. I run out of tops, before I run out of time. That is really wonderful."

When it comes to her own family, Porter has a very supportive one. Porter's mother, Joanne, has helped with the project.

"I think history is one of the most important things to patriotism," said Porter. "It's important to see how our country was founded and what it has stood for. I don't think as many people are as patriotic now because they

don't care about history. They don't know about people through the years who have sacrificed so we can have the freedoms now."

Donald Rumsfeld, United States secretary of defense, acknowledges Porter's salute to patriotism with a historical marking in itself. Rumsfeld sent Porter a personal letter thanking her for her efforts.

The strong elements of history, patriotism and family are important to Porter. So is the ever-present refuge of her Christianity. With every quilt, she writes a personal note and sends a little book: *The Power of Crying Out: When Prayer Becomes Mighty* by Bill Gothard.

As the death toll increases, Porter will stay true to her mission. "My respect and gratitude go out to these families," she said. "We will send a quilt to every family."

Ways You Can Help:

- Solid colored fabrics are needed to coordinate with the many patriotic fabrics Porter currently owns. Red, burgundy, royal blue and white are requested.
- Completed patriotic quilt tops would be helpful. Porter will finish the quilts and send to the respective families.
- Send materials to: Jessica Porter, 12637 Sugar Creek Blvd., Hudson, Fla., 34669-2818

