

Chronicle Quilt Project

Cathy Spencer (CRSPENC@k12.carr.org)

Carroll County Career and Technology Center, Carroll County

This quilt project began as a partnership between Shepherd's Staff, a local non-profit agency and our school, and grew to encompass a greater audience in the wake of the tragedies of September 11th. Originally, students were designing chronicle quilts using the theme "Angels Among Us" to be auctioned at a fundraiser for Shepherd's Staff. After the September 11th tragedy students expanded and modified their projects to reach out with a visual form of aid to the city of New York. Three quilts were constructed for Shepherd's Staff and an additional quilt is being constructed for New York City to demonstrate the concern and caring of the students in the Fashion Design class.

Best Practice 1: What recognized community need was met by your project? Shepherd's Staff is an agency that assists people in short-term crisis situations and looks to be proactive in addressing problems. This agency has a large back-to-school drive including clothing, school supplies, and shoes, as well as a Coats for Kids program to provide winter coats to community members in need. In addition, they also have a Dress for Success program. The Quilt Program supports their annual theme and provides another avenue of raising funds at their largest fundraiser of the year. The quilt being sent to New York City is a visible, creative expression of feelings of caring and concern for New York City and one that demonstrates pride and patriotism.

Shepherd's Staff and the Career and Technology Center partnered last year for this annual fundraising event and the students researched, designed and created costumes for the volunteers participating in last year's fundraiser. It was such a successful partnership that Shepherd's Staff looked for a different way that students could help this year and that is how the quilt project got started. As far as the need, Shepherd's Staff is a very valuable and visible contributor to the community and are well known for their great efforts to improve the lives of those in need. The New York City Quilt provides a tangible way for students to reach out to those in need in a creative, artistic way allowing students to express their feelings about the horrible tragedy of September 11th.

The Shepherd's Staff quilt project is a win-win situation as the community benefits from the quilts being auctioned for Shepherd's Staff as the money helps to serve so many people (a great many of them being children and youth) and our students get to use their sewing and design skills. The folks in New York City will see that students from around the country are thinking of them and helping in a totally different way than sending money or giving blood.

Best Practice 2: How was the project connected to the school curriculum and curricular objectives? The class had an outside speaker from Brothers International, a sewing machine company, who taught the students about Chronicle Quilts and the historical aspect of this type of quilt. Students also learned about entrepreneurship, planning a quilt, organization and teamwork -- all parts of the Fashion Design Curriculum.

Best Practice 3: How did participants reflect on their experiences throughout the project? Especially because of the September 11th tragedies, the very quilt itself is a reflection of the events in the world. Chronicle Quilts include writing messages and the question that the students had to address in their message was: "What I hope for the people?" One response in the quilt says, "I sincerely hope that we each can appreciate to a much more constant degree one another. Let us remember always." Some blocks are stars but each block represents that students artistic interpretation and their own personal reflection about world events.

Best Practice 4: How did students take leadership roles and take responsibility for the success of the project? Students had to design their square based on the lesson and collect new fabric or recycled fabric such as old jeans. Students were responsible for producing their finished product within the defined guidelines.

Best Practice 5: What community partners were worked with on this project? Shepherd's Staff was the primary partner, but Brothers International was involved as well by providing a speaker. The students also the students visited the Westminster Senior Center and worked with nine senior center members to assemble the quilts.

Best Practice 6: How did you prepare and plan ahead for the project? Again, preparation included a speaker and lessons about Chronicle Quilts, selecting fabrics and planning and organizing the quilt blocks. One additional note about fabric: Ms. Spencer purchased a yard or so of "millennium" fabric and had put it away for something... she had nothing in mind at the time. The fabric is dark blue with outlines of city skylines including New York City and the twin towers. This fabric appears in quilt blocks throughout the quilt and provides a very interesting and powerful backdrop for some of the blocks.

Best Practice 7: What knowledge and skills did students develop through this project? Students learned first-hand how history is made and how they were a part of that history. They developed skills related to sewing and designing. Every skill level was able to contribute to the quilt making process.

