

As seen in...



# Advance

137th Year, No. 9

August 13, 2009

\$1

## Piecemakers who mend hearts

*Healing Hands Mending Hearts Quilt*

By LINDA LEUZZI

Hearts and hands were the main theme and the women included their own compassionate spin on the quilt they made, a main one with two side panels forming a triptych.

Pat Lunati, one of the quilters, sewed a workingman's hand, embellished with a denim cuff and dirt under his fingernails. "We saw a lot of things with bling and she wanted to signify a hard-working person," said Diana Berthold of Lunati's expression of love. "She wanted to include everyone."

Berthold, an East Patchogue resident, had called Patchogue Village Trustee Lori Devlin over Thanksgiving weekend about her idea to try to heal and come to terms with the Marcelo Lucero murder. There were e-mails back and forth, then promotional flyers by the village. The first Healing Hands Mending Hearts quilt gathering took place in February in the Patchogue-Medford Library where the concept was discussed.

"Hearts were shattered and the piece makers as peacemakers are trying to piece them together," she explained. The work began in earnest in March, with Berthold lugging her portable sewing machine, ironing board and iron, dispensing her professional quilting knowledge twice a month. Her husband Jeff would help carry the materials and equipment in and out. Rumor has it he had perfect attendance.

The completion of the quilt, 36 squares with two side panels of six, is planned for tonight at the Patchogue-Medford Library. The meeting starts at 7 p.m.

"This will wrap it up," said Berthold, who attended Fashion Institute of Technology, was a fashion designer and is now an award-winning artist and quilt designer specializing in horse ribbon awards.

Twenty women came together over the months and produced the squares. They included Lunati, who did the working man's hand. She worked a few squares between hospital stays.



Some of the quilters who produced the Healing Hands Mending Hearts quilt in honor of Marcelo Lucero. Pictured are (left to right) Patchogue Village trustee Lori Devlin; quilt designer Diana Berthold, who conceived the project; Corinne Franco; and Pat Sweeney. The plan is to have the quilt displayed in the community.

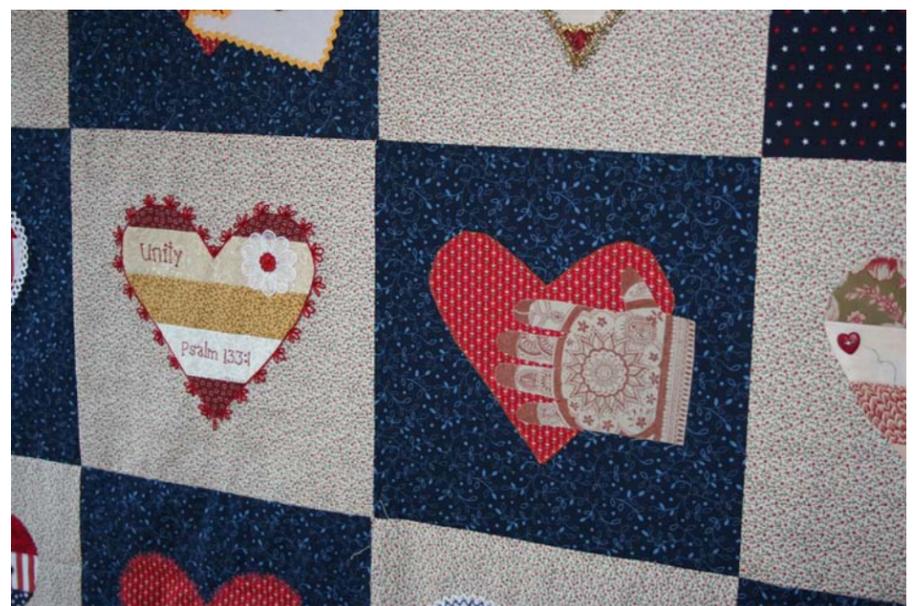
ADV/Leuzzi

One woman from St. Francis de Sales stitched the four corners representing Christianity, Judaism and Muslim faiths as well as Kwanzaa. Women from the Hispanic community participated. Elaine Perez from the Patchogue-Medford Library produced a hand with ruffles and gold stars. Another from the Marcelo Lucero Foundation attended one night.

As they cut the squares, ironed and sewed, the women would talk. "There are certain things that are tactile that are a stress reliever," pointed out Berthold.

The women talked about how they felt about the incident at the first meeting. "My emotion was, you're raised with the Ten Commandments, 'Thou shalt not kill,'" Berthold said. "That's my interpretation. You don't take a life. I encouraged people to express their feelings."

But once they did, the gathering and the project was a force of positive energy. It became a collaboration. "I think this positive energy concept is more simple than we allow," said Pat Sweeney, a retired teacher from the Patchogue-Medford School District. "It's as simple as smiling



Examples of the quilt squares sewed by 20 women who were involved with the Healing Hands Mending Hearts project at the Patchogue-Medford Library. This particular hand represented one with a henna design.

ADV/Leuzzi

at someone in the library or holding the door for the next person. Sadly, these young people (who were accused of killing Lucero) weren't familiar with that."

The next step, before the batting and backing are added, includes writing down what inspired each woman to walk through the library's doors on sometimes cold and dark nights and create their squares. Jo Ann Powell, a retired art teacher

known for her beautiful calligraphy, will add those messages on the border. "We hope it will hang in different institutions in the community," said Berthold about the quilt's aftermath. "It may be traveling around for a year."

"We attracted people with strong feelings about the tragedy," said Corinne Franco, a steadfast regular.

"And an interest in quilting," added Devlin. ■