



VILLAGE SQUARES QUILTERS GUILD

PRESENTATION NOTES

40 Years and still counting!

This presentation:

Not an exhaustive review of every activity, etc. of VSQ....we'd be here for days for that! For information, I scoured the VSQ website, dredged up my memories (I joined VSQ in 2002), and received info from a few of you; I then tried to select items that illustrate our history through the changing times in the quilting world. Janet (aka J Bo) then organized the resulting mess into the slideshow that you will see shortly.

Talking about a “changing times in the quilting world”:

- From templates and scissors to rulers and rotary cutters to Accuquilt
- From traditional designs to art quilts to modern quilts
- From primarily hand sewing (piecing, appliqué, quilting) to machine sewing for almost everything (in the early 1980's “machine quilting” was a “dirty word” and there were battles over how to even include machine quilted items into shows!

But I digress....firstly, I'll give a brief-ish summary of the past 40 years.....

1980's:

It all began with an Adult Education Class at the Quaker Ridge Elementary School in 1981.

An informal Quilting Bee was formed and they called themselves the Village Squares. Initially, they rotated get-togethers at their homes. Then found space at the Church of St James the Less in Scarsdale.

First formal meeting was held on January 10, 1983 and the Village Squares Quilters Guild was established. Meetings were scheduled for the second Tuesday of the month, a schedule that is still adhered to today!

In a nod to their group's Quilting Bee roots, the meetings always included an hour or so for “Sit and Sew” either to work on your own project or a group project – generally hand sewing. One popular group activity was “thread basting quilt sandwiches” for various members as the room at St James the Less was quite large and provided large tables. This activity continued into the early 2000's! Occasionally, a member would request assistance with “pin basting.”

Notes – VSQ 40th Anniversary Presentation: From the 1980's to the 2020's

Presentations, speakers, and workshops were added to the guild's meetings / calendar. For a long time, the visiting speakers / workshop leaders were hosted by one of the guild's members....that began to change early in the 2000's.

During the 1980's, there was some informal Outreach activity and some members made / donated quilts to various groups.

(1985 / 1986: A curated quilt show was held in The Gallery at the Hastings-on-Hudson Municipal building, "Quilting: New Images from an Old Tradition," and included 36 items from 28 quilters (some of whom were members of VSQ).

1990's to present day:

By the time 1990 rolled around, the guild had settled into a somewhat regular routine. In addition to members making quilts for themselves, family, and friends, they expanded their expertise via speaker presentations, workshops, member-teach-member days, challenge quilts, various projects such as BOM's, summer projects / challenges, etc., and participating in the various Outreach activities.

Outreach – Cuddle Quilts and Friendship Quilts (tho' these names were not used until the early 2000's):

Outreach activities became more organized during the 1990's. After a presentation regarding the children in Blythedale Children's Hospital, many members joined the project to make quilts for the hospitalized children, planning to donate them for the holiday season.

Throughout the 1990's and beyond, donations of quilts to nursing homes, hospitals, NICU's, etc. slowly expanded and became more organized with an "Outreach Coordinator" and various members, like today, "sponsoring" various organizations. Sometimes a group of members would do a small "Show'n'Tell" for the nursing home residents before delivering the quilts. In addition, some members met at the Veterans' Association Hospital in Montrose to make quilts....and the occasional mending (such as sewing on a button!)....for the residents.

Outreach – Not just quilts and not just Westchester County locations:

In addition to quilts, the members made and donated wheelchair / walker bags to Burke Rehabilitation Hospital, nursing homes, and the VA; added decorative quilt patches to bibs for special needs children at St Mary's Healthcare System in Ossining; pillowcases for children here in Westchester. I am sure that there are other examples. During the 2000's and beyond the number of activities, plus the locations supported, expanded to include both domestic and international groups as you'll hear later.

Outreach – Bedford Babies:

In the spring of 1997, following a suggestion by one of the members, a group of members delivered a bunch of baby quilts to the Children's Center at the Bedford Hills Correctional Center. While there, the mothers were asked if they would like to learn to make quilts – the answer was a resounding "yes!" And that is how, what is now known as Bedford Babies Outreach Program, began.

(At some point in time, one of the guild members transferred across the street to Taconic Prison (which had a drug rehab program), where the teaching of quilt making to another small group of mothers continued for a few years).

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The guild supported this activity by providing funds to purchase fabric, batting, etc. The members participating the Bedford Babies Program also did some fundraising on their own e.g., applying for and receiving a grant from the National Quilting Association (now defunct). In addition, as rotary cutters, large scissors, etc. are verboten in the Children's Center, the Bedford Babies Program organized various "cutting parties" that many members attended to help prepare the quilt kits for the mothers.

Fundraising – Shows and Raffle Quilts:

Fundraising became more important in order to support the various Outreach activities as well as covering some of the costs of the speakers. Workshops were "self-funding."

Although some funds were donated, the members decided to hold a Quilt Show every 2 years to raise more funds and to show quilts / quilting to the general public. To coincide with each Show, the members decided to make a raffle quilt ahead of time, sell tickets and then hold the drawing at each Show with 50% of the raffle proceeds going to a nominated charity. 1990 - the first show, "Quilt Celebration I" and the first Raffle Quilt. The Shows continued thru' to 2014, with our final quilt show, Quilt Celebration XIII – unfortunately, the financials / effort no longer made sense.

Both the Quilt Show and the Raffle Quilt were group activities that helped foster a comradery among the guild members. Initially, the raffle quilts were hand quilted....tho' in 2006, we had our first machine quilted raffle quilt, Square Dance. Two more quilts, 2008 and 2012, were also hand quilted but, by then, the number of members willing to put a few quilting stitches into the quilts had dwindled. So, after 2012, all raffle quilts have been machine quilted. You will see all except the 1990 Raffle Quilt in the upcoming slideshow.

Along with the Show, the guild sponsored a Quilt Challenge for members. A theme and associated "rules" were described; then the individual members participating in the Challenge interpreted the theme. The resulting quilts were then voted on by the guild membership. This was a fun activity – albeit it could be a bit stressful for those making / entering a quilt!

Fabric Donations:

Over the years, the guild received (and still receives) sporadic donations of fabric, batting, notions, etc. from several fabric shops, vendors, retiring quilters, etc. that helps defray the costs associated with our Outreach projects. I would like to highlight one person and their company that made two significant fabric donations – Mitchell Blank and Blank Textiles. I.e., "Blank Fabric".

In 2006, Mitchell Blank of Blank Textiles generously donated a large amount of fabric via Susan Wolman to the guild – greatly expanding our stash! Appropriate fabric was then distributed to Bedford Babies, and made available to guild members for use in Outreach projects.

Then, in 2014 Mitchell Blank advised Susan that he was closing Blank Textiles' NY Office in Irvington(?) and that we were welcome to come and take whatever we liked....bolts and yardage of fabric as well as Sample Fabric Cards, and so-on. So, Susan spread the word and several of us drove to the office and helped ourselves to what was available....loading up our cars with as much as we could. (Pics coming up in the slideshow!) In short, we collected over 2,200 yds of fabric in bolts and fabric yardage plus over 2,000 Fabric Sample Cards. [Show card]. The haul was stored in various members houses! Although we did sell some of the fabric to guild members (with monies going to the guild), a lot of the fabric was used (and is still being used!) in guild projects.

Talking about Projects....how did they come about and what were they?

“Regular” donations to nursing homes, hospitals, etc. continued. However, I would like to highlight some specific projects that were driven by a member sponsoring the effort, the impact of nature or manmade events. These projects are included in the upcoming slideshow.

Member Sponsoring project:

Rosalind Yong sponsored a project in 2007: Common Ground, an organization whose mission was “to end homelessness”, was working with NYS on the set-up of the Veteran’s facility in Montrose to house homeless veterans. The Blank Fabric donation of 2006 was raided and the guild members made and donated 72 quilts to the VA.

Then, in 2009, Rosalind coordinated a Summer Project to create “house blocks” to make a fundraising quilt for Common Ground, “Every House has a Story.” In 2010, Rosalind asked members to create “heart blocks” to make a quilt, “To Love without Borders,” for the US-based fundraising group associated with Angkor Hospital for Children. The resulting quilt was auctioned for \$4,000!

2010: We STILL had lots of fabric in the guild’s stash so, using the Blank fabric donation and supplementing it with fabric from another donation, we embarked on our first foray into “mystery quilts” – another way to use the fabric from the guild’s stash! 35 members participated with the resulting quilts going to various nursing homes. In 2013, we coordinated another Mystery Quilt Project with the resulting quilts going to the Wartburg Adult Care Community.

2016-2018: Three members led a “skill building” BOM project – each month focused on a specific technique. Fabric, pattern, and a demo of the technique were provided; completed blocks were returned and made into Outreach Quilts.

2015 & 2017: Member led Summer Projects - 2015 required using Blank Fabric Cards, resulting quilts to various nursing homes (I think); 2017 was a mix of suggested patterns e.g., I Spy, ZigZag Quilt, quilts made with 2½” strips, etc. using the guild’s stash. Resulting quilts to Furniture Sharehouse.

A Final Project was coordinated in 2019: “Making a Quilt from Start to Finish” This project used the pattern, Double Irish Chain, to cover all steps in making a quilt.

Projects due to manmade events:

2001: The events of 9/11 impacted all of us with many families having a relative or knowing someone who lost their life on that day. VSQ rallied and made several quilts that were donated to 9/11 families.

2009: Together with other guilds, members made children’s quilts in support of Chernobyl Children Project U.S.A. Inc.

2022 on: Quilts made and sent Poland in support of Ukrainian Refugees. Members also participated with other guilds to send quilts to Ukraine.

Projects due to Nature showing her wrath!

2005: Hurricane Katrina arrived. The guild members stepped up and made quilts and pillow cases for folks in need in New Orleans.

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2010: An international donation – via Afya Foundation - quilts and wheelchair bags to Haiti.

2012-2013: 2012 - Hurricane Sandy a.k.a. Superstorm Sandy blows through and, in addition to causing extensive damage in our area, leads to the rescheduling of our Show, Quilt Celebration XII, to 2013. Quilts made and donated to Acacia Foundation and UJA Federation of NY for distribution to Hurricane Sandy families.

2023: Areas of Mississippi devastated by a hurricane – quilts made and sent in support of families affected.

The Impact of the Pandemic:

Finally, I would be remiss if I did not mention the beginning of this decade.

Remember in January 2020 when “to zoom” meant “to go fast”?

Fast forward to March 2020, and “to zoom” means “to meet on-line”!

Guild members pivoted to making face masks and other protective gear for essential workers plus family, friends, and neighbors. The Board coordinated organizing meetings online (via aforesaid Zoom) and, after 5+ months of no face-to-face meetings, organized Outdoor picnic and Show’n’Tell, albeit following pandemic guidelines.....our first in-person get-together since February, 2020.



In closing, I would like thank the members of the 40th Anniversary Committee – Jean Borsellino, Janet Bozzone and Susan Wolman. Also, Linda Q and her band of helpers for putting on such a wonderful 40th Anniversary Lunch. Thank you all.

One last note – When did we ever find time to work on our own quilts?

Misc.:

Meeting locations:

1983 – 2002 (or thereabouts).....Church of St James the Less, Scarsdale

2002 (or thereabouts) – 2005 (or thereabouts)....Unitarian Church, Rosedale Ave, White Plains.

2005 (or thereabouts) – 06/2010....Wilson House, First Baptist Church, White Plains.

10/2010 – 09/2011..... Atria Woodlands, Ardsley

10/2011 – 08/2012.....Friends Meeting House, Purchase

09/2012 – present.....Westchester Reform Temple, Scarsdale