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Tiny Stitches nonprofit handmakes outfits for newborns | News | gwinnettdaily.com

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By

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Amy Wilson, with the nonprofit organization Tiny Stitches, works alongside other volunteer

Thanks to the nonprofit organization Tiny Stitches, newborns, who would have left the hospital wrapped in a towel or a blanket, now go home donning a handmade outfit along with a bag full of other items crafted with babies mind.

Up to 200 talented people turn their hobbies into gifts for babies in need. By using the patterns and guidelines provided on the Tiny Stitches website and supplies that are donated by corporations and private individuals, or purchased using donated money, hundreds of items are made and donated each month. Most of the volunteers do the work in their homes at their convenience.

The entire organization is volunteer run, with no paid positions. All donations remain in Georgia.

Susan Brunton, President of Tiny Stitches, says the organization could not survive without the help of its generous donors.

"We submit grant proposals to the EMCs in the areas where we deliver," Brunton said. " Jackson EMC Foundation has been very generous to us. Jackson EMC gave us \$10,000 and Hart EMC gave us \$500."

Tiny Stitches was founded by five of its current volunteers in 1998 and incorporated as a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization in February 1999.

One founding member, Debbie Vickers of Suwanee said they saw a need and decided to address it.

While volunteering for a national organization with the same mission, the founders realized they wanted their efforts to benefit their home areas.

"We thought, well, I don't want to ask my friends to give me money to send someplace else, we want to keep it here in Georgia." Vickers said. "So Tiny Stitches was born because if we are going to take Georgia money, we are going to put it here."

Starting with the five founding members, the organization grew to almost 200 very quickly.

The Atlanta Sewing Center in Duluth was instrumental in helping Tiny Stitches grow. They offered up their location for business meetings and assisted in promoting the group's efforts.

Additionally, The Gwinnett Daily Post ran a few mentions in a local column when Tiny Stitches was in its infancy.

"That was very, very helpful," Vickers said about the publicity.

The group provides a handmade layette bag loaded with 27 items in the summer and 31 items in the winter. These items include sewn gowns, sleepers, shirts, bibs and blankets as well as knitted or crocheted blankets, booties, sweaters and caps.

The bags are delivered to hospitals and health departments in the North Georgia area to distribute to new mothers as needed.

"Some moms aren't really prepared," Vickers said.

But nurses know when they need to present the filled layette bag.

"They go, 'it's time to get you ready to go and we have this little gift for you,'" Vickers said. "And the mothers generally cry, and then the nurses cry. It's not sad tears."

All the items are one size in hopes of fitting the newborns for at least three months or longer.

"The only thing we differentiate in size for are the burials," Brunton said.

Those articles are specially made by volunteer Diana Davis of Blueridge.

"We provide them gowns for burials," Davis said. "We do four different sizes."

The gowns for burials come with some special extras.

"We provide the gown and a bonnet, and a blanket and then an envelope for the birth certificate, maybe a lock of hair, items like that," Davis said.

These items and the loaded layette bags are delivered monthly by volunteers after they spend a day or two sorting and packaging them for transport.

Tiny Stitches has two drop-off locations in Gwinnett. The Atlanta Sewing Center in Duluth during business hours, and Your Extra Attic in Suwanee where volunteers pack the goods for delivery on the Wednesday before each monthly business meeting.

Tiny Stitches, based in Gwinnett County, serves Gwinnett County and other areas in North Georgia.

Business meetings are held at the Atlanta Sewing Center in Duluth and workshops are held in Alpharetta, Duluth, Gainesville, Lilburn, Marietta, Hartwell and Snellville. During the meetings and workshops, volunteers can pick up supplies and drop off their donations.

Tiny Stitches welcomes anyone who sews, knits or crochets, or would like to learn any of these skills. Detailed information can be found on their website, tinystitches.org.