

# Lions to make tie quilts for pediatric cancer patients

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For the last couple of years, Lions International has been involved in several different service projects. Typically, a project is chosen and then the state chapter takes on the project, asking all local clubs to participate.

This year, their project was to help kids with cancer. So the Alexandria Evening Lions Club has chosen to make tie quilts for pediatric cancer patients at the University of Minnesota Children's Hospital, said long-time member Patti Dahlheimer. She said the organization has asked all Lions clubs within its district to donate funds to the cause and then the Evening Lions will purchase all the materials.

Dahlheimer said the materials will be brought to the mid-winter convention and then the Lions members will make the quilts. Afterward, they bring them to the Children's Hospital in Minneapolis.

"These quilts are warm and soothing for those going through chemo," said Dahlheimer. "The quilts come in all sizes for children – from infants on up to about 9 years old."

There are 55 clubs in the district, which Dahlheimer said is the 5M4 District. Dahlheimer is challenging all clubs within the district to participate by making a donation for the purchase of tie quilt materials. Donations will be taken through the end of January. Lions clubs can donate to the 5M4 District,

directing the funds to be used specifically for this project.

For more information, contact Dahlheimer at 320-763-3538.

To learn more about the Alexandria Evening Lions Club and all the other service projects the organization is involved in, Dahlheimer invites people to check out a meeting. The meetings take place the second and fourth Mondays of each month at 6 p.m. at Broadway Ballroom in Alexandria.

Alexandria Evening Lions Club member Patti Dahlheimer stands by one of the tie quilts that will be donated to the pediatric cancer ward at the University of Minnesota Children's Hospital.

Celeste Edenloff / Echo Press



## ABUSE

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adequate basic needs – food, clothing, shelter.

Olson, a child protection supervisor, said the majority of child protection services cases involve neglect. She also mentioned other circumstances that could be considered child abuse, such as drinking and driving with a child in the vehicle, or a child living in circumstances deemed unfit, such as a filthy living environment that could cause illness, or even living in a house where the adults are hoarders.

In 2015, the state of Minnesota implemented guidelines all child protection workers are required to use to determine whether child abuse has occurred. The nearly two-inch-thick booklet is used by the

Child Protection Screening Team in Douglas County to screen in or screen out the reports they receive, said Laurie Bonds, the county's social services director.

When an advocate at Someplace Safe learns of possible child abuse, they report it to child protection services. All advocates are considered mandated reporters, said Someplace Safe Director Susan Keehn.

"If someone discloses something about child abuse, our role is to take the information and either report it to social services, or law enforcement if it's after hours," said Keehn. "It is not our job to investigate it. That's for social services and law enforcement officers."

People who come in regular contact with children, such as educators, medical professionals and many others, are mandated by the state to report any



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suspicion of child abuse. Mandated reporters can face consequences if child abuse was highly suspected and not reported, said Olson.

Keehn said she and the advocates at Someplace Safe will report any concerns they have and not second-guess their suspicions.

Some areas of child abuse are not always clear cut, however. When it comes to emotional harm, Keehn said it can sometimes get a little gray.

"If a parent calls a child lazy, it may not be child abuse," she said. "But

if that parent constantly says it and puts the child down, then yes, it can be. I will report it if I have any concerns. That is the whole reason we exist, to keep our children safe."

Keehn said of the 138 children served through Someplace Safe in its last fiscal year, almost half – 48% – were age 12 or younger, with 52 percent between the ages of 13-17. About two-thirds were girls and one-third boys. About 20 percent were cases of child sexual abuse or assault by both family and non-family members, said Keehn.

Non-family members

are those who have power differential, meaning they are people with authority whom kids trust, she said.

### After a report is made

Every weekday morning, members of the Child Protection Screening Team meet and discuss all reported cases of possible child abuse. The information is logged into the computer and then the team, which is made up of supervisors, law enforcement investigators from the Alexandria Police Department and Douglas County Sheriff's Office, and personnel from the Douglas County Attorney's Office, sit down and discuss each report.

Using the state guidelines, they determine whether the case needs to be investigated.

If it does, then the case can take one of two tracks, said Olson. The first track means there are high level concerns, at which point child protection workers work with law enforcement investigators to interview the child and determine the next course of action. This could be to remove the child from the home.

Olson said this is a last resort and used when conditions in the home are unsafe.

Only law enforcement can make the decision to remove the child and only a law enforcement officer can physically remove the child from the home, said Olson.

When children are removed, the goal of child protection services is to place them with other, more suitable family members. If no other family member is available, then the child would be placed in a foster home, she said.

"Our emphasis is on family first, because we believe kids do much better in the long run and it is less traumatic," said Olson.

Bonds said the focus is always on reunification when a child is taken from a home, but in some cases it doesn't work. More than 50 percent of children removed from a home are reunited with their parent or guardian, she said.

For the second track, which more than likely means an urgent response is not needed, a family assessment is conducted and courses of action are determined.

If there is not enough information to determine child abuse took place, there are still options for helping children and their families.

For families with children younger than 10, a parent and/or guardian can enroll in the Parent Support Outreach Program offered by Douglas County Social Services. The program offers assistance to families by providing positive support and preventative services.

"In all cases, the child's immediate safety is taken into consideration," said Bonds. "Child protection services is about the safety of children, not bad parenting."

Olson added that the philosophy of child protection services is "Shift not Shatter." She said they want to help parents make that shift where their children are living in a safe and loving environment versus shattering the lives of the families involved by removing the children.

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*Arlyn & Bill Davis*

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