



Anita Laffey on the left side of the quilt with Daphne Lang Richards, editor/publisher of Senior Magazine
Photo by Kati Garner, Sacramento Red Cross

Kurt's Heroes Quilt

By Anita Laffey

My husband John and I are Red Cross volunteers. When a hurricane, flood, fire or other disaster causes suffering, we go with the Red Cross to the disaster site to help run shelters, drive the emergency food vehicles, comfort disaster victims, and do anything else that is needed. To us, it's no big deal – it's just what we do.

But I recently had an opportunity to see how our volunteering looks through the eyes of a young child, my 7-year-old greatnephew Kurt. It changed my perspective completely.

I was preparing to make a quilt for Kurt. Whenever I make a quilt, I ask the person who will receive it to tell me what theme I should use. Kurt's sister Makenzie loves horses and asked for a quilt with horses on it. His sister Holly wanted a quilt with birds all over it. When I asked Kurt what he wanted, he said, "I want a quilt with heroes on it." I said, "Sure, we can have Superman, and Batman, and..." Kurt immediately stopped me. "No, Aunt Anita," he said, "I want the REAL heroes – you know, the Army and Navy, guys like that." Then he added proudly, "When I get big, I'm going to join the Army and the Navy, maybe even the

Marines and the Air Force!”

I immediately agreed with Kurt’s request for a heroes quilt, and we discussed who we should include. We started with the President of the United States since he is the Commander in Chief of the military. And of course we would honor the Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marines. Then we would include firefighters, like his Uncle Danny, and police, like his Daddy, Curtis. Kurt’s policeman Daddy rescued a three-year-old child from drowning in a swimming pool. We are all so proud of him. I told Kurt, “You know, your Daddy is a real hero!”

Kurt ducked his head, then looked up shyly at me. “But Aunt Anita,” he said softly, “you and Uncle John are heroes, too.” I was stunned, speechless. Finally, I asked, “Why do you say that, Kurt?” “Because you go with the Red Cross,” he answered.

My 7-year-old nephew Kurt sees us as standing on the same level as firefighters, police, the military and even the President, because we “go with the Red Cross?!” What a shock. What a humbling awareness.

So I asked Kurt if he wanted me to include the Red Cross in his quilt. He yelled, “Yes!” I did as he asked.

I have finished Kurt’s quilt and will soon mail it to him. His quilt depicts the President of the United States, the Army, Navy, Air Force and Marines, firefighters, various police departments – and the Red Cross. The fabric that I used in the quilt to represent the Red Cross came from actual jerseys that my husband and I wore on deployments to the floods in Vemonia, Oregon, and to Hurricane Ike in Texas. They look worn and torn because we wore them and tore them on deployments. On Kurt’s heroes quilt, those battered Red Cross jerseys stand side by side with representations of all the other heroes that little Kurt loves. In Kurt’s young eyes, we too are heroes when we “go with the Red Cross” to help our neighbors and show love in times of distress and need. I can think of no higher honor than that. Thank you, Kurt.

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