

CHEMO QUILTS: PAYING IT FORWARD

*“The only place where housework comes before
needlework is in the dictionary.”*

- Mary Kurtz

They come in all sizes. They’re made from plaids and solids and fun prints, in audacious colors and sweet pastels. They’re chemo quilts, and they’re designed to bring comfort and warmth to patients undergoing chemotherapy.

Marilyn Malloy had never used a sewing machine in her life. When her daughter, Mona, was diagnosed with a rare form of cancer, a friend made a quilt for her. Inspired by this beautiful, hand-stitched creation, Marilyn taught herself how to sew quilts.

Karen Brockway, on the other hand, is an avid quilter who has used a sewing machine for as long as she can remember. A friend gave her a quilt while she was undergoing chemotherapy. Later, Karen got the brilliant idea to start her 4th grade students on a chemo quilt project.

“The ‘C’ word is a devastating thing to hear,” says Karen. “To help somebody else – to give them something tangible – is a joy.”

Rare cancer, poor prognosis

Marilyn’s daughter, Mona, was diagnosed in July 1999 with leiomyosarcoma. Four people out of a million get this rare form of cancer. There is no known cure.

Mona was referred to Dr. Phillip DiSaia, oncologist and professor at the University of California at Irvine and the leading physician for leiomyosarcoma. Dr. DiSaia wasn’t accepting new patients but he took Mona’s case.

Initially Mona elected to forego traditional therapies to give homeopathic remedies a try. She eventually began chemotherapy in March of 2000. After a full year of treatments, she was given a break when neuropathy developed on the bottom of her feet.

But the cancer started growing again.