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Kansas City Star, The (MO)

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Soft and warm

You piled up donations of towels, sheets, pillows and cash to help women and kids in transition.

*LISA GUTIERREZ
The Kansas City Star*

THE MONTH OF LOVE - It's Christmas in February

We asked, you gave.

With gusto.

FYI's first Share the Love bedding drive collected sheets and towels for four local shelters that give refuge to women and children.

And the pillows came tumbling in. In one instance, donations came just in time.

In the week leading up to Valentine's Day, your generosity filled an office at The Kansas City Star with pillows, bedsheets and towels. The tower of pillows reached to the ceiling in one corner.

Cash donations flooded in, too, \$4,000.

"It's Christmas in February," said Jeanne North, clinical coordinator at Amethyst Place, which provides housing and help to women shedding alcohol and drug addictions.

In all, FYI readers donated:

About 300 bath towels and more than 600 washcloths

More than 200 pillows

More than 200 sets of sheets

Many "extras," including comforters, blankets and body pillows

One shelter already plans to use part of its money to buy more essentials: cleaning supplies.

They came from people like Lauren O Toole, who decided she didn't need CDs or clothes or mall gift certificates to celebrate her 13th birthday.

Instead, she asked her girlfriends last weekend for towels and pillows and bedsheets. Then Lauren donated them to Share the Love.

Lauren's mom saw the announcement of the drive, and "I knew I didn't really want to get gifts for myself," said Lauren, a seventh-grader at Prairie Star Middle School. "So I said I could donate to them."

One woman who dropped off a donation at The Star's Johnson County bureau in Overland Park spent the \$100 birthday money her husband gave her on sheets and pillows.

Employees at Unilever in Independence had their own mini-drive, collecting several bags of stuff, including extras like diapers and baby wipes.

Some people didn't shop at Target and Macy's. Four fluffy, handmade fleece children's blankets arrived in giant zip-top bags. Someone else donated several bags full of hand-knitted mittens.

And the giving is not over. Thirty members of the Mo-Kan chapter of the American Business Women's Association are collecting bedding and towels for a new shelter program the Catholic Charities of Kansas City-St. Joseph recently opened in the Northland.

Before FYI readers went shopping, the storeroom shelves at Sheffield Place were almost bare of linens; only five pillows were available for the shelter's 20 **homeless** female residents and their children.

"It's like the biggest shopping spree I've ever been on," said one of the young residents as she carried bags of donations into Sheffield Place in northeast Kansas City.

For her efforts, she got to pick out a set of sheets to call her own.

She chose the hot pink ones.

Share the Love beneficiaries

Amethyst Place: Provides housing and other services such as parenting lessons to women searching for sobriety and drug abuse recovery.

Friendship House/Catherine's Place: Gives shelter and other services such as counseling to women recovering from alcohol and other addictions. Many seek shelter from abusive relationships. (816) 531-7788, friendshiphousekc.org.

Hope House: Gives refuge and service to women and their families escaping domestic violence. (816) 461-4188, hopehouse-ejc.org.

Sheffield Place: Provides housing and other services such as counseling for **homeless** mothers and their children. (816) 483-9927, sheffieldplace.org.

To reach Lisa Gutierrez, call (816) 234-4987 or send e-mail to lgutierrez@kcstar.com.

We asked, and you donated towels, sheets, pillows and cash for shelters

Photos (3, color & b/w)

JIM BARCUS - THE KANSAS CITY STAR

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