

The Hospice Bear Program

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These tips are a addendum to the instructions included with the T-Bear, The Most Special Bear Sewing Pattern. They are offered free of charge by Peach Bandana Studios, publishers of beautifully illustrated children's books. This program is supported by the sales of sewing patterns. See www.peachbandana.com for the latest revision. All rights to the material herein are reserved by Peach Bandana Studios. These materials may be copied and distributed for non-profitable purposes as long as Sandy Hendricks and Peach Bandana Studios are properly credited.

Let me start by saying, there is no right or wrong way to do this. In these pages you will find suggestions on how to make your program successful. But the key here is that it is your program. Take some hints from these pages and start small, make a few bears from materials you have. Then show them to friends and suggest a program. Wonderful things will happen if you are dedicated and don't give up. Many people are looking to volunteer in the community but are afraid they will be asked to do more than they want to do. This can be a social thing with a charitable product. I would like to hear from you and will add tips from time to time based on our continued experiences.

FABRIC

Good places to gather fabric are interior design centers, independent designers or decorators, upholstery stores, etc. Ask for their discontinued samples in person. Bring a bear or two to show them what you are doing. Most people in this industry are very recycle conscious and are more than happy to give the fabric to a worthwhile venture rather than fill up a landfill.

As you progress you may find someone that may have a material donation drive for you, or you might want to do one yourself as you meet more people and get the word out. Once it gets going, it will snowball on its own. Handing out flyers to family of Hospice users works well too. They often are in a position where they are disposing of materials

At some point, you will not even need to do this, people just contribute. You will have to sort through this stuff because some is not useable for one reason or another. Make friends with you local St. Vincent's, Goodwill, or other thrift shop. You can pass the items you cant use to them and they in turn will keep a lookout for you for things they know you need.

I will not work with fur of any kind, synthetic or natural. First it is a bear (excuse the pun) to work with and Second, people may have allergies or object to the material. This is from experience.

Speaking of allergies, if there is any odor on the fabric, discard it. Dying people can be very sensitive to odors.

Keep an open mind when looking at textures, colors and patterns. Sometimes, the ugliest looking stuff can make the cutest bear.

I love to use old embroidered pillow cases, dresser scarves, towels etc. Some of the ones you find may have stains or marks on them. Just cut around them. They make wonderful bears. In my mind it is a shame these things are no longer used and all this wonderful work is just thrown away. It is a dying art.

OTHER ITEMS YOU WILL NEED OR ASK FOR

Lace and trims	thread
Buttons	pearl cotton embroidery floss.
Stuffing	jewelry

STUFFING

I personally like Fairfield. It can be purchased at JoAnn Fabrics and can be quite reasonable using their coupons.

When you get to the point of needing a lot of stuffing, contact Fairfield directly and you can purchase a large box wholesale. Hospice should have a resale number or tax exempt number you could use. At this point you might consider asking for a cash donation from Hospice families. When I write for donations like this, I always send a photo of one of the bears. It never fails to touch someone's heart.

BUTTONS

Buttons of any kind can be used, but I prefer the old looking ones or ones that are unusual in some way. Don't get caught up in the matching thing. For the eyes, all that is important is that they be the same size, and color. You can use beads, old costume jewelry etc. Keep an open mind. Also remember what I mentioned in the T-Bear Pattern's instructions. Always consider whether or not these bears might be given to small children before selecting any attachment.

EMBROIDERY

I like the DMC Pearl Cotton. You can purchase this through Hobby Lobby, Michael's, or a needlecraft store. A needlecraft store will have a better color selection. I have already tried contacting DMC directly and they do not supply people like us with discounts etc. The lady I contacted did, however, send me quite a few discontinued balls. If you try to purchase wholesale, you have to purchase 10 balls of the same color at one time and that gets pricey and then you have more than you will ever use. I managed to make friends with the owner of a knitting shop. She was kind of enough to let me choose the colors I was interested in and when she placed her order she gave me one ball of each color and I only had to pay for shipping.

NOTE; I make it a point to do as much advertising for those people, shop owners, etc that help me in any way. I do that by word of mouth, and include their name as contributors in any written materials.

BEAR WORKSHOPS

Personally, I open the workshop once a month at our Hospice facility training room on the 4th Monday of the month. That was the day the room was not being used. I put the word out that I will be there from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Anyone may come at ANY TIME and leave at ANY TIME they want. You may want to adjust the times once you get a feel for the times people usually come. The reasoning was, I would take all the help I could get. Even ½ hour or an hour was a great help. Make sure you let people know they DO NOT have to have sewing skills. There are many things they can do.

CUTTING

STUFFING,

EMBROIDERY

HAND STITCHING THE OPENINGS

SEWING

And most important, they can do this while meeting and socializing with like-minded people.

CUTTING

It is best to select the fabric or group of coordinating fabrics yourself until you find someone that has a good sense of color. Quilting groups are good at this and you may find some help there. Once you select the fabric, trace the pattern pieces on the fabric with a sharpie marker. With a large safety pin, pin all these fabric pieces together. When the cutter has finished cutting out the pieces, have them re-pin all these pieces together again. Scissors can be purchased at JoAnn Fabrics using the coupons. You will want to have several pairs available or ask your cutters to bring their own pair.

SEWING:

Partial Sewing

The sewing can be broken up into several phases. Those that are not comfortable doing the whole bear can sew only the seams they feel competent to do. I have one helper that will only sew the straight pieces such as the front, back, back darts, arms, front of leg, front of face and head back. She then pins the pieces together again and I get it back, to finish, or delegate to someone else.

Full Bear Sewing

Those who are able to sew the whole bear can select fabric, cut and sew or they can take advantage of the pre-cut package. As you can see it is important to have as many volunteers as you can supervise. This way no one is forced to do anything they don't like, or don't feel confident to do.

Closing

The stuffing openings will need to be finished and you may find someone who wants to do just that. Because most of the machine sewing is done in your volunteer's homes, you will need a drop and collection point.

DROP OFF AND COLLECTION

It will help if you have a convenient drop off and collection point. If it could be the same place as your workshop location it simplifies the process and is less for people to remember. I use our Hospice facility for several reasons: 1) it is the location of the workshop, 2)it is centrally located, 3) there is a secure room and 4) it reinforces Hospice.

HELPERS

You will get people who have been helped by Hospice. They are happy to help either with donations or construction. Quilters are a wonderful source because they can SEW and have a good color sense.

Utilize Retirement facilities. Usually there are women looking for something to do. Often it gives their life new purpose and meaning. They can come to you, because most retirement facilities have transportation available, or you can go to them. Usually the facility has an activity director that will be more than happy to help. Keep in mind that because it is their job to find meaningful activities for their residents, you are providing help for them also. I hope you experience the joy I have had watching the excitement of these "worker bees".

Keep a log of the people that want to help. You will want to contact them a few days before the workshop to remind them. Every now and then I also send them a hand written thank you note.

PAYMENT

Each new patient receives a bear at our Hospice . If the family would like more, they pay for the bear. I have selected \$50 per bear but you could charge whatever you think is appropriate. The \$50.00 goes for stuffing and any additional supplies I may need. Actually we have made more money than we need for the bears, so whatever is left, goes into the general fund. Our Hospice's mission is to not turn away people who cannot pay, but without extra money there can be no mission.

During our Hospice fund raisers, we auction off a few bears for additional moneys.

Charging for the extra bears is a great way to control the amount of bears needed. If you don't set the price high enough, people will take advantage and you will never get caught up. Don't be afraid to ask for the money. The bears are worth every cent! Be sure to tell the purchaser it is a donation to Hospice and it does not go into your pocket or anyone else's pocket.

PHOTOGRAPHY

If possible, photograph your bears. Initially, I did because, it was difficult to give them away, and like Billy Joe in the T-Bear Story, it was my way to remember them. I would make prints and put them in an album until there were too many. If you don't have the skills or equipment to do this economically, one of your volunteers will. It would be a good idea to print out the first 25 or so and put them in an album to show people that are interested. It shows how each one is different and what can be accomplished.

NOTES AND THANK YOU CARDS

I save all the thank you notes and cards I receive. (There have not been that many) I put them in a special album along with the photo of the bear. I keep an album in the living room of our Hospice for our families and patients to look at.

PUBLICITY

Once you get rolling, you might want to contact a newspaper to do an article. Your Hospice may have a PR person who would help you. It is also wonderful publicity for them. Unknowing to me, one of my quilting friends contacted the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel because she thought it would make a good story. The journalist contacted me and did a wonderful story for the Sunday paper. This is something I would never have done on my own because I would prefer to be invisible. It did a lot for our bear program and Hospice.

Until the next time we talk. Happy Bear making.

Sandy The Bear Lady