

How to Implement the  
**Bags of Love**

Program in Your Community



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Updated 2021 by Susan Schnell & LeShel Taylor

# WELCOME

Welcome to **It's My Very Own**. Our mission is to provide handmade **Bags of Love** to meet the immediate needs of displaced children. We are so thankful that the Lord led you to this ministry. We know that with His leadership and your devotion, this program will be so successful and bless your community. We look forward to working with you and your church to establish this ministry in your area.

As **It's My Very Own** grows and spreads around the country, we would like to witness where the Lord takes this program. Please feel free to contact us with any questions you may have. Also, we have designed this program to be a sharing program. We will keep you updated and we would love to hear from you with any ideas, experiences, or testimonials you may have.

Please either fill out the form below and mail it to me or send me the information by email or text. This will be added to our International website, which will allow us to provide your ministry with materials and will enable us to track chapter locations. When we receive information on volunteers or donors in your area, we will refer them to your chapter.

Again, welcome and thank you for joining this ministry. We will be praying for you.

It's My Very Own  
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**Name of Church** \_\_\_\_\_

**Address** \_\_\_\_\_

**Pastor** \_\_\_\_\_ **Phone** \_\_\_\_\_

**Name of Sponsoring Ministry** \_\_\_\_\_

i.e. (Community Services, Women's Ministry)

**Leader's Name** \_\_\_\_\_

**Address** \_\_\_\_\_

**E-mail** \_\_\_\_\_

**Phone** \_\_\_\_\_ **Cell** \_\_\_\_\_

# FORWARD

Adventist Community Services takes many forms. We have come a long way since the days of the Dorcas Society – when we busied ourselves primarily with the giving away of food and used clothing. While there is still a need for ministry in those areas, our society has

become more complex and challenging, creating new needs and opportunities for ministry to the hurting, disenfranchised and neglected.

Today we recognize the need for developing ministries that meet a multitude of needs in our communities. However, the personnel and resources needed to develop ministries are not always readily available. It is often a challenge to discover areas where the critical needs of our communities and the resources of the local congregation intersect.

Finding ways to meet felt needs often opens doors of opportunity for spiritual ministry. This is the way Jesus worked and there is no better method of ministry. In fact, it is the only effective means of ministry that leads to spiritual transformation.

“Christ’s method alone will give true success in reaching the people. The Saviour mingled with men as one who desired their good. He showed His sympathy for them, ministered to their needs, and won their confidence. Then He bade them, ‘Follow Me.’” *The Ministry of Healing*, page 143.

***It’s My Very Own*** – is a ministry that is so simple that nearly any congregation can do it. And the need is nearly universal across the nation. It is a ministry that exemplifies the method Jesus used in reaching people.

Barbara and Jack Neher conceived of this ministry out of a need they saw portrayed in a television newscast in which the parents had been arrested for drug violations. Barbara and Jack were struck by the terror in the children’s cries as their parents were removed from their home and put into a patrol car. It was as though their world had collapsed around them. They were terrified not knowing what would happen next. Barbara felt compelled to do something that would ease the pain of those children. Thus, *Bags of Love* was born.

Working out of their home, Barbara and Jack have created dozens – scores – of special duffle bags to give some comfort to children removed from their homes by law enforcement authorities and *Child Protective Services*. The project started small but quickly grew and word spread from county to county in western Kentucky.

If your church, group, or service organization is looking for a project that will make a difference in the lives of children – the future of our society – keep reading. Everything you need to get you started is found in this manual.

May you discover the joy of service through the *Bags of Love* project!

*Marvin G. Lowman Executive Secretary and Director of Community Services  
Kentucky-Tennessee Conference  
Goodlettsville, Tennessee*

# “It’s My Very Own”

## A History

We are all aware of the drug problems that have ravaged our country. They have reached epidemic proportions

and their effects on the lives they touch are often irreversible. Drugs destroy lives, homes, relationships, and dreams. Are their many lives that have not been touched in some way by this epidemic? Probably not.

More recently, we have been introduced to the new kid on the block – Methamphetamines (Meth). This is a drug that can be easily manufactured in your own kitchen. Because of the common, easily obtained ingredients used in “cooking” Meth, it is difficult to track and all too readily available. Where other drugs do the most harm to those who actively use them, Meth is different. Even during the manufacture of this insidious drug, all who are in range

of the poisonous fumes are in danger. These fumes, as they permeate the house, are toxic and combustible. They cause nausea, headaches, allergies, breathing difficulties, and many other maladies. The fumes are not a respecter of persons. They are dangerous to everyone in the home including, and especially, the children.

When a child is removed from a home where Meth has been manufactured, they must leave everything behind due to contamination by the fumes. They leave their clothes, toys, toothbrush, and any reminders of their family. From there they are taken to the hospital emergency room, their clothing is removed, and the children

are cleansed of these dangerous toxins. By this time they have nothing that previously belonged to them.

Perhaps this problem is far removed from the world you live in, just as it was for me – that is until it touched my family in a very real way. I remember very well the day my daughter and I flew several hours to pick up two precious young boys who had been permanently removed from their mother’s home due to her abuse of drugs. Two little boys who had lost everything that was familiar to them – their home, their friends, their mother, even their toys – would now be adopted by my daughter. Perhaps you can imagine how frightened and alone they must have felt. Even though God had already placed love in our hearts for them, to these boys, we were perfect strangers. Though all of their personal possessions had to remain in their house, they did have with them a very special cloth bag given to them by the local Child Protective Service. We enjoyed seeing them open their bags that contained a few small toys, some clothes, and a handmade blanket. To this day they still love those special blankets.

Sometime later our local news channel did a report on Meth. I watched as the reporter followed a local drug bust. The belligerent parents, as well as other adults, were removed from the home in handcuffs. The reporter walked over to a window of the home and held the microphone up to reveal the heartbreaking sobs of children who could not possibly understand why their parents were being taken away from them. Frightened, their worlds crumbling

around them, these children were taken from their home by strangers. As you might imagine, the next few hours, the next few days and weeks, must have been very difficult for these children. This news report strongly affected me.

Though I had previously asked God to show me how I could be of use to Him, the answer seemed slow in coming. Sometimes it is amazing how God works. Just as He was revealing His will to me, He also revealed it to my daughter. That is when the plans for ***It's My Very Own*** were first conceived.

Over Thanksgiving, my daughter and I worked out the details of our plan. We would begin making ***Bags of Love*** for these needy children. They would contain a handmade quilt, a stuffed animal, age-appropriate toys, and personal care items. With bag in hand, we introduced the program to our local Child Protective Services, letting them know that this is an ongoing, long-term service for the children of our county. They were elated and we were ready to begin.

What an awesome journey the Lord has led us on through this experience! He has opened doors and guided us every step of the way. He has provided help in so many ways. We now have a functional, well-working team. One new friend had the very same idea that we did.

She knew how to work out the business end of things. With her business sense, my experience in sewing and the many yards of fabric left from my previous business, it was a perfect match.

By January 1, 2005 we were off and running!

As you contemplate the need of such a program in your area, remember that with the Lord's help all things are possible!

God bless you as you embark on this journey of love!

*Barbara Neher and Staff*

### **Update by Susan Schnell**

In the spring of 2017, I contacted Barbara by email to order a manual. In the email I also volunteered to speak on behalf of ***It's My Very Own*** (IMVO) if she needed that service. I love this ministry and was involved in many different chapters as I moved from church to church with my Pastor husband. She called me and said, I would like for you to be the new director! She and Jack were needing to slow down a bit and when I contacted her, she felt the impression of God that I was the one to take over. What a humbling experience! While I can never fill Barbara's shoes, I am determined carry on this wonderful ministry. As you begin an IMVO chapter in your area I will pass on what Barbara always said, "Prepare to be blessed."

# Statement of Purpose

“LET THE LITTLE CHILDREN COME TO ME, AND DO NOT FORBID THEM; FOR OF SUCH IS THE KINGDOM OF GOD.”

**Mark 10:14**

The following outlines our **purpose(s)** for being:

We recognize that certain children, upon being displaced from their normal or perhaps abnormal home life due to domestic violence and/or the incarceration of the parents, in almost all cases are left with nothing, not even their personal belongings (personal care items, a favorite toy, or that “special” blanket, etc.)

It is our intent, that working through the official Child Protective Services offices of our communities, to provide to each of these children, from those just-born up to and including late- teens, a duffle-bag containing certain items for their personal care and their enjoyment that they can truly call “My Very Own.”

We are of the belief that this small token of love and affection will go far towards helping these children adjust to a foster or adoptive home, whether a temporary or permanent situation. We pray that these children will long cherish their bag of love and, as a result, endeavor in their growing years to remember other children who might be subjected to their same plight.

Finally, it is our decided wish, with hope and much prayer, that others throughout the communities of this nation may take up the call and provide these same or similar services to the displaced children in their respective regions. We stand ready and willing to assist any and all who would take-up this mantle so dourly needed!

“ASSUREDLY, I SAY TO YOU, INASMUCH AS YOU DID IT TO ONE OF THE LEAST OF THESE MY BRETHREN, YOU DID IT TO ME.” *MATTHEW 25:40*

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# “It’s My Very Own”

## Guidance Manual

This manual has been developed to assist you in your establishment of a local chapter of *It’s My Very Own*. Please allow it to help you accomplish your aims. We will discuss the things that have been quite successful in our area. Please use them to your advantage. You may have different circumstances and other helpful ideas.

It is our express wish, however, that we maintain certain standards as to the size and content of the bags, so that agencies receiving them for distribution know what to expect when we say we represent the *It’s My Very Own* project.

The following steps will help you get started:

### Initial Contact

Contact your local government service agency in charge of removing children from parental or other care due to neglect, domestic violence, drug activity, etc. (Sometimes the initial contact is in person with a filled bag in hand) The name of this agency is different in different areas. Ours is called Child Protective Services (CPS) in the Department for Community Based Services (DCBS). Explain to them what you are trying to accomplish and set up an appointment with the person in charge of handling the children.

Explain to them that you have a unique program that is designed to help a child adjust to new circumstances. It will also help make the job easier for the case worker. (The caseworker often looks like the bad guy in the eyes of the child. All the child sees is that someone is taking them away from their family.)

The agencies we have spoken with have been very happy about this program because it makes their job just a little bit easier. In all the commotion they are able to give the child this bag and tell them “it’s their very own.” Suddenly, the child’s focus is on this large, bulging bag, and they can hardly wait to see what’s inside! It helps take the child’s focus off of the problems they are facing at this very difficult time.

It will enhance your presentation to this office if you have one bag ready and filled with the items to show them what you intend to provide. Leave some brochures with them as well.

At this meeting, ask if they can give you an estimate of how many children they remove from homes each year. Having an average number will help you plan ahead. Assure them that this will be an ongoing service provided by your group – not just a one-time provision.

Let them know this is a program that enlists the community. We ask for volunteers in helping to make the quilts and bags. We also ask for the donation of toys, stuffed animals, and personal care items. Perhaps they can refer you to individuals or organizations that you can contact for donations. This will help you to start getting it out into the public.

One of our first presentations was at a luncheon as the guest speaker. We invited the press to come and cover the meeting. We had a very nice write up in the paper with pictures. That’s when we started getting calls wanting to know “How

can we help? What can we do? What do you need?”

Each call you receive is a chance to witness and talk about Jesus and how much of a blessing they will receive for caring and helping. We always let them know that this program was an inspiration from God and that He is the director.

You need to provide your agency with one bag for both boy and girl in each age group. The four age groups include: Newborn - 3 years, 4 - 7 years, 8 - 12 years, and 13 - 17 years. Some have split the tween/teen years differently 8-11, 12-14, 15-17

We initially had twenty-two quilts, thirty duffel bags, and enough toys, personal care items, and stuffed animals to fill 20-25 bags when we provided the initial eight bags to our agent.

Plan to have enough items for four of each bag on hand. If all of your items are ready - bags and quilts made, toys and personal items ready — all you have to do is fill the bag and deliver it to the agency when they call for a replacement.

## **Memoranda of Understanding**

It may be well to draft a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the agency you are working with. Properly drafted, the MOU will outline the expectations between you and the agency and allow you to maintain ownership and control of the program.

Some agencies may require an MOU and may even have a blank form.

Otherwise, a sample form can be found in the appendix.

## **Initial Costs**

Assuming that you must purchase all of the items, the cost of one bag will run between \$31 to \$37. The teen bags cost slightly more than the others because, rather than toys, we place in each a journal, a disposable camera, a \$5 phone card and sometimes a \$5 radio (which can be purchased at a Dollar Store). They also require more in the way of personal care items. See the list of items in the manual for more information.

## **Donations**

You may be able to get funding or donations to help you get started from the following sources:

- Your Church Community Services Fund
- Donations from other churches
- Your community (service clubs, businesses, individuals)
- Homemakers Club — Most communities have one
- Quilters club or guild — They are often willing to make quilts.
- United Way for grants.

Rotary Club — They give us a sizable grant each year.

- RSVP (Retired Senior Volunteers Program) — They are very eager about anything that helps the community.

Ask these organizations how they would like to help. These are just a few ideas. You will come up with more that fit into your community's needs and resources.



## Finances

Ask your donors to make their checks payable to “Its My Very Own” or “Bags of Love”. Your church treasurer will need to make arrangements with the bank and make sure funds can be accepted in this way. It is very important that all funds received for this project are kept separate from other donations the church may receive.

Issue each donor a tax-deductible receipt. You may copy the page included in this manual. (See Appendix.) Many office supply stores will copy these onto NCR paper for a reasonable fee. Then you will be able to retain a copy for your records.

\*\*\*Update – IMVO now has its own IRS tax ID number and is exempt from taxes.

Be sure that your donors know that all donations go directly to the children in the ***Bags of Love***. Administrative costs and time are donated by volunteers.

Some churches are more than willing to include this project in their budget. Our small church budgets \$50 dollars a month. That's \$600 per year and is very helpful!

## Initial Start-up

Purchase fabrics, (to add to those donated) in complimentary colors and patterns. Choose vibrant colors and patterns that are exciting to children from ages 3yrs to 18yrs. We want to make them happy, and we know how girls like things pretty. For the boys up to age 13 we purchase fabrics with bugs, dinosaurs, cars, trucks, etc. For the older boys we used stars, stripes, military emblems or any masculine prints. You get the idea. (Warning: making these

quilts could be addictive!) See the sewing instructions for more information.

We use a lot of different fabrics, (especially if donated) but have found that broadcloths work well. We actually prefer cotton-polyester blends because there is such a wide choice of prints and patterns. (Watch for sale items!) The pattern in this manual is designed for 42 – 45 inch wide fabrics. However, you will find some very delightful fabrics in wider widths. You can make use of these with a few adjustments, so don't shy away from them. The yardage needed is found in the quilt instruction chapter. People may want to donate fabric that does not fit into these guidelines. We accept all donations. If donated fabrics are not usable for the quilts or bags, you can donate them to someone else who can use them. Most people who donate don't realize that this quilt is sewn in strips and you will find that they will give you scraps. There are quilters that like to have these. You do not want to offend a generous heart. Every gift is a blessing. Let them know how special they are and God will bless.

## Batting for quilts

Batting can be purchased by the roll (or “batt”) which is usually 30 – 50 yds long and 96” wide. A roll will vary in cost depending on where you purchase it. You can also purchase it in smaller quantities at fabric stores, but it will end up costing quite a bit more. We use 12 oz. batting.

## Rope for bags

We buy the rope in the fabric department at Wal-Mart. Each bags requires 45” of 5/16” rope. Some prefer a longer rope – 52”.

## **Stuffed animals**

You may receive many donations of stuffed animals. We accept them all but only use those in pristine condition. They must appear to be new! To get started, check out the local Goodwill or Salvation Army stores. You will also receive a lot of small animals, we use those as a little extra in the bag, wherever the Lord urges us to place them.

## **Personal care items**

Ask your local dollar stores and department stores for donations and/or discounts. Dental offices are sometimes a good source for dental hygiene items. They receive them as free samples. We have found that when the word gets out that you need these items in the bags you will receive an ample amount.

## **Toys and activity items**

Consider the age and gender for these items. We put two new toys in each bag. Try to differently than other age groups. We have included a list of needed items for each age group in the Appendix. Try to limit the cost to \$5.00 or less per item. Watch for sales and you will find more expensive toys that fit into your price limit. During a good sale, you can often stock up as much as your budget will allow. We have found that the 8-12 year olds (“tweens”) are hard to plan for. Ask some of the children in your church for suggestions! Teen’s bags are handled differently. See Appendix for suggested items for each age group.

We have found that most people want to help when you tell the story of this program. People have big hearts when it comes to helping out these little ones. Meth is a universal problem.

It’s effects are well known. This program is one small way we can help ease the pain at a very critical time in these children’s lives.

# Instructions for Making the Duffel Bag

The bags for our **Bags of Love** need to be sturdy; they will be used a lot. Very often CPS tries to reunite families, so the children get home visitations, when they do, they use this bag as an “overnighter”. We try to use fabric that is like a lightweight slacks material such as sailcloth, gabardine, corduroy, etc. You get the idea. Denim is too heavy; it does not allow the bag to close enough when drawn closed.

We do not make all the bags alike (the same size but not of the same material). We use prints, interesting patterns, children’s prints, etc. We also make the pocket a contrasting print or color. We want to brighten their lives as much as possible. You can make the pocket of the same fabric if you can’t find something that coordinates with the bag material.

Quite often you can find these fabrics at Wal-mart in their bargain bin for a \$1.00 per yard. (Many are very interesting, and quite often you will find expensive fabrics that are very nice.) I always keep a check on it. It’s much easier if you use the 42”-45” fabric because the bag is designed to use that width. You can use 60” wide fabric, but you need to change your layout.

**Bags:** You will need a piece 45” x 30”. You will get six bags out of five yards. If purchasing 60” wide fabric you will get eight bags out of five yards. You can use knits, but you must use a different layout, and you will have some waste. You never know what you will receive as a donation, so be prepared for anything.

**Pocket and Flap:** You will need one flap, cut one piece, and one pocket piece. Select fabric that will co-ordinate with the bag fabric. You can cut ten pockets and ten flaps out of 1 1/8 yd of 45” wide fabric.

**Rope:** Use 5/16” white cotton rope. The rope can be found in the fabric department. It works very well. You will need 45” for each bag. We usually buy 30 yards; that is enough for 24 bags.

**Buttons:** You need good sturdy 1” buttons. We find that the ones with the metal shank in the back are the best. They give enough room to accommodate the layers of fabric and open and close easier. You may find a good assortment by asking people when they throw away a garment to cut off the buttons and save them for you. You may also use Velcro but it must be the sew on type. If using Velcro you will eliminate the steps for making the button holes and, of course, the button on the pockets and the flaps.

## Starting The Bag

You will need:

Cut 1 piece for the bag: 45”x 30”

Cut 1 pocket: 9”x 13 1/2”

Cut 1 pocket flap: 9”x 6 1/2”

5/16” white cotton rope: 45”

Button: 1”

## Preparing the bag

1. Set your sewing machine stitch on zigzag, the closest stitch and widest zigzag (Figure 1). Stitch across one 45” edge of bag. This will be the top of the bag. It will bind off the edge, it will not unravel, this makes less bulk for the top.



FIGURE 1

2. For the openings for the drawstring, measure over from the 30" edge 11 1/2" and make a mark (Figure 2). Now measure down from the top 1 1/2" to where the other mark is, make a mark. This is where you are going to place two-1" buttonholes 1/2" apart.



**FIGURE 2**

Cut a piece of interfacing about 2"x2" centered behind the buttonholes, this is to reinforce them so they won't tear in use (Figure 3). Make the buttonholes.



**FIGURE 3**

## **Pocket**

1. Take the pocket piece and zigzag along the top edge.

2. Fold over to the right side 2" from the top. Stitch down on the 2" side with a 1/4" seam allowance on both sides (Figure 4). Turn right side out.



**FIGURE 4**

3. Press, folding a 1/4" seam allowance on all remaining sides to match the top (Figure 5). It is now ready to sew onto the bag.



**FIGURE 5**

4. Center the pocket 6" below the buttonholes. Pin in place and top stitch onto the bag, reinforcing at the top on both sides (Figure 6).



**Figure 6**

### **Pocket Flap**

1. Fold flap right sides together, making it 9 x 3 1/4". Sew both ends with 1/4" seam allowance. Turn right side out and press. Zigzag across the cut edge to bind (Figure 7). Make a buttonhole in the center.



**Figure 7**

2. Place the zigzagged edge 1/4" above the pocket lining it up with the pocket. Sew across with 1/4" seam allowance (Figure 8).



**Figure 8**

3. Fold flap down towards the pocket and top stitch across (Figure 9).



**Figure 9**

## Sewing the bag

1. Fold the bag in half, pin. Sew across the bottom and up the side (Figure 10). Bag should measure 22"x 30" at this point.



**Figure 10**

2. At the top edge, fold over 1" and sew around with ¼" seam allowance, forming the casing for the drawstring (Figure 11).

3. Insert rope (drawstring) and place a knot on both ends so it won't slip out. Before inserting the rope wrap a piece of tape around the end so it won't fray. Use a safety pin to help guide it through the casing just formed. Remove the tape and tie knots on the ends.

4. Sew the button on the pocket and you are done!



**Figure 11**

## “It’s My Very Own” Quilt

The “It’s My Very Own” quilt is a modified Log Cabin type quilt. It consists of 12 blocks - 3 across and 4 down. We have put the blocks together with two borders. This makes a finished

48”x 60” quilt that fits well in the duffle bags and is just right for most kids to cuddle in. The quilts are done using a continuous fabric strip method. This is fast and easy and a top may be completed in a short time.

This is a variation of a very old quilt pattern. It generally calls for very small strips of fabric of various colors. They even pieced strips in the middle of the strip. We do the same thing by sewing this quilt in the strip sewing method.

Using fabric in various sizes of prints, such as calicos, create an easy flow from one print to another. Try to use colors that have the same value/hue and choose 3 different degrees of color for the lights and darks. You will need 3 light fabrics and 3 dark fabrics, a center square that is the same fabric as the first border. The outside border, should complement the overall quilt colors. Choose a dominant color to compliment and tie everything together for the outside border. After you have made a few you will get the hang of it. I prefer to use 42-45 inch wide fabric. The instructions and amounts needed for the top are based on this width. However, if you have 54-60 inch wide fabric you will have to make adjustments accordingly.

You may have a quilt pattern that you especially like, and that is fine. The only thing that we have as a standard is the size 48”x60” and using a batting with high loft, such as 12 oz – 18 oz weight. We have chosen this quilt type because of the speed and simplicity, and the loft of the batting makes it a comforter, which is what we are trying to be... a comfort.

**Sewing.** We suggest a #70/10 needle using 15 stitches per inch stitch length. Sew with a ¼” seam allowance. The ¼” seam allowance must be used consistently. If you have a problem with maintaining this, place a piece of tape with the edge ¼” from the needle. This will help you maintain a consistent ¼” seam. There is also a magnetic seam guide available at fabric stores.

**Batting.** Use 12 – 18 oz. polyester batting. It is suggested to buy it by the bolt—96”wide and approximately 50 yards. A bolt will make about 60 quilts.

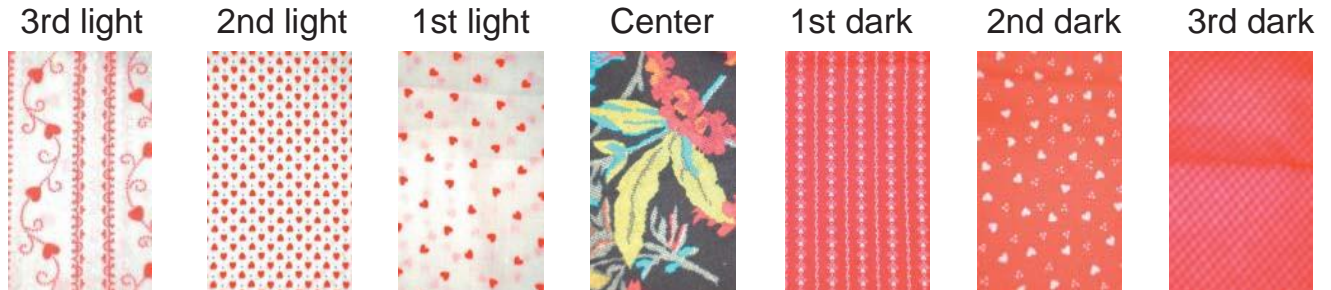
**Backing.** A twin sheet will back two quilts if you undo all the seams and press. Lay your tops crosswise on the sheet. I use colored and printed sheets. I also use used sheets that have no signs of wear (spots, holes or pilling).

### Recommended Tools:

- ✓ Rotary cutter at least a 2”
  - ✓ 6”x24” clear plastic quilting ruler
  - ✓ Cutting mat for rotary cutters  
18”x24”...(self-healing) Olfa
  - ✓ 70/10 machine needles
  - ✓ Scissors
  - ✓ 2” Safety Pins (about 50)
  - ✓ Straight pins
  - ✓ Pin cushion
  - ✓ Needles
  - ✓ Seam Ripper
  - ✓ Tapestry Needles (6 or more)
  - ✓ Crochet thread of various colors. (This is used to tie the quilt)
- You may have many of these items already in your sewing room.

## Yardage and Cutting

Stack the fabric in the order you see them in the chart below. This helps to keep from missing one in the cutting, sometimes this is easy to do, it also helps with a visual on the graduation of colors and prints. Sometimes a piece just doesn't look right, and here is your chance to make a change. *Your finished quilt block should look something like the example to the right.*



## Block Yardage

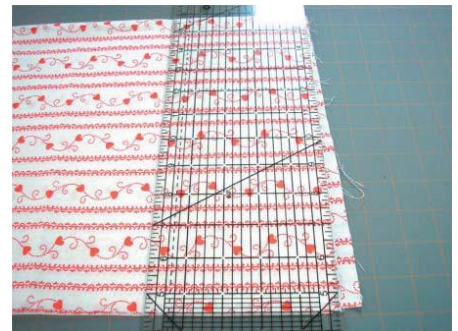
Use fabric 42"-45" wide. See chart below for fabric amounts needed for each.

3 <sup>rd</sup> Light	2 <sup>nd</sup> Light	1 <sup>st</sup> Light	Center	1 <sup>st</sup> Dark	2 <sup>nd</sup> Dark	3 <sup>rd</sup> Dark
2/3 yard	1/2 yard	1/3 yard	1/8 yard	3/8 yard	5/8 yard	2/3 yard
7 strips 2 1/2" wide	5 strips 2 1/2" wide	3 strip 2 1/2" wide	1 Strip 2 1/2" wide	4 strips 2 1/2" wide	6 strips 2 1/2" wide	8 strips 2 1/2" wide

**Borders – 1<sup>st</sup> Border** five (5) strips 2" x 42-45" 1/3 yd  
**2<sup>nd</sup> Border** five (5) strips 3 1/2" x 42-45" 1/2 yd

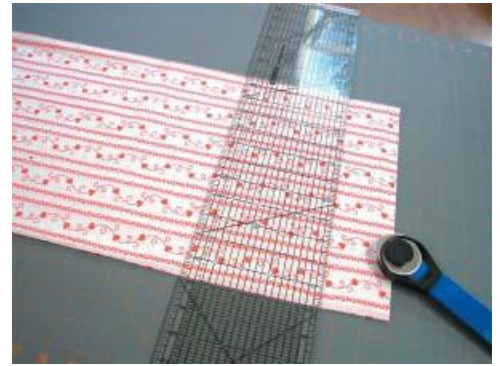
**Cutting.** I like to fold my fabric in quarter folds, the length of the fabric, making sure that all four layers are smoothed out without any wrinkles.

- To be sure that it is square, make sure the fold is straight with the selvage.
- Lay the folded edge, on the grid cutting board, align the length with one of the horizontal lines on the board. Have the cut edge aligned with one of the vertical lines. When you have done this you will probably have uneven edges on the cut edge of the fabric.
- Place the ruler on the line and cut. This will give you a straight edge to start cutting your quilt strips.





- Start cutting the fabric into strips, start with the strips for the blocks and then do the borders.



## Getting ready to Sew the quilt

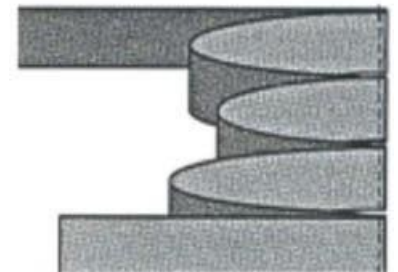
After you have cut all your strips, stack them in the order that they will be sewn — Center, 1<sup>st</sup> Light, 1<sup>st</sup> Dark, 2<sup>nd</sup> Light, 2<sup>nd</sup> Dark, 3<sup>rd</sup> Light, 3<sup>rd</sup> Dark. Every fabric strip is used twice in the block except the center strip.



**Preparing the strips for sewing the blocks.** This is a variation of a very old quilt pattern. It generally calls for small strips of fabric of many colors. In pioneer days this was a popular pattern because you could use even your smallest pieces of fabric, usually it caused a seam in the middle of

a strip. By sewing the strips together, often there is a seam in the middle of a strip and this is ok. We encourage the

continuous strip because it does save on fabric and time. Sew the strips together end-to-end, right sides together to make a continuous strip of each color.



## Making the center squares for the quilt

1. Take the center strip and one of the 1<sup>st</sup> light with right sides together.



Place the 1<sup>st</sup> light on the bottom. Sew with a ¼” seam allowance down the length 30”, combining the two pieces. This will leave 12 – 14 inches unsewn. You will need the remainder of the 1<sup>st</sup> light; it will be used later.



2. Place the strip just sewn on the cutting board with grids. Using the rotary cutter and quilt ruler, cut into 2 ½” squares. There should be twelve (12). The center square fabric is used only once. Remove it from the work area.



### Adding another 1<sup>st</sup> light

1. The new strip always goes down first, right side up. Stack the blocks to your left with 1<sup>st</sup> light on top. The seam side should be towards the edge of your sewing table.



2. Pick up one of the 2 ½” squares, open it, finger press open. Place the 1<sup>st</sup> light at the top edge of the strip, right sides together.



Begin sewing down the right side with a ¼” seam allowance. Stop and straighten the block so there are no puckers.

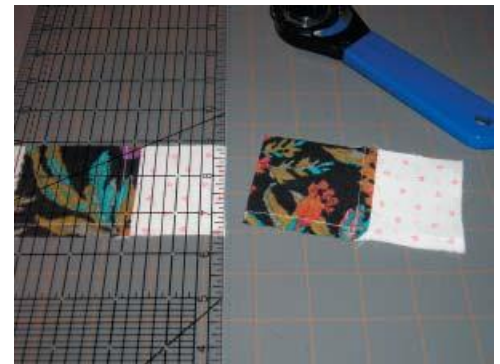
At the seam, finger press the seam allowance upward.  
Hold the seam flat while you stitch over it.



When you near the end of the block, pick up the next block and open it. Butt the second block right below the first one. Sew as before.

Continue sewing the strip in this order until you finish all 12 blocks.

When you have finished sewing all of the blocks together you will do as you did before in cutting the blocks apart. Lay the first completed strips straight on your cutting mat, with the block side up. Align your ruler straight with edge of the block.



Make one cut between each block with your rotary cutter, separating the blocks.

Stack and turn the blocks over so the 1<sup>st</sup> light just finished are on top. Turn stack so stitching is facing you (table edge.) You are now done with the 1<sup>st</sup> light and ready to add your 1<sup>st</sup> dark.



Remove any of 1<sup>st</sup> light and center from your work area.

## Adding the 1<sup>st</sup> Dark

1. Place the 1<sup>st</sup> dark under the pressure foot right side up. Pick up the top block, open and place on the strip right sides together.

*Check your block placement. The last color you have added on should be on top. It is the side without any seams.*



Sew down the length of the strip just like the strip just completed, making sure there are no puckers at the seam. Be sure that the seam allowance is finger pressed upwards, stitching over it.

You should be able to get about nine blocks on this strip, (some fabrics are wider than others so it may accommodate 10), but anticipate this and start a new strip at this point.

Now you may do like the pioneer women did. They had to use every bit of fabric, so they sewed the strips together to make a continuous strip. The seam may come in the middle of a strip and that's okay. However, if you see the seam is going to come in the last 2½" of the block, take the stitching loose (on the strip). Start at the top of the next strip as you would a new addition. Continue with the next strip and until you have used up all your blocks.

2. When you have finished adding all the blocks, place the strip on your cutting mat and cut the blocks apart. Stack and turn over. Turn the blocks so the stitching lines up with the edge of your table. You are now ready to add another 1<sup>st</sup> dark.

## Adding another 1<sup>st</sup> dark

Place 1<sup>st</sup> dark strip under the presser foot, right side up. Take a block from the stack with right sides together. Stitch as you have previously done on the other strips. Remember to have the seam allowance upward when stitching over it.

Now you have another seam to sew over, this one goes downward. Butt the next block against the first sewn and continue as above. You will get about six blocks before the seam on the strip.

Check to be sure that it doesn't come within the last 2 ½". If so, remove stitching on strip, and start sewing at the top of the remaining strip. (If not using continuous strip method, just go to another strip.)



Cut the blocks apart, stack, turn stacks over making sure the seam side is toward you.

You no longer need this fabric so remove from the work area.



## Adding the First 2<sup>nd</sup> Light

Place the 2<sup>nd</sup> light strip under the presser foot with the right side up. Place a block to the top of the strip right sides together. Sew as before.

The 1<sup>st</sup> dark, which is the last color you added, will be perpendicular with strip you are now adding.

Remember the upper cross seam goes up, and the lower cross seam goes down. This will be consistent through the remaining blocks.



You should get six blocks on the strip before the seam. When all the blocks are sewn, cut them apart, and turn over.

## Adding another 2<sup>nd</sup> light

At this point you can see how the pattern is working, always rotating the block with each new addition. The light colors with the light and the dark with the dark.

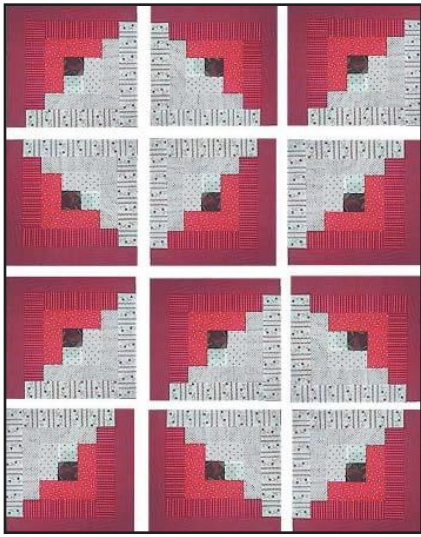
## Continue the rest of the blocks

Repeat the same sewing instructions as in 1<sup>st</sup> light and 2<sup>nd</sup> light, continuing to add as you sew around the block. Cut and turn over so stitching faces you. Add a new strip and sew.

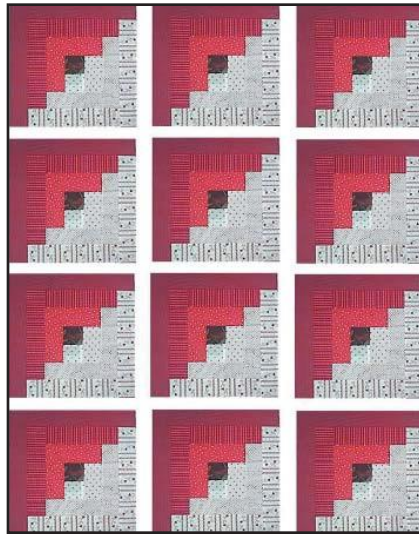
When you have completed your blocks they should measure 13 1/2" x 13 1/2" square.

**Pressing.** Press the blocks, make sure all the seams lay flat from the center out. Press both sides.

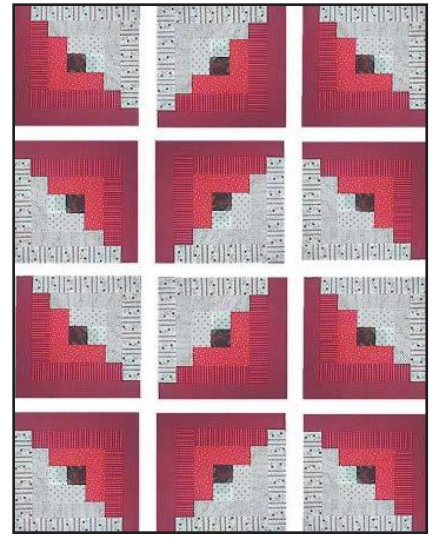
**Quilt top layout.** It's now time to preview the lay out sheet to select the way you want your finished quilt to look. (See Page 21.) When you have made your selection, note that the blocks line up 3 across and 4 down.



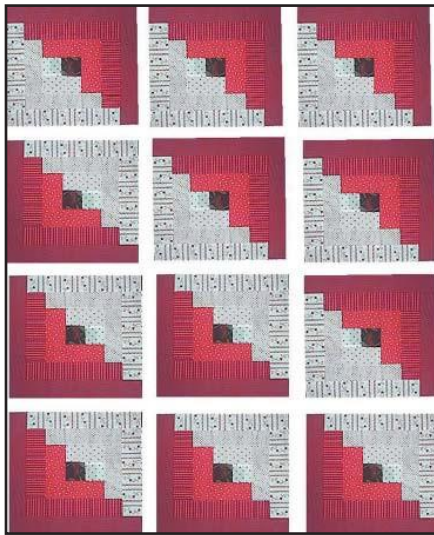
*Lightning*



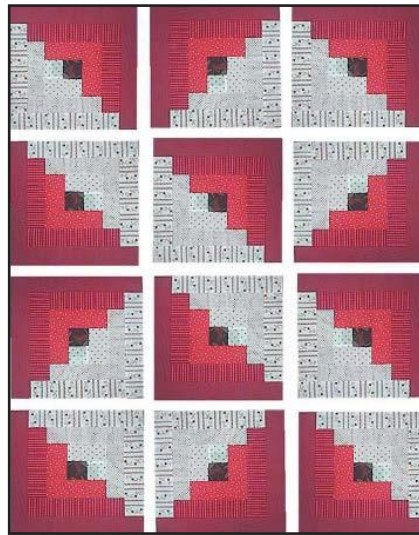
*All Sevens*



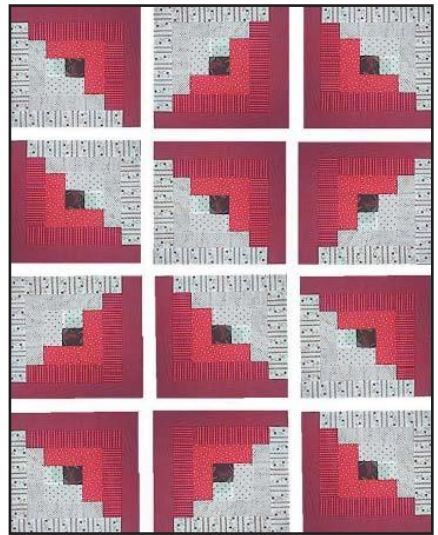
*Zig Zag*



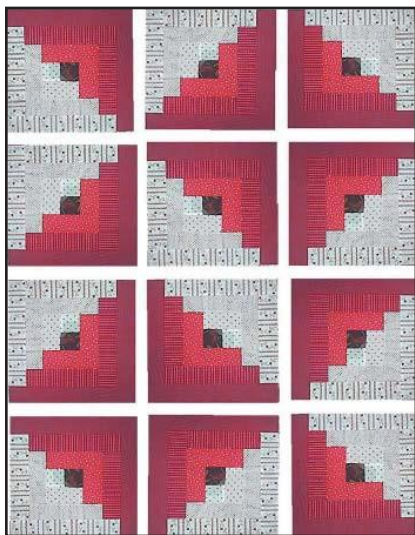
*Timberline*



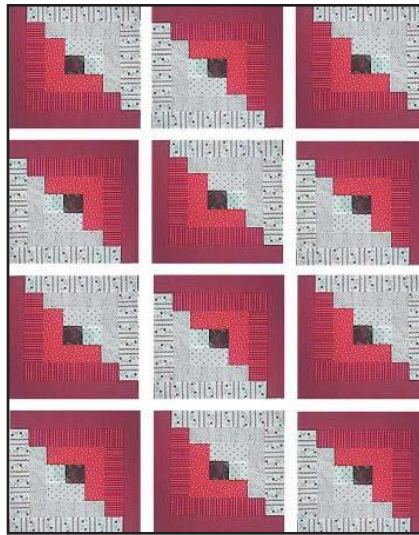
*Stamps*



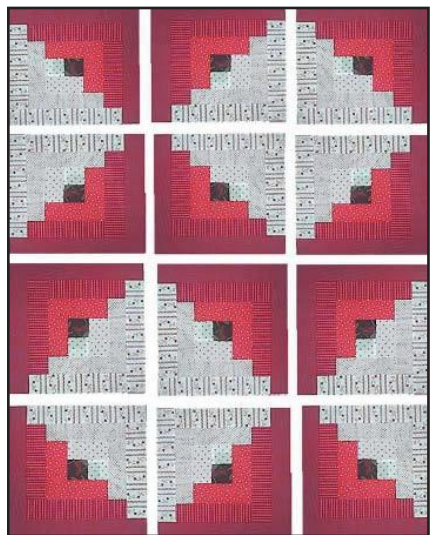
*Stumbling Blocks*



*Pyramids*



*Fields and Furrows*



*Shadows*

## Sewing the quilt top together

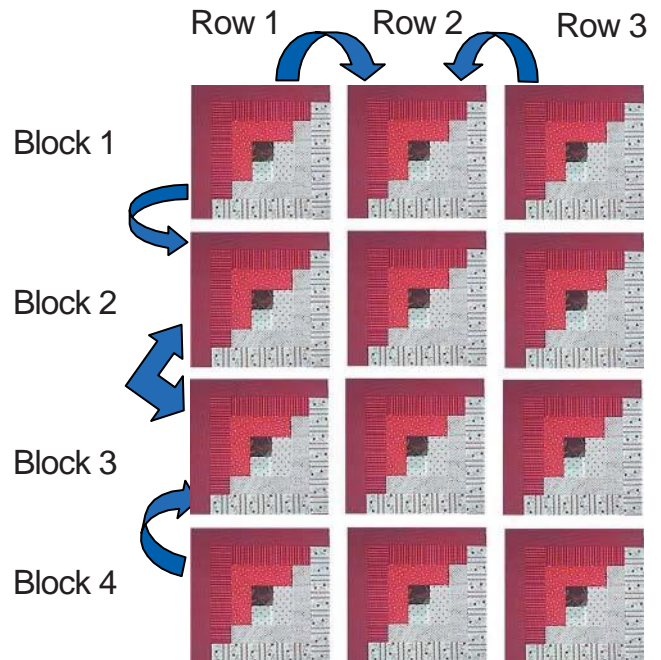
Before putting the top together, lay the blocks out on a table, bed or floor. Arrange the blocks in the layout that you have chosen. This is where you get creative! (See layout chart on page 21.)

Row 1 – going vertical (up and down) pin blocks 1 and 2 together at the lower edge of block 1 and the upper edge of block 2. (See arrows)

Do the same for blocks 3 and 4. Then connect the two pieces together forming a strip of four blocks using a  $\frac{1}{4}$ " seam allowances.

Press after you have completed sewing the blocks into a strip.

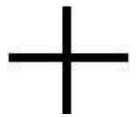
Row 2 – the same as row 1. Row 3 – the same as row 1.



Mark the strips row 1, row 2, and row 3 with tape. Lay the strips out side by side to make sure the pattern that you have chosen is correct. Check to be sure that your strips are in the right order and not upside down.

The next step is to sew the strips together. Pin row 1 to row 2. Sew with right sides together the length of the strip with  $\frac{1}{4}$ " seam allowance. (see arrows)

Make sure the corners of each block align forming an intersection as shown here.



Press, and the top now is ready to add the borders.

## Borders and Backing

### Adding the borders

1. Measure the length of the top down both sides and the middle. If the measurements are different, take an average. Use this measurement for the length of the border.
2. Sew sets of border strips together to make two strips longer than the length. It will only take  $1\frac{1}{2}$  strips sewn together for each side.
3. Cut the strips to the measurements taken in Step 1.

4. Find the mid-point of the sides of the strip and pin to the mid-point of the sides of the top. Pin at both ends then space the pins 6-8 inches apart.

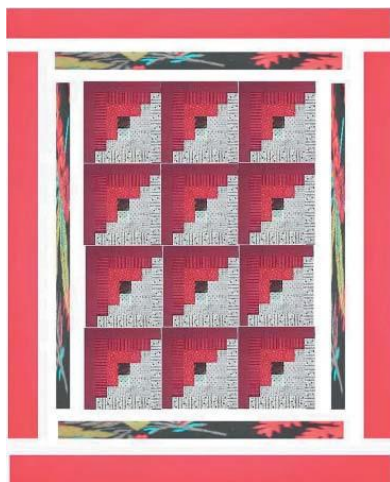
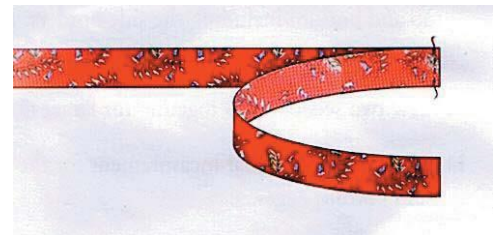
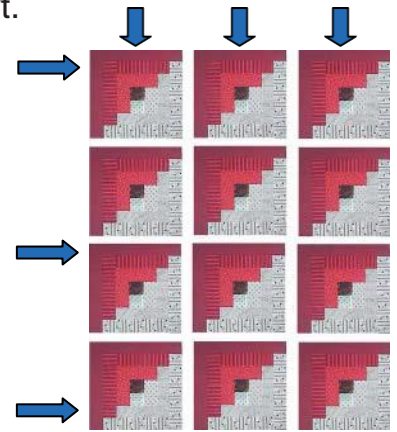
5. Sew with a ¼" seam allowance, stretching or easing as necessary.

6. Repeat on the opposite side.

7. Measure the width of the quilt across the center, top and bottom including the side borders. Follow the same order as in steps 1-5.

8. Repeat this method for the second border. After you have finished attaching the borders, press.

9. You are now ready to progress to the backing.



## Preparing the Backing

1. I use twin bed size flat sheets. You can get two quilt backs out of one sheet, and that's all you will get out of the double or queen. Why waste the sheet, and they are more expensive. At Wal-Mart you can get a flat sheet for \$2.96.

2. You will have to take out all of the hems using a seam ripper. (Do not cut away.) Press.





3. Spread the sheet out on the floor, table or bed. Lay the quilt top crosswise, right side down, facing the sheet.

4 Starting at one end, square it up as close to the edge as you can, it will be a little smaller than the sheet. You will have very little waste.

5. Cut around the quilt top. Now is where you will use your big safety pins. Pin in several places to keep the two pieces from slipping.

6. Now you will apply the label in the lower corner. (To make the label refer to Making the Label.)



### Applying the label

We cannot put any religious literature in the bags so I put a label on the quilt with the logo and my church, denomination, my name and phone number. There is a template to follow found in the back of the manual.

When you make the label be sure, before you print it, that it is reversed so when it irons on it will read right. Use iron on transfer paper available at most stores that have printer paper.

Do two different labels, one in light color and one in dark so you can use it on the dark or light backings. Follow the instructions on the package to apply.

Place the label in a lower corner of the back of the quilt. Iron on.



### Batting

You now have your quilt ready to add the batting. Your batting is 96" inches wide so you should be able to get two quilts in one width (side by side).

Lay the quilt top and backing on the batting with the quilt top in the middle, like a sandwich. Cut the batting to fit the quilt top.



Pin all three pieces together with the safety pins about 2 inches from the edge all the way around, spacing them about 12 – 14 inches apart and 4 or 5 in the middle.



Sew all the way around the outside edge with a  $\frac{1}{4}$ " seam allowance leaving an opening about 15" at one end for turning the quilt inside out. Use marking pens or pins to mark your opening or you may sew it closed. Back stitch 2 or 3 times at either side to reinforce the stitching so it won't unravel while turning the quilt.



Reach into the opening, between the top and the back, into the corners and pull towards the opening, turning it inside out.



Once you have the quilt turned, go inside and sharpen the corners.

Hand stitch the opening closed with a blind hemstitch.

I shake the quilt several times from each side to straighten out any puckers. It helps to flatten it.



## Quilting and Tying the Quilt

To finish the quilt lay it on a table and stretch it tight checking to make sure there are no wrinkles on the top or on the bottom. Place a few safety pins along the outer edge about 12" in from the edge.

Now, smoothing the backing and the top straight in from the edge place a straight pin through all thicknesses in the 1<sup>st</sup> seam. Pin around quilt, checking to be sure there are no puckers.

Change your thread to match inside border; also change the bobbin thread to match the backing. Start sewing in the corner. You will be "stitching in the ditch." Stitch right in where the two seams meet. Try to stitch as straight as you can. If you stray off a little bit don't worry, when you are through the quilt will puff up and hide it.

Repeat on the other seam. Now you are through with the machine sewing.



## Tying

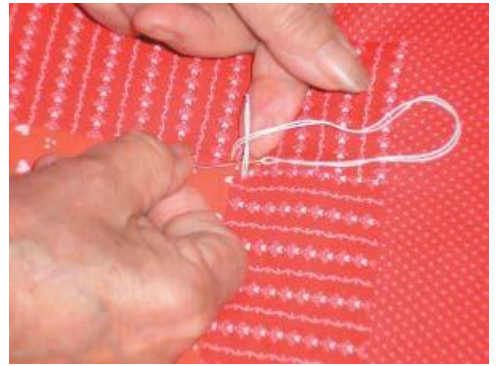
Use crochet thread to tie with (Knit-Cro-Sheen). Use a tapestry needle. Thread it with crochet thread and use it double.

You will be tying the quilt in the blocks. I spread the quilt on my table, starting at the top, at the center of the first block. At the corners of the first light and first dark is where you will make your ties. See graphic.

Step 1. Insert the needle going through all 3 thicknesses, pulling the thread through until all you have is a tail about 2" long.



Step 2. Hold the tail in the left hand and lay the thread that is remaining over the top of the tail and bring the needle back under the tail.



Step 3. Pull tight.



Step 4. Take both strands in the left hand, go around the back side and over the loop just formed.



Step 5. Pull tight.



Step 6. Clip to even the ties. Follow these steps and continue tying the quilt.



The other places to tie are at the intersections where the corners of four blocks meet. Enjoy making your quilts.



# Appendix

1.

Contents of the Bags
Tags for the Bags
Templated for the Tags for the Bags
Sample letter for the Bags
Sample Letter Requesting Donations
Sample Receipt
Memorandum of Understanding
Basic Provisions for Memorandum of Understanding
Letters of Reference

# Contents of the Bag

## Teens:

- ✓ Quilt
- ✓ Toothbrush
- ✓ Toothpaste
- ✓ Hairbrush set or comb for boy
- ✓ Soap
- ✓ Shampoo
- ✓ Bath beads or Bubble Bath (opt)
- ✓ Deodorant
- ✓ Journal and pen or Stationary
- ✓ Deck of cards
- ✓ Camera
- ✓ Phone card
- ✓ 2 small animals
- ✓ 1 large animal  
Bag and Tag

## Tweens: 8-12

- ✓ Quilt
- ✓ Toothbrush
- ✓ Toothpaste
- ✓ Small shampoo

- ✓ Small soap
- ✓ Hairbrush set (girl) Comb (boy)
- ✓ 1 bag of Ponytail holders
- ✓ An activity kit (beading, crafts, etc.)
- ✓ 2 toys (age and gender appropriate)
- ✓ 2 small animals ( when donations are given, you acquire a large number of small stuffies, this is how we use them up.)
- ✓ 1 large animal  
Bag and Tag

## Ages 4 – 7

- ✓ Quilt
- ✓ Toothbrush
- ✓ Toothpaste
- ✓ Small shampoo
- ✓ Hairbrush set (girl) comb (boy)
- ✓ 2 Toys (nice size)
- ✓ 1 Color book and crayons
- ✓ 1 Large animal

## Ages 18 months – 3 years

the same as above only age and gender appropriate and no color book or crayons.

# Tags for the Bags

When you deliver the bags, you will need a tag on each one to identify the age and gender of the child who is to receive it. This helps the CPS caseworkers to easily identify them when they have a need. They then do not have to open each to see who it is for. They really appreciate this little detail.

When they call for a bag they will let you know how many they need by age and gender. Fill the bag(s) and deliver them with the tags on.

We have included a template for you to copy, for your convenience. Just copy, mark and separate. Use card stock for the tags, paper tears away in the moving of the bags if you are not careful.

Cut string or yarn, etc. for tying them to the bag. Cut a piece about 10" long. Put through the hole and knot the two ends together. Have several of each age and gender made up, so you are ready for the call. We have a box with them bundled so we can easily find them.

**Attach to the bag:** After you have filled the bag and drawn the top closed, tie into a bow, slip your tag onto one of the loops of the bow.



**GIRL**

Age Group

**18 mo - 3 yrs**



**GIRL**

Age Group

**4 - 7 yrs**



**BOY**

Age Group

**18 mo - 3 yrs**



**BOY**

Age Group

**4 - 7 years**



**GIRL**

Age Group

**8 - 12 yrs**



**GIRL**

Age Group

**13 - 17 yrs**



**BOY**

Age Group

**8 - 12 yrs**



**BOY**

Age Group

**13 - 17 yrs**



## Sample Letter for the Bags

Dear One,

This **Bag of Love** has been furnished to you by a community of people who truly care about you, and who pray that your circumstances will only improve as time passes by.

It is indeed our heartfelt wish that this will provide some small measure of comfort to you.

We pray that at least a part of this gift will be cherished by you in the years to come.

Finally, we hope and pray that someday, when you have grown to maturity, you will look back on this **Bag of Love**, and in your own way, remember to offer a loving kindness to another child.

With Love and Sincerity,

IT'S MY VERY OWN

**Bags of Love** - a Project of \_\_\_\_\_  
And the Community of \_\_\_\_\_

## Sample Letter Requesting Donations

Dear Sir or Madam,

We would like to introduce to you a community-wide project that we believe you will want to be involved in. **It's My Very Own** is a program that was conceived because of the needs of children in our community, who many times each month are removed from their homes due to the illegal activities of their parents. Many of these children lose everything they have.

Methamphetamines, or "meth," is usually manufactured in the home. Due to the toxic fumes it produces, children who are removed from these homes cannot take anything with them. Everything they have (including the clothes on their backs) has been

contaminated. By the time the local children's service agency has placed them in a foster home they are left with nothing that previously belonged to them.

***It's My Very Own*** is a program that provides a ***Bag of Love*** to each child removed by CPS. The handmade cloth bag contains several items, including a handmade quilt, a stuffed animal, and age and gender appropriate toys and personal care items. As you might imagine, these bags become a very important part of these children's lives.

This program has been highly successful in other communities due to the many donations that keep it going. The administrative costs that are required to operate this program are all given by volunteers. Everything that you donate goes to the children. Our greatest need is for personal care items and toys for all ages.

Below is a list of items that are needed to help ***It's My Very Own*** thrive in our community.

With the generosity of people like you we hope to see this project become nation-wide! Thank you for choosing to support the children of our community.

Sincerely,

[Name of local ***It's My Very Own*** Chapter]

**Suggested Donations:**

Toy cars	Pens (Teens)	Baby Toys
Dolls	Journal (Teens)	Disposable Camera (Teens)
Toothpaste	\$5 phone cards (Teens)	Craft items
Toothbrushes	Ponytail holders	Combs
Deodorant	Crayons	Soap
Hairbrushes	Coloring books	Shampoo
Baby shampoo/soap	Baby bottles	
Activity sets	Beading sets	

Items may be donated by calling [phone number of local chapter]. Monetary donations may be sent to [Address of local chapter]. Please make checks payable to ***It's My Very Own*** or ***Bags of Love***.

# Sample Receipt



## Donor Receipt

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Received from \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Description of Donated Item(s) \_\_\_\_\_



Cash Donation \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Donor's Estimated Cash Value \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Signed \_\_\_\_\_

This is a receipt for a tax-deductible contribution for which the organization has provided no goods or services other than intangible religious benefits to the donor.

**MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING**

Between

IT'S MY VERY OWN  
**BAGS OF LOVE** PROGRAM

(your address)

AND

DEPARTMENT FOR COMMUNITY BASED SERVICES (DCBS)

(your county and address)

It is agreed that the attached Basic Provisions will guide our working relationship and that the representative who will serve as liaison with DCBS is:

(your name and phone #)

The DCBS representative who will serve as liaison with ***It's My Very Own***

(IMVO) is: (The names and phone #'s of the case workers and supervisors involved)

The Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) may be amended, in writing, at anytime with concurrence of both parties. It will be reviewed every three years or sooner if needed to permit changes.

IMVO STAFF SIGNATURE:

\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
(your name and signature)

COUNTY DCBS STAFF SIGNATURE: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_



## BASIC PROVISIONS OF MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

### A: *It's My Very Own*: IMVO, **Bags of Love** Program will:

1. Furnish DCBS with **Bags of Love**, one for each child removed from their home by a DCBS worker. Each bag will be filled with age appropriate toy(s), personal care items, and a handmade blanket.
2. Discuss with DCBS if there is a need for assistance to transport the bags to the DCBS office or if DCBS staff will pick up the bags needed from our office.
3. Will maintain an available stock of bags to meet DCBS projected needs.
4. Meet with DCBS staff periodically to assess and/or discuss additional needs or problems as they might arise.
5. Will ensure the quality and contents of each bag are consistent and approved by DCBS personnel.

### B: THE (your county) DCBS/ WILL:

1. Store up to eight bags at their location.
2. Make final dispensation of **Bags of Love** to all children who are being removed by their department. Ensure that the **Bags of Love** are only given one per child to those children being placed in the custody of the state.
3. Provide IMVO with an annual estimate of number of bags needed.
4. Communicate with IMVO on at least a quarterly basis to request additional bags if needed to maintain a current stock of one bag for each age and gender.
5. When possible, meet with IMVO staff to discuss needs, problems and other suggestions that might effect the usefulness of the **Bags of Love** program.





**CABINET FOR HEALTH AND FAMILY SERVICES**  
**Protection & Permanency**

**Ernie Fletcher**  
Governor

P.O. Box 32  
277 Commerce Street  
Cadiz, Kentucky 42211  
(270)522-3451  
Fax: (270) 522-0131

**James W. Holsinger, Jr., M.D.**  
Secretary

To Whom it May Concern,

The Trigg County Cabinet for Health and Family Services provides many services to the families and children of the community. Many times, our agency turns to various community partners for assistance. Several months ago, Barbara Neher shared an idea she had about making duffel bags for our foster children. This was only the beginning of what now is known as the "Bags of Love".

Ms. Neher, along with members of The Cadiz Mission got together and created bags and stuffed them with toys, personal care items, and a handmade comforter. These bags are given to foster children upon removal from their home. Most of the time, this is the only thing the child has to take with them that they can call their own.

Any assistance you can give to The Cadiz Mission would be greatly appreciated. We would like to see the "Bags of Love" continue to be made.

**Joan Doub, Family Services Office supervisor**  
**Deborah Anderson, Secretary III**  
**Pat King, Support Service Aide II**  
**Brenda Holt, Social Services Clinician**  
**Brad Richie, Social Services Clinician**  
**Kristy Patterson, Social Services Worker II**  
**Amy Cox, Social Services Worker II**



**CABINET FOR HEALTH AND FAMILY SERVICES**  
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**Ernie Fletcher**  
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Fax: (270) 522-0131

**James W. Holsinger, Jr., M.D.**  
Secretary

August 30, 2005

**Barbara Neher**  
P.O. Box 1156  
Cadiz, Kentucky 42211

Dear Barbara,

As the Family Services Office Supervisor of the Cabinet for Health and Family Services in Trigg County, I am sending this letter of support for the formation of "It's My Very Own". Our agency works daily with children who must be separated from their families due to neglect and abuse. Unfortunately, most children who enter foster care do, so in an emergency situation. Usually the child has little advance warning and is not prepared to be separated from his family.

However, even when the entry move is abrupt, there are ways to minimize the trauma. "It's My Very Own" helps serve this goal. Many times children have nothing to take with them that helps serve as a transitional attachment object. Imagine their joy when they are presented with one of these bags filled with stuffed animals, brightly colored quilts, games, camera's, and grooming items. Recently a four year old little girl came into my office carrying one of these bags with a big smile on her face. The bag was actually bigger than she was, but this didn't matter because she was so proud of it and wanted no one's assistance.

The Cabinet for Health and Family Services looks forward to the successful development and implementation of "It's My Very Own" throughout this region. If there is anything else we can do, please call me at (270)522-3451

Sincerely,

**Joan Doub**  
Family Services Office Supervisor  
Trigg County

JD/da



**CABINET FOR HEALTH AND FAMILY SERVICES  
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY**

**Ernie Fletcher**  
Governor

110 Riverfront Drive  
P. O. Box 3  
Hopkinsville, KY 42241-0003  
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(270) 889-6594 Fax

**James W. Holsinger, Jr., M.D.**  
Secretary

December 5, 2005

Barbara Neber  
P. O. Box 1156  
Cadiz, KY 42211

Dear Ms. Neber,

Just a note to thank you for the wonderful service that you provide for our foster children. The gift bags that you donate for our kids are a resounding success as the children who receive the bags both appreciate and enjoy them. The quilts are great and the children use them repeatedly, the personal hygiene items like tooth brushes, hair brushes are very useful and I have been happy to see that the children really enjoy the personal care items. Two children who got the bags commented that they were happy as "they had never had their own toothbrush".

The children really enjoy the stuffed toys and other toys that they find in the bags. It just seems to mean something to them to be given items that are just theirs so soon after leaving "most all their things" when they come into state care. The efforts that you make go a long way in helping our kids make the adjustment into foster care and for that we thank you very much.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Debbie Robertson".

Debbie Robertson  
Family Services Office Supervisor



IT'S MY VERY

**OUSH**®

