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Help PBS Wisconsin give quilts to refugee children in our state

To help welcome refugee families from Afghanistan, Ukraine and other countries, Wisconsin residents and quilters from across the state can help PBS Wisconsin Education's collaboration with resettlement agencies and other community partners to fill and distribute 500 backpacks to recently resettled children in Wisconsin.

The backpacks will contain materials to prepare young children for school and a comfort item such as a plush toy or a handmade quilt.

To help fill the backpacks with comfort items, PBS Wisconsin Education is collaborating with The Great Wisconsin Quilt Show's annual community service project, Quilt to Give, to provide comfort to these new neighbors in Wisconsin. This year during The Great Wisconsin Quilt Show, Sept. 8-10, quilters are invited to create a lap-size or larger quilt to donate to the backpack project. Anyone is also welcome to donate fabric or a quilt they made at home. Full details are available at quiltshow.com.

As someone who is married to a Tibetan refugee, PBS Wisconsin Director of Education Alyssa Tsagong understands how important comfort is for people in a new home — especially kids.

"We're focusing on that early childhood element because it's my understanding from our partners that the systems that are designed to support our new neighbors mostly revolve around workforce development for adults," Tsagong explains. "And then, of course, the school districts are resources for school-age children. But in terms of preschool-age children, that's an area where there's less formalized work and support."

When Jen Kobylecky, manager of education engagement at PBS Wisconsin Education, saw PBS KIDS fabric was available, she pitched the idea of including quilts as a comfort item.

"She recognized something that we are uniquely positioned to do here," notes Tsagong. "We have media and we have this robust community of quilters from our legacy of broadcasting and creating *Sewing with Nancy* and hosting The Great Wisconsin Quilt Show."

The ultimate goal of the project is to continue to offer a welcome from PBS Wisconsin members and viewers, and quilters from The Great Wisconsin Quilt Show for as long as children are finding their new homes in the state.

Tsagong hopes quilts will be included in as many of the backpacks as possible, and speaks to the irreplaceable value that sewists and quilters add to this project.

“If you’ve met a child, you know that having a cozy blanket is something that’s comforting,” she says. “I really do think that the love and attention that someone puts into making a handmade item is felt by the recipient.”

To learn more about how you can help make quilts for the backpack project, visit quiltshow.com/quilt-to-give.

For the first time in three years, The Great Wisconsin Quilt Show will return to the Alliant Energy Center in Madison, Wisconsin, as an in-person event, welcoming quilters from across Wisconsin and throughout the United States to join together and share their love for quilting. It will be held Sept. 8-10.

The Great Wisconsin Quilt Show includes dozens of educational lectures and workshops led by expert quilters; exhibits showcasing hundreds of beautiful quilts; shopping opportunities from trusted vendors, featuring the latest fabrics and notions; and the Quilt to Give community service project.

Event organizers will continue to monitor updates from health officials regarding COVID-19 safety guidelines and will share the latest information about their protocols at quiltshow.com.

The Great Wisconsin Quilt Show is presented by PBS Wisconsin and Nancy Zieman Productions. Proceeds from The Great Wisconsin Quilt Show support PBS Wisconsin programs and community outreach projects.

Thank you to our Premier Event Sponsors: Husqvarna Viking Sewing Machines and Pfaff Sewing Machines. Additional thanks to our Associate Event Sponsors: Ana’s Sewing Studio, BERNINA of America, Blue Bar Quilts, Brother International Sewing Corporation, Janome, Juki America, Inc. and Linda Z’s Sewing Center.

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