

Daily Blog

Category: Member Stories

Published: Saturday, 09 August 2008 00:00

Quilts for Peru

[Story Submitted by: 9patchnurse](#)



I have been a nurse for 30 years, most of them in pediatrics at Johns Hopkins Hospital. I currently work in the Pediatric operating room and a year ago I was offered a wonderful opportunity to go on a medical mission to Peru. A team of pediatric plastic surgeons, anesthesiologists, nurses, and physician assistants (each paying our own travel expenses) traveled over 10,000 feet up into the Andes Mountains to the small town of Andahuaylas. We spent a week in a tiny hospital repairing cleft lips and palates as well as burn scars. The contracted scars from burns can be very disabling as well as disfiguring. Imagine not being able to close your eye or mouth or bend your fingers! And the stigma attached by some cultures to visible defects such as cleft lips can be devastating. In addition to medical care, we took as many donated items as we were allowed to take on the plane. Because our medical supplies and instruments took up the bulk of our allowed weight, each person was only allowed to carry on for 10 days worth of clothes and personal items! HOWEVER, through much wheedling and persistence, I was able to talk my way into being able to take 4 duffle bags of quilts!! With the magic of Space bags, I squished over 80 quilts into my duffles!! I received donations of quilts from my guild, The Flying Geese in Harford County MD, as well as from my online group, The Blockswappers (we met each other through the TQS forum!). Although I took a bit of teasing for my persistence in wanting to take the quilts (I believe I was referred to as the 'Blanket Nazi'), they were such a hit that everyone enjoyed giving them away. The patients and their families couldn't believe they got to keep them! We made sure that all of the children on the pediatric floor and the babies in the nursery got a quilt. The mission was a wonderful experience that I hope to be able to repeat, there is talk of another in the early planning stages. I'd better start sewing! What a great stash buster!!