

Spread the Warmth!

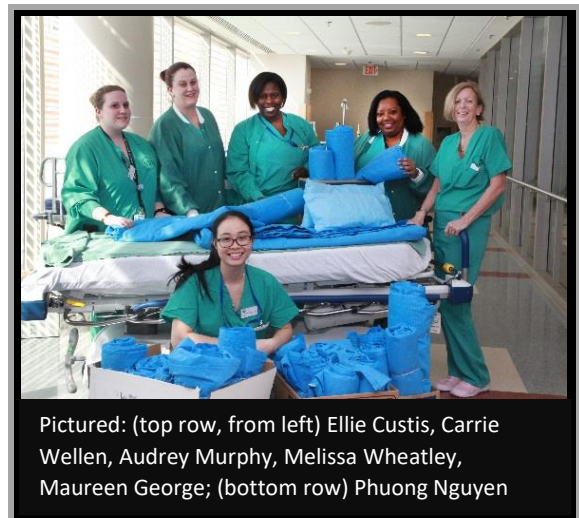


Pictured: Phuong Nguyen

Would you like to provide a warm blanket to local homeless people? If so, then please consider volunteering your time with the Spread the Warmth initiative! This initiative was created in early 2019 by Carrie Wellen and a few of her colleagues from the Clinical Center. These volunteers collect surgical covers from operating rooms at the NIH and repurpose them into blankets, which are then donated to the local homeless. Not only does this initiative support those in need, but it also reduces waste from the operating rooms.

The Spread the Warmth initiative was inspired by a video of operating room staff from another hospital creating mats, blankets and pillows from surgical covers. After realizing she could follow the same process in operating rooms at the NIH, Carrie Wellen recruited a handful of surgical technologists and nurses to begin collecting the surgical covers. These covers are used to ensure surgical equipment remains sterile; however, they are removed from the equipment before surgery begins. The covers cannot be recycled and cannot be autoclaved and reused, so they are thrown away. In total, the surgical covers represent approximately 19% of operating room trash.¹ The ability to use the covers for another purpose reduces the considerable waste generated from this one item.

Thus far, the folks involved with Spread the Warmth have created approximately 20 blankets since February of 2019. These blankets have been donated to BethesdaCares, a non-profit organization that distributes the blankets to the local homeless. The donated blankets are water and wind resistant and quite warm as well. The goal is to increase the total number of blankets donated to BethesdaCares to 50 blankets by October. The main obstacle to reaching this goal is the need for more volunteers for sewing. Each blanket takes between 20 minutes to an hour to create and requires very little sewing skill. We would ask anyone interested in donating their time to this worthy cause to please contact [Carrie Wellen](#). If you are interested in learning how the blankets are made, this [short video](#) provides all of the details. Alternatively, you could stop by their booth at the Green Labs Fair to see their process in person!



Pictured: (top row, from left) Ellie Custis, Carrie Wellen, Audrey Murphy, Melissa Wheatley, Maureen George; (bottom row) Phuong Nguyen