





Meet the FtH's Newest Board of Directors Member Christine Kerkeslager

Christine Kerkeslager lives in Bon Air with her husband, Darryl. She has two daughters and is expecting her first grandchild this summer. She found FtH in 2003 when she bumped into a group of ladies at the Starbucks on Huguenot Road. She learned to knit as a child from her mother and grandmother, but she learned to crochet during the pandemic by watching YouTube videos.

Christine earned her undergraduate and graduate degrees in business from Longwood University and retired from corporate America in April 2024. She said that retirement now gives her the time and opportunity to do more with FtH. In March of 2025, she trained to be an Elf and says she has thoroughly enjoyed meeting members dropping off finished creations, clients picking up donations, and the sense of community with others sitting and creating in the shop. Christine became part of the Distribution Team in October 2025 and is excited to continue to find more ways she can contribute.



We are excited to welcome Christine to the Board of Directors and look forward to her contributions in advancing our mission.

For a complete list of the 2026 Fth Board of Directors, please click [HERE](#).



NEW From the Heart

Inclement Weather Policy



From the Heart's policy is simple: if the schools are closed, the workshop will be closed.
If schools open late, we open from noon – 2 p.m.

For Richmond-area meetings, we follow Chesterfield, Henrico, and Richmond City schools.
For Fredericksburg meetings, we follow Spotsylvania schools. If schools are closed the Fredericksburg workshop is closed. If the schools have a delayed opening, the Fredericksburg workshop is open regular hours. A separate notice will be sent out on Saturday morning by 8:30 a.m. regarding our Saturday hours.

Your safety is our priority!
If you do not feel comfortable driving, please stay home! If you are scheduled for elf duty, but do not feel safe driving, please contact the scheduler and a substitute will be found. It is not a problem.



Looming Large: A Loom Knitting Demonstration with Barry Kennedy



Mark your calendars! On **Saturday, March 7, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.**, at the **Richmond workshop**, we are in for a special treat! **Barry Kennedy** (husband of FtH board member, Rebecca) will be hosting a live demonstration on the art of knitting with a **loom**. Throughout the day, Barry will showcase several different loom sizes and explain which types of yarn work best for round, hand-cranked machines. Whether you

are curious about how they work or looking to speed up your own production, come see these helpful tools in action and learn from Barry's expertise!

Fredericksburg SPRING Gathering



When: Tuesday, March 31, 2026, 10 a.m.-2 p.m., (Come and go or stay all day)
Where: Eastland United Methodist Church, Fellowship Hall, (follow signs in parking lot)
10718 Courthouse Rd., Fredericksburg, Va.

If you would like to attend, please click [HERE](#) to RSVP.



What to bring:

- Lunch and a beverage
- A project to work on
- A project or ideas for sharing (optional)
- Cash for raffles
- A non-perishable food donation for church food pantry
- Smiles and laughs

Valentine Hats and Pillowcases!
YOU Did It! GOAL Achieved!
Thanks to YOU FtH filled the hospitals with lots of hearts and lots of love!
Thank you so much!!!

100--150 Newborn Valentine Red Hats with White Hearts
Deadline is February 1, 2026

Help Us Work Some St. Paddy's Day Magic!



Our partner hospitals will soon be looking for **St. Patrick's Day hats** for their newborn units. Throughout February, we're asking you to pull out your favorite green yarns and make some adorable newborn hats "magically" appear!

To ensure the best fit for the tiny patients, the nurses have requested that all hats follow a standard newborn size. **Hats should fit a 4-5" ball, which corresponds to a head circumference of 9.5" to 13". The Goal: 100-150 hats — The Deadline is March 1st**

Your handiwork will make the newborn units look extra festive this March!

Stitching Before the Storm: Fidget Mat & Mitt Saturday was a FUN Day!



Our recent **Fidget Mat/Mitt/Cuff Saturday** was the perfect way to relax and get crafty before the big snow and ice storm arrived! With more than 20 volunteers in attendance, the rooms were filled with creativity and warmth. Together, we stitched our way to an incredible finish, completing:

- **17 Fidget Mats**
- **12 Cuffs**

While some volunteers tried their hand at crafting potholders to be sewn into future mats, others got busy "fancying up" thread spools or stitching unique



tactile items onto mats and cuffs to keep busy hands engaged. It was a delightful day of fellowship and productivity.

Teaching Crochet, Inspiring the Next Generation



On January 10th, as part of her Girl Scout Gold Award project, **Jori C.** organized a special event and invited From the Heart to teach beginning crochet to members of her scout group and local adults. FtH volunteers **Susan R.**, **Joyce P.**, **Kulla F.**, and **Ellen D.** each worked with one to two participants, teaching basic crochet stitches and sharing their love of the craft.

Ellen D. shared, “**Susan R.** introduced From the Heart, and totally amazed the group with all the wonderful services we provide to the community. A nice yarn donation was made to FtH at the end of this very fun event. But most importantly, it was great to pass these skills on to a younger generation. We are hopeful that some of the girls will visit the shop and continue building on the crochet skills they learned today.”

From the Heart Mentors the Next Generation at Quioccasin Middle School’s Yarn Club



MaryJo F. helps students with crochet basics.

We are thrilled to announce that **From the Heart** has been invited to partner with the **Yarn Club at Quioccasin Middle School!** Every Thursday morning from 8:30 a.m. to 9:15 a.m., the school library buzzes with creativity. Under the supervision of two dedicated school librarians, roughly eight students gather to sharpen their crochet skills.

The club represents a wonderful mix of talent: while some students are new to the craft, others are becoming quite the experts! Regardless of their experience, every student is eager to learn more about yarn weights, hook sizes, and reading patterns. Best of all, they are excited to give back—some of the club members mastered soap sacks and have

donated their first six to FtH!

Want to join the fun? If you are interested in helping with this worthwhile endeavor, we would love to have you. Please email us at fromtheheartstitchers@gmail.com. We will put you in touch with the librarian to complete a volunteer application and get you started!

The Power of Partnership: 1,290 Reasons to Smile this MLK Day

For the second year in a row, the MLK Day of Service proved to be a delightful and extraordinarily productive collaboration. Board members from From the Heart joined forces with the sisters of **Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc.** to honor Dr. King’s legacy through hands-on community support.



L-R: Rebecca K., Lydia B., and Susan R.

Together, the volunteers created a staggering **1,290 items** for donation. This impressive total included:

- **62 scent hearts** to provide comfort.



Debbie M. sewing pillowcases on her new sewing machine she got for Christmas!



Jane A. was busy with the other sewists as they transformed fabric into comfort items.

- **57 completed lumbar pillows** (with an additional 130 nearly finished).
- **26 pillowcase kits** ready for assembly.

The AKA sorority sisters also generously donated six 20-pound bags of Poly-fill and a large supply of Velcro. These supplies were vital in completing the many projects brought by FtH board member and Dinwiddie Group Coordinator, **Rebecca K.** Throughout the day, Rebecca's leadership ensured every item was sewn, stuffed, tagged, and bagged with care. We extend our deepest thanks to AKA Sorority and to Rebecca for her outstanding organizational skills and for providing the materials that made this day of service both productive and joyful!



Colonial Heights group was very busy. They brought in 196 items on January 21! Photo by Lydia B.



The members of the LCL In Stitches group, who meets at the Lancaster Community Library, donated 30 handcrafted items to From the Heart in memory of their member, Anita S. who passed away in May. Photo from Rappahannock Record.



Christmas time at the USO! Photo by Lydia B.

(Photo right) Dawn M. in the FtH Fredericksburg group made these adorable toys for donation. Dawn, you are so talented and your work is sure to make a lot of local children very happy!





One of my favorite TV shows is PBS *All Creatures Great and Small* which has a new season picking up after WWII. I watch the episodes fascinated at the Fair Isle sweaters and cable sweaters, all hand knitted in 2ply yarn especially a lovely lace sweater Mrs. Hall, the housekeeper wore. The sweaters deserve far more screen time.

Moderndailyknitting.com is a knitting society as well as a shop but has interesting articles such as the one written by Franklin Habit... Yarnsub.com is a website that helps knitters convert discontinued and expensive yarns to less expensive and easier to find yarns. Matching discontinued yarn for unfinished projects is a highlight. Nimble Needles is a great site for beginning knitters. Notting Hook Crochet is [a YouTube channel] full of free tutorials and lots of granny squares and crochet patterns and projects. Happy Valentine's Day! Happy Groundhog's day! —**Janet Sparzak**

Our Sincerest Thanks to...

Kim L., Diane B., Laura K., Sarah E., Virginia Roadrunners, Kathleen K., Jane A., and Gail W. for your generous monetary donations. We will certainly put these funds to good use, and it will help us continue our mission of providing warmth and comfort to those in need in our community.

To everyone who snagged some lovely luxurious yarn during Grab Bag December! Your generous donations totaled \$320. We will put that toward buying acrylic yarn and specialty fabrics for the workshop.

Anonymous for sending us a package of 20 socks and a 16-inch doll from our [Amazon Wishlist](#).



Another **anonymous** donor for sending us 12 pairs of adult gloves and 16 pairs of children's gloves from our [Amazon Wishlist](#) (photo right). These are sure to warm hearts and hands this winter!

Anonymous for sending one 16-inch doll from our [Amazon Wishlist](#). It is sure to bring comfort to someone in need.

Elizabeth G. for the packages of t-shirts and the 3-pack of Red Heart yarn from our [Amazon Wishlist](#). These items are always in demand, and the yarn is such pretty colors.



Joan F. for the 3-pack of Red Heart yarn from our [Amazon Wishlist](#). We are always in need of variegated yarn.

Unknown donor for the lovely 3-pack of yarn (photo left) from our Amazon Wishlist. Unfortunately, Amazon did not include a gift note, but please know we greatly appreciate your donation.

Please consider donating items from the [FtH Amazon Wishlist](#).

← **Additional Ways to Help From the Heart!** →

FtH members who link their [Kroger Reward Card](#) to FtH can support our organization just by shopping there.

Messages That Made Our Day!

From the Heart's Impact Highlighted in Vessels of Mercy Newsletter

[Vessels of Mercy International](#) (VOMI) is a recipient agency that From the Heart has worked closely with for many years. **Kulla F.**, a past president of FtH and a volunteer with both From the Heart and Vessels of Mercy, recently shared the following:

*"FtH received lots of ink and praise on pages 2, 3 and 4 [in the recent Vessels of Mercy International Newsletter]. The **Holiday of Hope** bags that they distribute during the holidays to the less fortunate always contain a hat, toy or other item that FtH provided. I have helped fill the bags and can tell you it's very touching to know that our organization provided something that is hand-made vs. store bought."*

...during COVID, VOMI was one of the few organizations that would accept donations from us. If we couldn't distribute the items being donated during that shut down, **Tricia [E.]** would have needed to stop accepting donations. That would have been a disastrous situation for our members that were confined with nothing to do but stitch. They are such a good partner and really appreciate what we do."

Thank you, Kulla, for sharing these wonderful articles with us. Excerpts and one article from the newsletter are provided below. To read the full newsletter, click [HERE](#).

Operation Homefront-Giving Thanks to Our Veterans (excerpt from the article)

Our team served at the McGuire Veterans Hospital in honor of Veterans' Day. We provided 150 gift bags and lap blankets to the veterans. Thanks to **From the Heart Stitchers**, who made all the blankets; they were a hit. We also had the privilege of having three veterans on our team that day...

Stitching to Bring Joy!

This fantastic team of ladies made all the blankets, men's, women's, and children's hats for our Holiday of Hope outreach. Not only do they provide warmth in these cold temperatures, but they also put smiles on faces that, before receiving them, had looks of hopelessness and despair. It's incredible how much love those items convey to those who receive them. Thank you, **From the Heart Stitchers**, for your partnership in helping us reach RVA.



Holiday of Hope -GOOD NEWS, GREAT JOY! (excerpt from the article)

...It takes a small army to pull off, serving over 4,000 people. We had amazing volunteers who started preparing all the food boxes, stockings, toiletry gift bags, and blankets back in September. We are incredibly grateful to our partners, **From the Heart Stitchers**, who knitted and crocheted all our hats for our stocking gift bags, as well as special toys, shawls, lap blankets, and fidget mats for this project...



Email from [DaVita Kidney Care](#) on Three Chopt Rd., Richmond, Va. December 2025

"We are so thankful and honored to receive these for our patients. Each will be so appreciated." — **Ida and Ruth.**

Email from [DaVita Kinday Care](#) on Glenside Drive, Richmond, Va. December 2025

"We continue to receive daily thank yous and phone calls from our patients for the beautiful items received. I hope you know what a difference each has made" — **Cyd (director) and Amber (social worker).**



January 2026 Facebook post

It was practically Christmas again at Belmont this week! We were so grateful to receive huge bags of cuddly stuffed animals and cozy, hand-knitted hats from From the Heart Stitchers, whose thoughtful work and generosity brought joy and warmth to our neighbors. These gifts were a huge hit and much appreciated. Thank you for spreading kindness! —

[Belmont Community Resource Services](#)



Facebook post January 2026

Our friends at [From the Heart Stitchers](#) keep spreading happiness - one pillowcase and baby bag at a time! These cute pillowcases, which are filled with comfort and activity items for young people coming to @goshineforth for services. The colorful cases will brighten up the bedding in kids' rooms. And these adorable baby bags will hold care items - bottles, body wash, hooded towels, pacifier, wipes and more! The bags will be added to our curated collections for CC clients with infants.... — [Caring Closet](#)



Card received January 12, 2026

...We were very excited about all the items you donated. Absolutely loved the layette sets, really sweet and such a wonderful idea. Thanks to all your team at **From the Heart**. You guys are doing great things for so many people in the community – **WHAT A BLESSING!!!** We greatly appreciate all the work you are doing; we are extremely grateful!! —**Liz C. and the PRC**

[Pregnancy Resource Center of Metro Richmond] Team



Email received January 29, 2026



Good freezing cold afternoon!

I want to thank all the talented stitchers who gave their time to create pillowcases for Ryan's Case for Smiles!! Each one is unique and beautiful. When the roads are passable (hopefully next week), I plan to deliver them to Children's Hospital of Richmond. Know that you are the backbone of this mission. Without your donations I would not be able to provide enough pillowcases to the children. Thank you with all my heart! — **Christine**, Richmond Coordinator for [Ryan's Case for Smiles](#)



Stitching Hope: FtH 2025 Community Impact

To all the FtH Volunteers: The numbers below are more than just statistics; they are a testament to your dedication and your love for the community. You are a remarkable group of generous, hardworking fiber artists, and it is truly an honor to work alongside you. You give your time and talents so freely to fulfill the FtH mission of providing comfort, care, and compassion to those in need.

Thank you for everything you do!

Highlights of the **46,231** total items donated in 2025!



Adult	
4,424	Hats
2,624	Blankets/afghans/wheelchair-blankets
958	Shawls
2,697	Scarves
1,794	Underarm, other Pillows
2,419	Drain tube "Suzy" bags
1,130	Totes for wheelchairs/walkers/other
1,417	Bibs
1,679	gloves/mittens/mitts/dialysis sleeves
163	Chemo shirts
2,244	Twiddle muffs/memory care
948	Seatbelt protectors/port pillows
1,139	soap sacks

Baby/Kids	
8,125	Hats
1,895	Blankets/quilts
280	Sweaters/vests/ponchos
414	Scarves
145	Socks/booties
99	Mittens
130	Infant demise sets
2,680	Bears/toys
48	Bibs
254	Octopus
1,010	Wash-Cloths
2,831	scent hearts

Other	
258	Pet-snuggler
702	Misc
2,206	pillowcases
335	knitted-knockers
332	acrylic squares
21	comfort hearts
742	market bags



Now on to 2026...



January 2026 Distribution Numbers and Current Needs



Donation Inventory Numbers as of January 29, 2026	
Previous Total	
Mid 2002 - 2025.....	643,553
In 2026:	
January.....	3,049
Year to date total.....	3,049
Grand Total	646,602

Richmond FtH needs:

- Green **Newborn** Hats – 9.5” to 13” circumference should fit a 4-5” ball.
- Child/Teen Pillowcases – in fun child fabrics
- Chemo Port Shirts
- Blankets – 40” x 60/70”
- Child sweaters
- NICU Octopuses

FtH Fredericksburg - 10718 Courthouse Road, Fredericksburg, VA.

Everyone is welcome on the **2nd and 4th Tuesday of each month from 9 a.m. to noon.**

Fredericksburg Needs:

- | | |
|----------------|------------------|
| • Ladies Totes | • Shawls |
| • Chemo Hats | • Scarves |
| • Drain Bags | • Dialysis Mitts |
| • Neck Pillows | |

For a list of From the Heart group meetings, please click [HERE](#).

