

Glen Ellyn charity helps shelter pets feel at home



By Ann Piccininni
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The blankets Linda Kastiel Kozlowski and her team of dedicated volunteers make by hand may be the first thing "owned" by a shelter cat or dog.

And when each of those animals is adopted, that familiar belonging goes with them to their new home.



[Comfort for Critters](#), the Glen Ellyn-based nonprofit charity Kozlowski founded 10 years ago, so far has donated more than 50,000 blankets for homeless animals to shelters across the country and beyond.

Kozlowski said the machine-washable blankets are crocheted, knitted or fashioned from fleece and shipped, for no charge. Each

blanket stays with its animal recipient, even after adoption.

"It makes a cage more comfortable. It's also something there that has their scent on it. Having one thing that follows them, it calms them down," she said. "It helps with the transition."

The blankets help shelters appear more inviting, she said.

"The colors of the blankets really liven up the shelter," she said.

They also increase animals' chances of adoption.

"They can look like strays. With handmade blankets, when a family comes in

to see them, they really see a pet. They make them look much more adoptable," she said.

Blankets have been shipped as far away as Hawaii and Alaska. Last month, three shelters in Ontario, Canada, were added to the list of recipients.

"I have over 220 shelters," she said.

The [Naperville Area Humane Society](#) has been receiving regular blanket shipments for several years, said Jenifer Cotner, lead animal care technician.

"We have lots of kittens and kitties to be adopted. We get blankets randomly throughout the month, usually crocheted or knitted. Sometimes we get some fleece ones," she said.

Kozlowski said she got the inspiration for Comfort for Critters when she visited a shelter with her two young sons in 2007.

"We adopted a cat called Anna," she said. "We had a hard time looking at all the rest of the pets we couldn't take home that day. I'm a Christian and I really felt a tap on my shoulder. All I heard was, 'This is your thing to do, make these blankets.'"

The first year, about 100 blankets were made. That number has climbed.

"For a long time, we were doing 800 per month," she said. "Last month, we shipped a record of more than 1,300."

While some volunteers make one or two blankets for Comfort for Critters, others have donated multiple times. Kozlowski said she is grateful for any quantity of donation.

"One of the biggest blessings is for what a joy it is for the volunteers to do," she said. "We really feel many of our volunteers put their heart and soul into it. Some think of the pet it's going to as they crochet."

Volunteers either drop off their finished products in Glen Ellyn or ship them directly to shelters.

Kozlowski said she ships hundreds of blankets each month. To defray the shipping costs, which have skyrocketed as the volume of blankets has increased, she began creating blankets from leftover pieces of yarn. She calls these creations Remnants Reborn and she offers them for sale on [amazon.com](#) and [etsy.com](#).

"They sell pretty good. I can sell maybe 30 per month," she said.

The sale of each Remnant Reborn blanket generates enough funding to ship 15 to 20 blankets, she said.

Comfort for Critters also accepts monetary donations and yarn donations.

"I donate a lot of the yarn to area retirement homes," she said, where residents pitch in, making blankets for her organization's efforts.

Other blanket donors include school and Scout groups, along with members of other nonprofit organizations.

"We love having groups," she said. "It's fun and you know it's going to an animal. It's all good."

For information, visit [comfortforcritters.org](#).