

Guild Celebrates Founder With Surprise Goodbye Party

Barbara Morrow was among the founding members of the Quilting Guild of The Villages.

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THE VILLAGES

Barbara Morrow helped start the Quilting Guild of The Villages 23 years ago with the Piecemakers chapter.

On Sept. 27, her quilting friends said goodbye with a surprise going-away party back where it all started — Paradise Recreation Center.

Morrow is moving to Idaho to be closer to family, and her fellow members are sad to see her go.

"She's a wonderful person," said Mary Whitmore, of the Village of Silver Lake. "I miss her already."

The group shared stories about Morrow's legacy of giving to the group.

"She's about the sweetest person on Earth," said Barbara Rule-Mispel, of the Village of Orange Blossom Gardens. "I (once) gave her a quilt that she was going to work on the border. She gave it back to me, and the entire thing was finished. That's just the kind of person she is."

Besides sharing patterns and the knowledge she has gained from a lifetime of quilting, Morrow also brought her baking gifts to chapter meetings.

"She was our cookie mom," said Susan Davis, of the Village Santo Domingo.

Morrow made a fresh batch each time to share with her friends, something she learned from her mom during the Great Depression.

"She always baked cookies for the neighbors. They would



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Founding members of the Quilting Guild of The Villages encircle Barbara Morrow at her going-away party. Morrow is moving to Idaho to be closer to family.

give her the sugar and the flour that they got from the government, and she would bake cookies and all of the little kids would come around," Morrow said.

Along with cookies, the group celebrated with a sewing-themed cake, topped with a fondant thimble, needle and measuring tape.

Morrow, who moved to The Villages in 1992, never expected the initial group of 14 quilters, who were split between the more experienced Piecemakers chapter and the beginner Quilting B's chapter, to grow to 1,100 members.

She gazed in awe at the large group of quilters who packed the Rita Hayworth Room for her send-off.

"When I look around and see all of the people, my goodness. Most of them didn't even know how to sew. That's what's so funny," Morrow said.

Whitmore said she barely knew anything about quilting before Morrow convinced her

to join during a square dance. And she helped her make her first quilt, which she has held onto ever since.

"I think of you every time I look at it," Whitmore said.

Morrow will continue quilting after she moves. Her dedication has impressed members through the years.

You are still quilting every single day, and that is an inspiration," said Esther Meinhardt, of the Village of Buttonwood. "I wish you many, many good years."

Morrow's dog, Angel, will join her in Idaho. Though the dog is blind, she's always looking out for her owner.

"She won't let me out of her sight," Morrow said.

The new community where Morrow will live doesn't have a quilting group. For now.

"Maybe you'll start one," a partygoer shouted.

Morrow left the group with a promise.

"I will be back, you girls," she said.