

Quilt is vivid illustration of community's history

By KATHERINE CUMMINS
The Fulton Sun

NEW BLOOMFIELD
-- Darlene Grillos came up with the idea to create a community quilt several years ago to give her mother, Berniece Smith, a project to focus on.

"I wanted to keep my mother busy after we moved her - - she was a longtime resident of New Bloomfield and I wanted to keep her connected to the community," Grillos said of the quilt, which features

signatures of area residents who donated to the project. "Gracia (Backer) and Nancy (West) gathered the signatures, my mother embroidered the names and I pieced it all together.

"It was a labor of love."

On July 25, the New Bloomfield Area Historical Society will auction off that labor of love as part of its annual meeting. The event also will feature a mini antique road show.

"I hope the historical society in some way can make money on it," Grillos said. "It's amazing what they have accumulated; I hope this brings some visual interest."

She said thousands of hours went into the making of the 10'x8' quilt, which was designed to represent the history of Callaway County and New Bloomfield.



This community quilt -- created by Darlene Grillos and her mother, Berniece Smith, and featuring signatures of local residents -- will be auctioned off at the New Bloomfield Area Historical Society's annual meeting on July 25. (Contributed photo)

"I put it together as a scrap quilt because in the 1800s, scraps were all they had to quilt with; I chose red, white and blue for the colors to symbolize all the veterans that we have in the county; I used a split rail pattern to represent the split rail fence," Grillos said. "There were eight churches that held the community together and their names are in the border; there are five stars in the corners to represent the five counties that surround Callaway; and the whole quilt looks like it was overlaid on a flag."

In addition to history, Grillos said it also is a vivid illustration of how useful the math skills she used to complain about in school really are.

"My algebra teacher, Earl Trafk, would have been proud of me," she said. "There was no pattern and I had to do all the math with figuring out the stars and stripes. When I was done, it was less than 1/8 of an inch off."

The quilt means a lot to Grillos; not just because of the amount of time and effort invested, but because it was the last quilt her mother -- an avid quilter -- ever worked on.

"She finished her blocks on July 28, 2009, and that weekend we found out she had cancer," Grillos said, noting she hurried to finish piecing and quilting the quilt for her mother to see the finished product.

Berniece Smith died from pancreatic cancer in September 2009, but not before her daughter was able to show her the result of all their hours of hard work.

"There at the end, she could barely talk, but we took the quilt in and she raised her head up and that was probably the most joy we had seen for the last two weeks," Grillos said. "I couldn't understand what she was saying, but my sister said 'She wants to know where her name is.' I put it in the bottom right corner, where any artist would sign their work."

The quilt auction is the first scheduled piece of business for the historical society's meeting, which starts at 4:30 p.m. The only stipulation of Grillos' donation is that it hangs in the New Bloomfield Area Historical Society museum for the next 10 years before removal by the owner.

The "antique road show" -- to be held 2-4:30 p.m. -- will be conducted by Tom and Joan Benke, who owned an antique business in Jefferson City for more than 40 years. For \$5 area residents can have two pieces appraised or, in some cases, identified by the Benkes