Knitting a community

Every Tuesday afternoon from 12:30-1:30, staff, faculty, alumnae and students gather around a low table on the Campus Center balcony to knit. Today they are working on an "experimental" batch of socks, learning to turn heels under the guidance of master knitter Helen Rehl `96.

"We started our knitting group last year as a part of the staff enrichment classes," said Ann Ogle, secretary for the psychology department and a staff association representative. "We wanted to do service projects, and we asked Helen and Elaine Ewing `00 (both McBride alumnae), who are expert knitters, to be our leaders. Last spring we made chemo caps for Bryn Mawr Hospital's cancer ward. This fall we started working on 9x7-inch afghan squares, based on the Warm Up America Project. We thought this would be a great way for knitters of all levels to participate; they could do a simple stitch or get fancy. We gave some yarn to another knitting club organized by students, which meets on Fridays, and they contributed squares as well."

In doing research, Ogle read that Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota had been the recipient of many afghans, and coincidentally, that she had a connection there through her husband Mark, who has been a pen pal with Adolf Bull Bear for many years in his adoptee-elder program. Pine Ridge, home to the Oglala Sioux Tribe, covers 2,000,000 acres with an estimated population of close to 40,000. It is the poorest county in the United States.

Then Ogle learned that Jane Ahem Macan `65 was closing her business, Busybody's Yarn Shop in Haverford. "Elaine said to me, 'Why don't you write to her and see if she has any wool she can't sell?'" Ogle said. "I did, telling her about the Pine Ridge project. She responded immediately and gave us several bags of beautiful wool worth thousands of dollars. We have made blankets, sweaters, jackets, hats, scarves and mittens."

The group has already sent two boxes of items to Pine Ridge. Bull Bear, a Korean War veteran, is distributing the clothing through the Ladies Auxiliary of his VFW Post.

"Kimberly Blessing `97 has also donated bags of her grandmother's acrylic yarn, which is perfect for infantwear and for our sock project—wool wears out too quickly," Ogle said.

The group provides an incentive for those who would like to knit but have trouble "finding the time," as well as an opportunity to connect with other members of the campus community they might not otherwise encounter during the work day.

"And knitters of every stage have had the opportunity to make beautiful garments for people," Ogle said.

From left: Carol Pawlowski, secretary for student life; Huong Huynh `07; Ann Ogle; Dawn Bruton, housekeeper for Pembroke; Melvina Taylor, housekeeper for Erhman; Sally Allison, general merchandise buyer for the Bookshop; Melvina Kim Cassidy, chair and associate professor of psychology; Helen Rehl `96, retired administrative assistant for English; and Marion Brill, secretary for Career Development. Regulars not shown include Elaine Ewing `00; Tracy Ryan, Alumnae Association accounting assistant; Cynthia Washington, Alumnae Association assistant director; Carole Steiner, associate comptroller; Maria Wiemken, associate treasurer and comptroller; and Leslie Ruscito, professor of psychology and director of the Child Study Institute.