

Blanketing the Littlest Victims of AIDS with Love

By Craig McGuire

A group of Flatlands students have joined a national movement comforting the most tragic victims of the AIDS epidemic: babies infected with the HIV virus.

"Kids With Kids For Kids" at Public School 203, Avenue M and East 51st Street, is a small branch of "ABC Quilts," (At-risk Babies Crib Quilts), in which thousands of Americans nationwide have sewn quilts to line the cribs of victims of AIDS or substance

abuse.

"It's a good learning experience for the children," explained ABC Quilts New York Coordinator Maureen McCormick. "It gives the children a sense they can do something in the face of this tragedy."

P.S. 203 Parent Teacher Association President Joyce McQuillan said, "The children are working to make these unfortunate babies a little more comfortable."

In 1988, Northwood, New Hampshire resident Ellen Ahlgren made several

quilts she then presented to hospitals for HIV-positive babies.

The response was so overwhelming that Ahlgren, in her mid-70s, began organizing a movement that would strike a national nerve and quickly spread to all 50 states.

According to New York Coordinator Maureen McCormick, ABC Quilts has distributed over 150,000 quilts nationwide. New York, which received 32,000, has been the major recipient.

Quilts are produced by students, senior citizens, community groups, even convicts in a Connecticut prison, and then distributed to hospitals and homes and later placed in the cribs of the infants.

In several instances, these heartfelt testimonials of love from one young child to another accompany the infants when they are

laid to rest.

Fifth graders from Mrs. Conti's and Ms. Baudanza's classes, and Mrs. Garland's and Mrs. Hayes's first grade classes, began soliciting donations in October and started production in January.

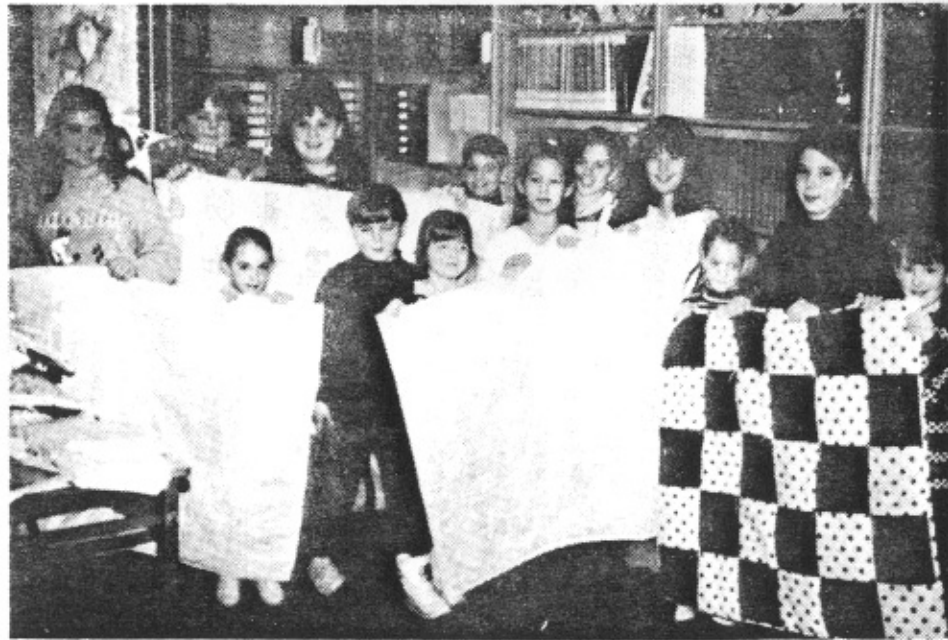
ABC Quilts depends entirely upon donations for materials. While Washington lawmakers have hon-

ored Ahlgren in the past, the movement is entirely sustained through private funding.

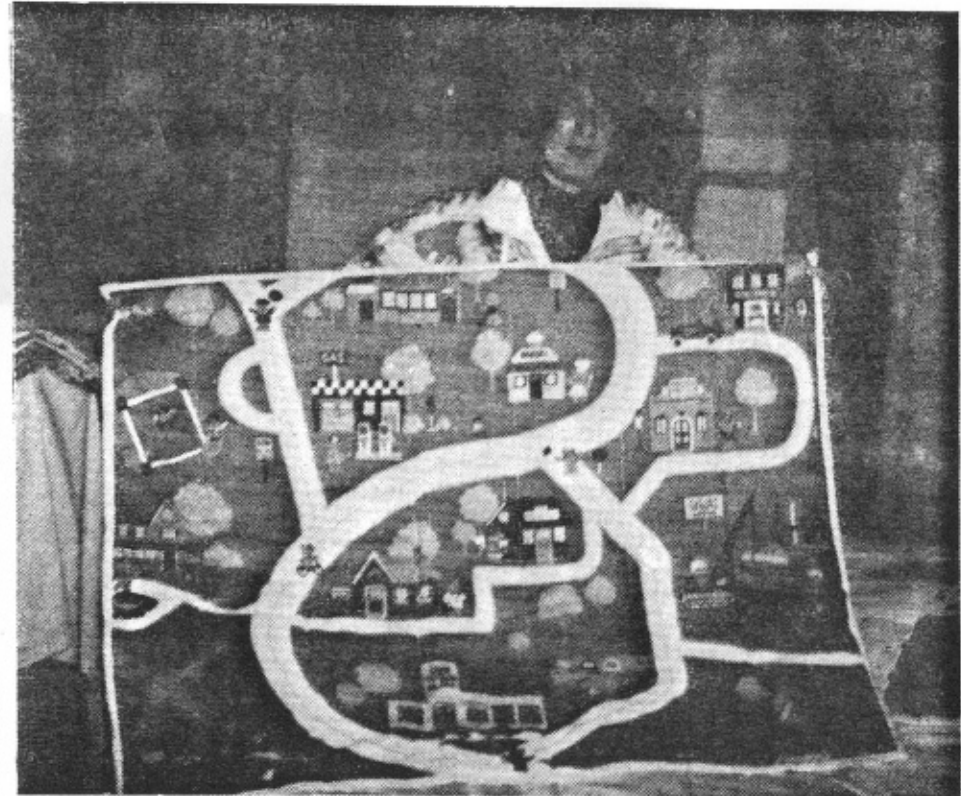
Local Stores Help Out

Before they could pick up their knitting needles, P.S. 203 students had to pick up pens and contact area fabric stores and textile companies.

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Materials for these quilts, displayed by their producers at P.S. 203, have been donated by local area fabric stores and textile companies.



P.S. 203 Parents Association President Joyce McQuillan displays a quilt made by the children.