



**CHARITABLY INCLINED** - Rose Estrada, Jean Ellison and Doris Di Falco promote contributions to the Valley's homeless at Big City Fabrics in Lancaster on Wednesday. All contributions will go to Grace Resource Center, which provides help to the homeless on a year-round basis.

BERNARD KANE/Valley Press

## Women helping women

### Product collection to benefit homeless

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It's hot, people are sweaty and not everybody has access to soap and shampoo.

The Big City Gals, a quilter's friendship group that meets at Big City Fabrics in Lancaster, are helping out with "Women Helping Women," a program aimed at collecting personal hygiene products for female clients at Grace Resource Center.

"If you are not familiar with the center, they provide food, meals and help in many different ways for people who are homeless or temporarily down on their luck," said Jean Ellison, owner of Big City Fabrics.

When the women talked with Lynda Elmes, the fundraising coordinator at the center, they were told the summer months of relentless heat in the desert are the toughest times for the center's clients, especially the women.

"The heat causes short tempers and a definite rise in personal hygiene problems," said Ellison.

So the women decided to place a collection barrel at the fabric store and asked customers to contribute products to donate to the center.

"In just a few weeks time, the barrel was overflowing and needed to be emptied," said Rose Estrada, a member of the quilting group.

Elmes was shocked by the success of the campaign, Estrada said, so the women decided to continue the project through the month of July and are asking Valley residents to help out.

According to Ellison, besides the obvious personal feminine products, items such as toothbrushes and toothpaste, floss, shampoos, deodorants and sunscreens are sorely needed.

She suggested people clean out their suitcases and bathroom cabinets and donate the small bottles of shampoos, conditioners, lotions and other products guests collect during hotel stays.

"Keep in mind that these women may be homeless, so they can't drag around large bottles," Ellison said. "With our help, maybe this summer will be a little less volatile and a little more comfortable for some of these women.

"We have the collection bin here in the shop, waiting to be filled. Any and all donations are welcome," Ellison said.

The quilting group was formed several years ago after several women who loved quilting met at Big City Fabrics and decided to meet regularly to trade ideas.

Members took the group a step further when they decided to share their talents by participating in several service projects each year. They have made children's quilts for Moms of America and quilts for Katrina victims and created a team called the Big City Gals for the American Cancer Society Relay for Life event in Lancaster.

Last year members designed, stitched and quilted an opportunity quilt with proceeds benefitting the cancer walk.

This year the group donated four handmade quilts to be auctioned at Grace Resource Center's "Comedy Against Hunger" event on March 27. According to Estrada, their labors of love raised more than \$1,700 for the center.

The eight quilters include Ellison and Estrada, Lynde Mesa, Doris Di Falco, Donna Grindey, Lola Gumayagay, Sandi Ortiz and Mary Platz. They are committed to using their philanthropic stitching projects to help others in the community, Estrada said.

One project might be a memory quilt to hang in the eating area at Grace Resource Center, where clients could have something attractive to look at, she said.

"We do quilts all the time. There are still four other quilts we haven't done anything with," Estrada said. "Perhaps for another time in the future when Grace Resource is having another auction. If we got another \$1,700 off of another auction that would be awesome."

Big City Fabrics is located at 43941 15th St. West in Lancaster.

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