

Quilting group offers solace, support

By Candice Craig
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Sewing was something that 71-year-old Jeanette Farmer had loved ever since she was young.

"I would start sewing and shut everything and everyone out," Farmer said.

Not a day went by that she didn't sew. Farmer said not even a long workday would stop her. That was, until her husband's death.

She said she just wanted to stop. It was becoming too consuming.

Farmer's sister, who saw Farmer abandon sewing, began trying to find ways to get her back into doing what she loved.

"She would send me quilting books and just kept encouraging me to try it," Farmer said.

One day, Farmer finally gave in to her sister's pleadings. She joined her first quilting group in 2003: African American Quilt Circle of Durham (<https://www.facebook.com/AAQC.Durham.NC/>). Farmer began as a member of the quilting group. Now, 13 years later, she leads it.

Every Thursday at 1 p.m., you'll find Farmer in the art room of the Durham Center of Senior Life laughing, teaching and helping fellow quilters (<http://www.durhamor-angequilters.org/bees/>).

"It's just some satisfaction and it gives the women something to do," Farmer said. "A lot of people, once they make something, it seems as if they get hooked. And then there are lots of people who like to do it but they don't have the patience to do it because it's just like all other projects. You start something one day and the next day, you know, you just don't have the same interests."

The art room is filled with about six tables. During the group meetings, each table is covered with different fabrics of all types of designs and lifetime memories, such as old shirts and pictures to be used as pieces in their quilts.

"There's really good fellowship and it's very peaceful here," said quilter Gretchen Robison. "You come



(FROM LEFT?) Rubie Lawson, Gretchen Robinson (CHECK), Jeanette Farmer, Lena Dunston and Sandra Brooks put a final touch on a quilt made of Hillside High School T-Shirts. Farmer joined the African American Quilt Circle of Durham after her husband's death 13 years ago. (Staff photo by Candice Craig)

"It's about having something that can be passed down through generations. Something that the kids can look back to."

Gretchen Robison, member of the African American Quilt Circle of Durham

when you want to come and leave when you want to leave. You're able to bring your stuff, work on your piece and leave. And the teachers are really helpful. You can call them whenever you need to, for example, if you're at home working on the quilts and may need some help."

"It's very relaxing," said Rubie Lawson, who joined the group in November. "Very much so relaxing, and I never would've thought so. I couldn't thread a needle when I

started."

Farmer's quilting group is for anyone over the age of 55, but she said people of any age can join the African American Quilting Circle of Durham (<https://www.facebook.com/AAQC.Durham.NC/>).

One of Farmer's finished pieces is hanging in the stairwell of the senior life center. Farmer is making quilts for everyone in her family.

"When I'm gone, they'll have something to remember me by," Farmer said.

Robison said the quilts represent more than gifts.

"Legacy," she said as she revealed the quilt she made for her family reunion. It is filled with remnants of her past reunions. "It's about having something that can be passed down through generations. Something that the kids can look back to."