

Tentmakers of Cairo  
remarkable appliqué

The Grand Canyon  
in quilts and photos

The other half of the  
Ricky-and-Alex duo

February 2013

# The QuiltLife

Ricky Tims & Alex Anderson

Perfect  
combos

TheQuiltLife.com

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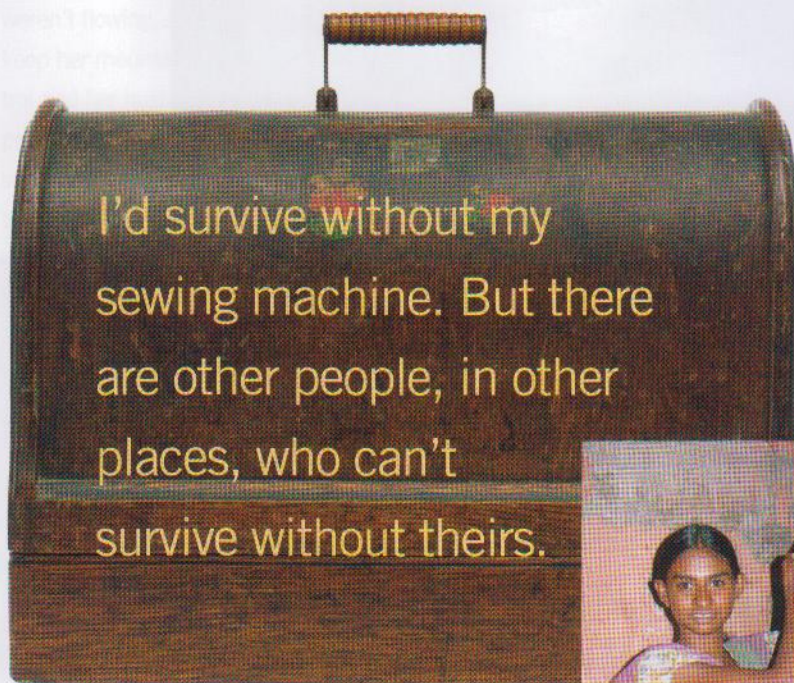


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From the American Quilter's Society



That realization came to Margaret Jankowski in 2005, while surfing the Net. "I came across an article by a journalist who accompanied a group of women back to their village, following the Southeast Asian tsunami in December 2004. One woman was looking for her sewing machine. She'd saved for years to buy it and used it to support her daughter. She hoped that one day she could teach her daughter to sew, and she might have a better life than her mom had. This woman's machine made the difference between survival and starvation." At the Bernina dealership in Madison, Wisconsin, where Margaret worked, customers frequently wondered if anyone could use their old machines. It seemed so simple at the time—just collect these machines and send them to people who needed them.



## [ Mending communities,

Without ever really wondering if it could be done, Margaret bounced the idea off a friend who worked at a local TV station. A quick interview on a morning news show was arranged—and viewers donated 75 machines! A team of volunteers checked out the machines, cleaned them, and got them ready to go. So they thought

Shipping to Southeast Asia wasn't that simple. To start with, you have to have a connection there. "No sooner had

I realized this," Margaret recalls, "than a friend introduced me to a man from the local chapter of the American Hindu Association. He had connections, and he also knew ways to ship things to that region." Now convinced that the Sewing Machine Project (SMP), as it became known, was meant to be, volunteers packed the donated machines, using fabric, sewing notions, medical supplies, and toys as padding. They shipped 25 machines, five at a

time, to orphanages in Southeast Asia.

The machines would be used to teach the children a trade. When Hurricane Katrina hit in 2005, SMP directed their efforts to New Orleans.

To date, SMP has distributed 1,200 sewing machines to people as far away as Sri Lanka, Mexico, Guatemala, Kosovo, and Haiti and as close as New Orleans, Gee's Bend, and Wisconsin. A shipment of machines is being readied for a group





# one sewing machine at a time ]

To ♥  
Mayan Families  
With love from  
The Sewing Machine Project ♥



Clockwise from  
top left:

A girl in New Delhi  
holding the dress  
she made

Bhutanese refugee  
who paid it forward  
by acting as mentor  
and translator in  
other classes

Florence in Liberia  
with her Singer



called Apne Aap, in New Delhi, India. This organization rescues young girls, who'd probably otherwise end up in the sex trades, and teaches them life skills, including sewing. An American-sponsored group in Cambodia will receive machines to give to graduates of the sewing program. SMP's Sewing Shares program is a lending library of sorts, where groups unable to buy machines can borrow them.

In SMP's own city of Madison, Bhutanese refugees are getting sewing lessons. When an individual completes the class, a machine is theirs to keep. Margaret says, "I can't imagine the shock of going from a rural, farming life to a city like Madison—navigating the bus and schools and grocery stores—everything! We teach sewing, but we also try to just offer a calm, kind atmosphere where they can breathe and take their time creating."

SMP's next endeavor is connecting people who sew with members of the homeless community who need their clothes repaired. Four machines have been sent to a rescue mission in Montana,



where residents are interested in learning to sew. "It's really about much, much more than machines," she concludes. "It's hope, and connection, and a message that we're all in this together." **TGL**

**Above:** Volunteers work together checking each donated machine.

**Clockwise from below left:** SMP projects in Guatemala, El Salvador, and Kosovo (bottom photos)

## How you can help

"We've been blessed with many machines," Margaret says. "What we sorely need are financial donations, so we can get all these machines where they need to go."

Portable sewing machines in good working order, as well as donations of thread and sewing notions, are still being accepted at various collection sites around the U.S. When you give a machine, please consider making a financial donation as well. A gift of \$25 will cover the machine's transport and any education necessary to help the recipient get started. Visit [TheSewingMachineProject.org](http://TheSewingMachineProject.org) for details.

