

Warm blankets await infants after disasters

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GARLAND—In the wake of a hurricane, flood or tornado, many times families have lost all they worked for their entire lives. Their homes are in shambles. Their possessions have been ruined. They are shaken to the core.

In the midst of it all, infants struggle to make sense of what they've experienced. They sense their parents' mental state and unconsciously realize how scary the world around them can be.

But thanks to a Garland woman, they'll quickly be reminded that people love them.

Peg Oppenhuis recently donated 80 handmade blankets and matching burp cloths for the Texas Baptist Men child care unit to use in the wake of disasters.

Lost and frazzled by what they have gone through, infants come to volunteers running a TBM child care unit, a licensed program that ministers to children while parents fill out paperwork and take the first steps toward recovery. Volunteers will wrap children in the blankets, providing a sense of warmth and comfort.

'A gift of love'

Each of the blankets has a different theme that appeals to infants—animals, balloons and flowers to name a few—and calming designs to help soothe them.

"My first hope is that they feel hugged, they feel loved, they feel warm,"

said Oppenhuis, a member of Big Springs Baptist Church in Garland where her husband, Greg, is pastor. "I hope it helps them along."

Oppenhuis worked on each blanket for two hours, working on four to five of them in a row as she watched television or visited with friends. She picked up the material on her way back home from work and hand crocheted each blanket.

The blankets are a special aspect of [TBM's disaster relief ministry](#), which has responded to every major disaster in the United States since 1967, delivering help and hope in the midst of heartbreak for millions through mass feeding, home construction prep and debris removal.

"These blankets truly are a gift of love," said Dwain Carter, director of TBM disaster relief. "Children are incredibly special in the eyes of God, and Mrs. Oppenhuis has given us another way to express how much he loves them. These blankets will be a great gift to infants and their families during some of the most difficult moments in their lives."

Disasters of any kind are traumatic, particularly for children. Oppenhuis hopes a moment of calm helps families as they take the first steps in recovery.

"Babies are so special," she said. "Moms and dads want the best for them. Hopefully this will help them."