

Knitters share gifts of warmth



Hour photo / ERIK TRALTMANN

Teri Klein, right, director of the senior volunteer program RSVP, receives a hat and scarf to model from knitting volunteer and Kingsway resident Fanny Binetti. The hats and scarves are donated to local relief agencies such as NEON and the SoNo Health Center.

By JAMES WALKER
Hour Staff Writer

NORWALK — Marie Reale has been around a long time and can tell folks a great deal about knitting. The senior citizen said she's been knitting "forever" and can give detailed instructions on how to purl or cast on.

But Reale isn't above pulling the wool over someone's eyes if they ask her exact age.

"Guess," she said, before jokingly admitting she is "39" just like everyone else in her group.

There was a lot of laughter Tuesday in the kitchen at Kingsway Apartments, where fruit punch and a plate of coconut macaroons sat on

a table along with skeins of bright-colored yarn.

The soft metallic click of knitting needles could be heard as the busy fingers of a group of "39-year-old" senior citizens were engrossed in knitting hats, scarves and mittens.

The group of volunteer women, who hail from the United States, Bolivia and China and live at Kingsway, knit and give away approximately 1,000 colorful hats, scarves and mittens a year.

And not even foreign languages can prevent the women from talking, socializing and completing their task. They use laughter, a mix of hand gestures and broken English to work together.

"We like to come," said Fanny Binetti.

Dozens of hats, scarves and mittens in shades of green, pink, blue, red, white and blue sat on a side table waiting to be transported to Norwalk citizens.

The handmade, warm winter accessories are distributed to the children of Norwalk Economic Opportunity Now's Head Start, the South Norwalk Community Health Center and Project Lulus.

The group of knitters which includes Reale, Catherine Brooks, Binetti, Dolores Morton, Pei Yan Tan, Carmen Tardio, Say Ling Ouyoung and

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Norwalk seniors knit cold-weather gear for local charities.

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instructor Doris Allegrini, also makes blankets for the domestic violence shelter.

"This group is always asking for more wool," said Teri Klein, director of the Retired and Senior Volunteer Program. "They're always running out."

And whether you are a beginner or a seasoned pro, the kitchen door is always open Tuesday at Kingsway Apartments for an extra pair of experienced hands or those willing

to learn how to purl or crochet.

"I'm trying to make a scarf," said Catherine Brooks, who joined the group about a month ago and was trying to get the hang of things. "I'm trying."

Klein said knitting was good for hand and motor skill coordination and is good for physical and mental health.

"This is a great program," Klein said. "This is a very diverse group who loves to socialize with each other."