

Giving Back

BETH BRADLEY

In the fall of 2006, breast cancer survivor, K-12 art teacher and *Sew News* contributor Deon Maas was recovering from a mastectomy. Although she'd tried holding a small pillow to ease the very painful area under her arm, she disliked the fact that the pillow kept one of her hands occupied at all times. It prevented her from getting back to the activities she loved, especially sewing. Right away, the creative wheels in Maas's head began to turn. She combined her ingenuity with her sewing talent and came up with a brilliant solution: The Anti-Ouch Pouch.

The Anti-Ouch Pouch is a wedge-shaped pillow with an adjustable shoulder strap. Maas intentionally designed it to resemble a tote bag so that it can be used inconspicuously in public. It fits much more comfortably under the arm than a standard pillow and provides an angle at which the arm doesn't rub against the body. The shoulder strap leaves the hands free and gives a break to sore arm muscles. The pouch also has an opening so the fiberfill amount can be adjusted for maximum comfort.

Maas showed the Anti-Ouch Pouch to a physician at her local breast health center, who told her that the pouch was a completely new concept and that it had the potential to alleviate the pain of many other mastectomy patients. Inspired to share her great invention on a wider scale, Maas got together with the Central Illinois chapter of the American Sewing Guild. They held an Anti-Ouch Pouch mass production event, working together to create 150 pouches in just one day. Since then, Maas's family and ASG chapter have made and distributed over 500 more. Word about the Anti-Ouch Pouch has begun to spread.

Last July, the ASG chose the Anti-Ouch Pouch as its nationwide service project for 2008. Maas has been thrilled with her fellow sewers' eagerness to reach out to other women during a difficult time. She's hoping that thousands of Anti-Ouch Pouches will be contributed this year, and she needs your help! Find out below how you can join Maas's mission to deliver the Anti-Ouch Pouch to breast cancer survivors nationwide. ➤



ASG members in an Anti-Ouch pouch assembly line



One recipient of the Anti-Ouch Pouch wrote to Maas, saying, "I cannot imagine having gone through (breast cancer treatment) without the pillow ... God bless you for sharing this with the rest of us."



HOW CAN YOU HELP?

Deon Maas and the American Sewing Guild are asking *Sew News* readers to join in the ASG's 2008 National Service Project by making Anti-Ouch Pouches. It's a simple project that can be completed in about 15 minutes, and you can give each pillow a unique look depending on your fabric choice and any other special touches. For additional information and directions, visit asg.org/files/projects/Anti_Ouch_Pouch.pdf. Find great tips on making the Anti-Ouch Pouch at sewnews.com, or contact Deon Maas at tommaas@winco.net.