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The bother of restless, wringing, hands is one most people are familiar with. Unfortunately for those with Alzheimer's, Lewy Body Dementia, other forms of dementia, or traumatic brain injuries, restless hands can be an everyday, unrelenting struggle. Often they are simply a symptom of a larger, sometimes progressive issue. The incredible staff at Franciscan Hospice House gives the gift of fidget blankets to the residents in their care who experience restless hands and minds. Fidget blankets are lap blankets designed to be touched and played with. Each blanket is unique, easily fits on the lap of an adult, and has ribbons, zippers, pockets, buttons, rivets, and other items attached to it. Palliative and hospice care are designed to reduce the stress, as well as the suffering, of those receiving care. Fidget blankets, though seemingly small or inconsequential, do just that. They reduce stress, they give the mind and body something to focus on, and to those at Franciscan Hospice House they mean a great deal.

This spring Weeks' Dryer Mortuary staff Rylee Melot and Kali Thomas along with outreach coordinator Charmaine Jovanovich-Miller, set about to start an ongoing community service project aimed at providing fidget blankets to the residents at Franciscan Hospice House. We contacted local craft and quilting guilds, posted the service opportunity on JustServe (a website dedicated to connecting volunteers with service opportunities in their area), and met with the heads of local churches. To get the ball rolling we even sewed some blankets in the office!

Another positive point of this project is that it will be easy to duplicate at other locations. Already we have shared the idea with our colleagues at the Weeks' Enumclaw Funeral Home. Secretary Karen Strecker has presented the lap blankets as a new project to her quilt group and they are going to look into making some blankets. Owner Fay Weeks is also part of a quilting group through her church in Enumclaw and we will get a sample to her to share at their next meeting. Soon the Enumclaw funeral home will be able to donate blankets to their own local hospice group, and we expect that even more funeral homes will follow this example.

At Weeks' Dryer Mortuary, our hope is to ease some of the burden on the Franciscan Hospice House staff by supplying them with desperately needed, but often overlooked aids, while at the same time supporting the people in our community who need it the most. This fidget blanket drive is an ongoing opportunity for us to give, and give, and give. We are so excited to be introducing it to our community.

