Written by By Melinda Russell Sun Correspondent
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Quilts of Valor, a national foundation, mission is to cover service members and veterans touched by war with comforting and healing Quilts of Valor. Here in Gallup, there are several groups who strive to satisfy that mission.

With long hours of designing, cutting and sewing, these dedicated women create magnificent quilts that are nothing short of art. But the outer beauty of the project is only the tip of its importance.

The Gallup McKinley County Quilters have been making quilts together since 1985.

They first met in a house in Allison and have moved several times until finally acquiring a room at the Larry Brian Mitchell Recreation Center, compliments of the City of Gallup. These ladies made more than 30 quilts for veterans this year.

Eleanor Moller is a member of the Gallup McKinley County Quilters, and the collaborative effort helps the group reach its lofty goals of providing veterans a quilt.

“We help each other,” she said. “There is a $10 annual membership that buys coffee, paper goods and some fabric.”

She would like to see more people show up to help make the quilts and says the experienced quilters are happy to help newcomers learn. This group meets every Tuesday and Thursday from 9 am until “we can’t see anymore,” she quipped.

Moller shared some history about the group.

“We started making blocks and sending them to Santa Fe,” she said.

The blocks were assembled into quilts and sent onto Walter Reed Medical Center where they were distributed to wounded veterans. However, they decided to start taking care of the local community and now complete the quilts and distribute them locally.

Susan Ackerman is a member of the Gallup Service Mart Quilt Club and is a registered member of the Quilts of Valor national organization. Her group is planning to give 10 quilts at the ceremony on UNM’s North Campus in June.

“We put on quite a show last year,” Ackerman said. “It is very heart-warming to be able to give back to the veterans.”

Laura Jijon, program manager for the UNM North Campus, says their campus has become very involved with Quilts of Valor.

Last year, they hosted an event where veterans were honored by receiving quilts in a community ceremony.

Over 200 people attended including Medal of Honor recipient Hershey Miyamura, Tohatchi Color Guard, Mayor Jackie McKinney, John Matajcich, owner of Gallup Service Mart and UNM Executive Director, Dr. Christopher Dyer. Each quilt was presented by a quilter.

The university provided a meal while students of the Community Based Education and Workforce Development Division’s, North Campus, decorated and helped with serving food.

“There were a lot of tears,” she said. “We incorporate the families in this, acknowledging there is pain included whenever war is involved.”

The next Quilts of Valor ceremony at the North Campus will be held June 26 from 4pm - 8pm. The community is invited.