

PEACEKEEPING AND PEACEMAKING MINUTES



"Izzy Dolls" – photo courtesy of Isfeld family
www.veterans.gc.ca

Carol Isfeld and the Izzy Doll

After her son Mark's death in 1994 Carol Isfeld found that the demand for Izzy dolls for Canadian soldiers to give to children on peacekeeping missions outgrew her capacity to knit them. She made the pattern available online and soon Canadians everywhere were helping her—especially elderly women. According to her husband Brian, "I have watched those who've become involved in Carol's brainchild regain interest, energy and enthusiasm to help others—a rebirth of energy, something to gladden the hearts of children in war-ravaged lands and to revive hope and optimism in mothers who have lost sons on these missions."

When the distribution of dolls outgrew the capacity of Master Corporal Isfeld's unit, the Canadian Military Engineers Association stepped in to provide a network of military engineers to collect and deliver dolls to troops in the field throughout the world. Lieutenant-Colonel (Ret) Ken Holmes, President of the Canadian Military Engineers Association, said, "It was a way to recognize the contributions made by Canadian soldiers and the Isfeld family."

In 1998 Carol gave Sandra Bast permission to make dark-faced dolls for HIV and AIDS orphans in Africa. By 2007 more than 200,000 Izzy African Comfort Dolls

had been packed with medical supplies and in the travel packs of medical personnel—humanitarian stuffing. In the summer of 2008 ICROSS Canada (International Community for the Relief of Starvation and Suffering) sent 3,000 Izzy Comfort Dolls to the Congo and Nigeria, 10,000 dolls to Malawi in a medical container and readied 2,500 more for survivors of the genocide in Darfur. ICROSS Provincial Director Mike Comeau of Bradford coordinates the supply of dolls that comes from all over Ontario from Niagara Falls and Alliston to Orillia and Owen Sound. “Our kids have so much. When the program first began, the majority of African children receiving the dolls were HIV-positive, or had AIDS; many were buried with their Izzy dolls when they succumbed to the disease.”

The Order of the Eastern Star became involved with the creation and collection of Izzy dolls at the request of the Isfeld family in 2005. Since then, the Order has provided more than 18,000 Izzy dolls to Canadian Forces. Shirley O’Connell of Perth who took over as national coordinator for the Izzy Doll Project said, “It gives me great joy to be able to knit a little doll, using my imagination to make each one different and unique, but especially to know that somewhere on the other side of the world it will bring a little comfort to a child who perhaps has never had a toy before, or just needs something small and soft to hug for comfort.”

The Dunnville Chapter of the OES made approximately 1,500 in 2008. One of its organizers Jean Goodfellow noted, “There are lots of families around the Dunnville area who remember having treats given to them by Canadian soldiers during the Second World War.”

Patterns for Izzy Dolls:

www.veterans.gc.ca/eng/sub.cfm?source=activities/kid_szone/colour/izzy