

This teen is using her free time helping ‘some little babies that really need it.’ Here’s how she's doing it

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Sarah Bridges, 16, of Reidland, sews a swaddling blanket at her sister’s dining room table. The Marshall County High School junior has been crafting and donating blankets for Baptist Health Paducah’s Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) for the past two months.

PHOTOS BY DEREK OPERLE | The Paducah Sun

Armed with a passion for serving the community and a talent for sewing, local high school student Sarah Bridges is just trying to do her part.

The 16-year-old Reidland resident has been crafting swaddling blankets to donate to Baptist Health Paducah's Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) for two months now, churning out over 20 wrappings in that time.

"It's just been a good way for me to help some little babies that really need it, and some nurses that really need it, too," the Marshall County High School student told The Sun. "These aren't challenging to make, but it is nice to sit down and make something and know that it's for a good cause. It's fun."

The project, Bridges said, has its origins in a suggestion from Elaine Stevens — a McCracken County Extension Homemaker who taught her how to sew when she was 7. Stevens suggested Bridges speak with her sister Alyssa Fawkes, who works as the clinical educator for Baptist's NICU, about what they need. Together they came up with this.

"They're just a great little gift," Fawkes said. "They help our nurses and our positioners to get the infants in a nice and comfortable position, even when they can't be dressed and swaddled, we can make sure they're tucked in and cozy."

Bridges works on the swaddlers whenever she has time and her parents are overjoyed with their daughter's drive to do good.

"I couldn't be happier. It's wonderful when I hear her music going and she's sitting at our dining room table and I hear the sewing machine going," said Sarah's mother, Stacey Bridges. "It makes me really proud of both (Sarah and Alyssa)."

Sam Bridges, Sarah's father, feels much the same.

"She's trying to find out or be open to where there may be a need in the community and then being so willing to use her talents to meet that need," he said. "It was so wonderful for (Sarah and Alyssa) to be able to work this out together. That made it even more special."



To be able to watch Bridges' talent bloom over the years has been a special thing for her sewing teacher.

“She has such a warm and loving heart that she shares wherever she goes and in all that she does,” Stevens said. “I feel very lucky to have crossed paths with her in 4-H Sewing Club and to have been her leader.”

Fawkes was highly complementary towards her sister and her drive to do good.

“Sarah's so talented,” she said. “I know she says these are pretty simple to make and I know she can bust out a whole lot, but she's made clothes and bathing suits and all sorts of stuff through 4-H.

“For her to be spending her time that she could be making something else to do something for the babies and for the parents is really sweet.”

Moving forward, Bridges hopes to continue sewing these swaddling blankets, and eventually receiving blankets, for Baptist Health, at least until they don't need any more. Then she plans to ask other area hospitals if they are in need.

Otherwise, she'll continue to work her local 4-H program and with other service organizations she's become a part of — including The Marshall Mission, the school's family and youth

services center; the Humane Society of Marshall County; and her school's Beta Club chapter, among others.

This has all been part of a recent effort by Bridges to work toward a common good.

"I've tried to be a lot more intentional about helping others," she said. "Especially this year after COVID-19 and seeing how much the community really needs everyone in it to work together."