Gems of the PRAIRIE QUILTERS

FEBRUARY 2026

HTTPS://GEMSOFTHEPRAIRIE.COM/

February Birthdays!

Peggy Whaley 2/3
Sherry Sansom 2/4
Lise Mundwiller 2/5
Laurie Schierer 2/20
Karen Rush 2/22
Noemi Bowers 2/26
Gwen Lombard 2/27

President's Message

By Sue Wozniak

As of this writing, we are nearing the end of our first Gems major activity of the year. The Peoria Notre Dame Winterim classes have been amazing. Several members have volunteered countless hours working with the instructors and students to make NICU quilts in the Quilting class and potholders and pajama pants in the General Sewing class.

Thanks to Pam Knollenberg for coordinating this effort with the faculty and volunteers. Our new sewing machines have performed flawlessly during the classes. What a great way to mentor budding quilters and sewists!

We had a fun workshop led by Lori Levar via Zoom Check out our Members Only Facebook page to see photos of finished projects and Peoria Notre Dame photos. Don't forget the Quilts of Valor Workshop on February 7th at the church. Please let Candy Rizzo know if you are planning to attend. Guest helpers are welcome.

I hope everyone is getting lots of sewing done. I am starting to think about the Challenge Quilt, working on decluttering my sewing room, and getting to start a baby quilt for our new grandson.

Stay warm and make something beautiful!

“See Stars” 2026 Quilt Challenge

CINDY POTTER, LISA MCCABE, MONICA FRANCISCOVICH



Commemorating the 250th Anniversary of Independence

On July 4, 2026, our nation will celebrate the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence, marking its semi-quincentennial. In honor of this remarkable milestone, we invite everyone to participate in the "See Stars" quilt challenge for this year’s 2026 quilt show.

Star Designs and Choices

Participants are encouraged to use any type of star in their creation. Options include pieced stars such as LeMoyne star, sawtooth star, Ohio star, friendship star, lone star, broken star, pinwheel star, feathered star, or any other star pattern you prefer. With countless star designs available, you can choose one or combine several in your piece.

Fabric and Color Guidelines

You may incorporate stars in your fabric choices instead of in your piecing if you wish. However, it is essential to use patriotic colors, specifically red, white, and blue. In addition to these, **you must add one extra color.** This extra color can be your favorite, your birthstone's “Gem” color, or any other unique combination you can imagine. Importantly, this additional color must be integrated into your quilt and **not limited to just the binding.**

Construction Methods

Feel free to use any construction technique you prefer, whether it is traditional piecing, foundation paper piecing, applique, or another method. The requirements are simple: include red, white, blue plus one additional color, and feature stars in some way.



Size Requirement

To qualify for display at this year's quilt show, your piece must not exceed 22 inches by 48 inches – think table runner. It may be smaller if you wish, but it cannot be larger than these dimensions.

Join in the "Sew-ciety" fun Feb 4, 7 &17th!

PROGRAM AND SPECIAL EVENTS

LuAnn Armstrong armstrong1530@gmail.com 309-690-8853
Lise Mundwiller, Pooh6673@aol.com 309-657-2489

The **February 4, 2026** Gems meeting will be hosted on ZOOM. A link will be sent to all members a few days before the meeting. The meeting begins at 6:30.

February 4: Beth Helfter (Zoom) https://evapaigequilts.com/ Oompah Accordian Sewing HST What happens when you have a designer who not only wants to be as scrappy as possible but also hates wasting fabric? Beth figured out a way to create HST that don't have a twin, and waste no fabric, by sewing HSTs that are "accordians". Add another step and you can sew the blocks for an entire quilt. This lecture will have you picking up your accordian and joining the oompah sensation!

QUILTS OF VALOR

Kelly Harvey kellyharvey@hotmail.com
309-453-2022

Come quilt with us on Quilt of Valor National Quilting Day! **Feb 7, from 9:00-3:00, at St. Paul's.**

You can bring machines and piece or just come support and cut and press. I will have quilt kits and blocks kits. Gems is providing lunch. Come have a good time. It's impossible to honor these Vets without your help. I am so grateful for your support!

Quilt Show

Amy Lister listeramy@hotmail.com
Joyce Blank jblank914@msn.com

Are you ready? Get set! SEW! The sewing machines are humming, the irons are hissing, and we are gearing up for a fabulous quilt show this August. Our first committee meeting is **Tuesday, February 17th** 6:30 pm at St. Paul's in our regular meeting room. It's FAT TUESDAY and maybe there will be some FAT QUARTERS to give away to some lucky quilters. Let's brainstorm together for our best show yet!

Stitches that reach out...



Peoria NOTRE DAME – Jan 5-16, 2026

Pam Knollenberg, psknollenberg@gmail.com 309-360-6243
Sandy French, szwergelfrench@gmail.com



OMG !! Another HUGE success!! 40 students in total were in the morning and afternoon classes taught by Sister Jude Andrew and Elena Kiser. This year, we were able to have a sewing machine for each student, and what a DIFFERENCE that made!! The number of projects they completed, and the progress each student made on their quilting / sewing journey, was amazing to see.

Amanda and Eric from OSF NICU (took time on their days off of work) to come to both the morning and afternoon classes to talk about NICU, and how the quilts that the students made, will be used. Both classes made a total of 24 NICU quilts.
NOTE: I will delay donating 2 quilts made by each morning and afternoon class, and include them in the NICU display at our Gems August quilt show.



Other items made during the 2 classes: PJ pants, decorate T shirt, Pot Holders, coasters, tote bags, origami bags, lanyards, etc.

I think I can speak for all of the volunteers and say that we had as much fun as the students. AND, both teachers are already talking about their plans for next year!

Please check out our Members Only Facebook page for pictures taken throughout the 2 weeks of class. Below are a couple of pictures from the last day of class: mini Quilt Show / Show n Tell.

Don’t Miss a Stitch

FACEBOOK – Members Only

Pam Knollenberg, psknollenberg@gmail.com 309-360-6243

If you are not yet a Member on our Members Only Facebook, please search for Gems of the Prairie Quilters Members Only, and ask to Join. I am an Administrator and will approve your request.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Kelly Harvey kellyharvey@hotmail.com, 309-453-2022

2026

February 4:	ZOOM Meeting 6:30 - Beth Helfter
February 7:	Quilts of Valor sew day 9-3, St Paul’s Church
March 4:	ZOOM Meeting 6:30 - Pat Speth
March 21:	Little Gems (NICU & St Jude) @St Paul Church 9am-3pm
April 1:	Meeting 6:30 - Carol Wilhoit, St Paul’s Church
April 18:	TBD
May 6:	Meeting 6:30 - Linda Halpin, St Paul’s Church
May 7:	Mexican Star Special Workshop 9am to 3pm - Linda Halprin, St. Paul’s Church, Mexican Potluck lunch.
June 3:	Meeting 6:30 - Juli Johnson, St Paul’s Church
June 20:	TBD
July 1:	Meeting 6:30 – Quilt Trivia Evening and Quilt Show Prep
July 18:	Barn Quilt Painting @ St Paul Church 9am-3pm
August 5:	Meeting 6:30 – Sharon Wasteney, St Paul’s Church
August 6:	A Leaf Collection Special Workshop 9am to 3pm – Sharon Wasteney, St Paul’s Church
August 22 & 23:	Quilt Show
September 2:	Meeting 6:30 – Quilt Show Wrap Up, St Paul’s Church
September 19:	Jelly Rolls (National Jelly Roll Day),St Paul Church 9am-3pm
October 7:	Meeting 6:30 – Janice Powers, St Paul’s Church
October 17:	Witches’ Hat/Sit-n-Sew Day @ St Paul Church 9am-3pm
November 4:	Meeting 6:30 - TBD
December 2:	Christmas Dinner 6:00, St Paul’s Church

FUTURE PROGRAM AND SPECIAL EVENTS

LuAnn Armstrong armstrong1530@gmail.com 309-690-8853
Lise Mundwiller, Pooh6673@aol.com 309-657-2489

Reminder - because of zoom we are able to present these national quilters that we would not be able to bring to our in-person meeting. Take time to look up these speakers' websites and be ready for the amazing programs they will be presenting.

March 4: Pat Speth (Zoom) https://patspeth.com/
Five Inch is a Cinch
How Nickel Quilts are Created – This lecture is sure to get quilters fired up about using 5" squares of fabric. Many of the ideas can also be adapted for using other precuts. She will show an assortment of quilts from her collection focusing on the blocks and the components they are made from. **Note – Pat is no longer traveling to guilds to give lectures. So don't miss this opportunity to see her on zoom.

April 1: Carol Wilhoit
Gaps in My Quilting Education
During 40 years of making quilts and being part of the quilting community, Carol has learned much about quilting. However, many techniques that she uses are rarely discussed and almost missed learning about them. Fill some gaps in your education with the most valuable information that she failed to learn about thread, fabric, piecing, batting and machine quilting.

May 6: Linda Halpin
Borders on Parade
Linda says you should bring your camera to this lecture! Borders are not just to make your quilt bigger! Over 3 dozen quilts will be shown, all with different border treatments for your consideration. This program will explore the wide range of possibilities.

May 7: Linda Halprin
Mexican Star Special Event Workshop
This is a great pattern to use up lots of different fabrics in one quilt and the construction technique cleverly creates a bonus quilt out of the cutaways. Join us for a Taco Lunch to celebrate Cinco De Mayo.

June 3: Juli Johnson
Process, not Pattern
This textile artist will explain the focus on the journey from concept to creation, with imagination and inspiration leading the way to create. We will hear the stories of how some of her projects where dreamed, then developed and made. Come gain inspiration to push your boundaries of creativity.

July 1: Quilt Trivia Evening & Quilt Show Prep
Quilt Trivia – Make your team of 8! Prizes for quilting knowledge, team name, team costume (gear) and be ready to laugh. The remainder of the evening will be Quilt Show prep, its that time of year.

FUTURE PROGRAM AND SPECIAL EVENTS (cont.)

LuAnn Armstrong armstrong1530@gmail.com 309-690-8853
Lise Mundwiller, Pooh6673@aol.com 309-657-2489

August 5: Sharon Wasteney
Hand Me Down Quilts
This trunk show is focused on her book and how we can share the stories of our quilts past and present for future generations of quilters.

August 6: Sharon Wasteney
A Leaf Collection Special Event Workshop
In this workshop you will learn 5 artful techniques with leaves as the motif resulting in a small project. These creative techniques can be applied to future projects that can be separated into stand alone quilting projects.

September 2: Quilt Show Wrap Up
Gems annual quilt show Ribbon Winners Show and Tell. Bring your ribbon winning quilts and join the fun of this show and tell, drag and brag or hey look what I did !!!

October 7: Janice Powers
Girls in White Dresses
Jan is locally know around Peoria for Stone Well Gardens and her water color artwork. She has written a book Girls in White Dresses, stories gathered and tales spun from the fabrics of our lives.

November 4: TBD

December 2: Christmas Dinner
Dinner, program, raffle quilt, prizes

Fresh Off the Frame

GEMS GEAR

Laurie Schierer 309-357-9601

It's Gems Gear time!!!! You will be receiving an email from the webmaster with the Teamworks link to order your Gems Gear around **February 6th**. Once you receive the email with the link to the Teamworks store, you will have **until March 6th to order** your gear. All sales are final. If you have any questions about sizes, please feel free to check with your Gem friends with gear, or call Teamworks. The polos tend to run a little small, and everything pretty true to size. Delivery will take place at the April meeting. If you cannot make the April meeting and you have no one to pick up your order, please choose to have it shipped to you when you place your order. If something comes up at the last minute, PLEASE call Laurie Schierer and make arrangements for pickup.

Looking forward to seeing you lovely ladies in April!!!

Equipment/Store

Georgia Schmidt gquilten@gmail.com 309-453-6630
Shawna Knapp sewwhat2020@yahoo.com 309-361-0350

The 1st performance of The Sewing Machines was spectacular. They have arrived back and are awaiting the Quilts of Valor workshop on February 7th. Please contact Shawna Knapp by text or call 309-361-0350 to make your reservation.

Center for Prevention of Abuse

Donna Leber donnaleber3@gmail.com 309-692-0228

As you are working in your sewing room on these cold days, keep an eye open for any pillowcase kits you may have taken. I am hoping to get them all back when we meet in person in April. Since I am new at this, it would help me get a good feel for where we are with kits. If you can get the kit done by the meeting, GREAT, but if you are not able to complete it, do not worry, bring the kit back as is. I will appreciate it either way. Instructions for the pillowcases are on the GEMS website, members only page. Huge Thank you!

MEMBERSHIP

Noemi Bowers noemibo@aol.com 915-241-7011

Thanks to everyone that has renewed their membership for 2026. Gems currently has 103 members. If you have not renewed, please do so via PayPal on the Gems website https://gemsoftheprairie.com or send a check to Gems of the Prairie Quilters, PO Box 9543 Peoria, IL 61612-9543.

To maintain the accuracy of our records, we kindly request that all members complete a membership form. A copy is included in this newsletter. Membership dues will be $30.00 for January 1, 2026 - December 31, 2026. Renew your dues by January's end to receive the February guild meeting ZOOM link.

NICU

Pam Knollenberg, psknollenberg@gmail.com 309-360-6243
Sandy French, szwergelfrench@gmail.com

2026 Goal:300 (stretch goal:400) NICU Quilt Sizes:36x36 and 40x40
Quilts ready to be donated: 71
Quilts made by Peoria Notre Dame students / Gems: 24 (included in 71 count above)
Quilts donated to Pediatric ICU: 18
2025 TOTAL Quilts donated to OSF/NICU: 354

Again … THANK YOU to everyone who picked up a quilt kit in November and December. If you get those done and want to get them out of your house, or you did not get any quilt kits, or want more … let me know. I am happy to meet you to pick up / drop off. I plan to be at the February QoV workshop if you want to meet there.

TREASURER'S REPORT

Lisa McCabe mbacpa3@gmail.com 309-840-0937

There is no financial report for this month's newsletter. The 2025 financials will be reviewed by an audit committee of Gem's members. Once the committee has reviewed the final 2025 figures, they will be published in the newsletter and on the website. Next month, I will begin reporting 2026 figures. At this point only a few checks have been written in 2026.

Stitches & Snacks: A Quilter's Treat Corner

Newsletter Editor

Kathy L. Shapley whsquilting@gmail.com 210-379-9162

Did you know: Early quilts often hid mistakes on purpose.
Many quilters intentionally included a small "error," sometimes called a humility stitch, based on the belief that only God could be perfect.

Deconstructed Stuffed Bell Peppers

In a deep skillet, brown a pound of ground beef (or ground turkey) and drain grease
Add:
A package of sliced mushrooms
Whole bag of baby spinach (it will all cook down don't worry if it's overflowing)
Add a medium size jar of chunky picante sauce (mild or medium)
Add a small jar of regular picante sauce (mild or medium) this helps add more liquid
Simmer for 30 minutes.

Chop up 3-4 bell peppers into good size chunks and add to a casserole dish. I use red, yellow and orange but green ones work great too. Pour the meat mixture over the pepper chunks and cook in the oven at 350 for 30-45 minutes. It makes the house smell great. This is an easy one to reheat for leftovers. Serve over rice.

Have a recipe to share: whsquilting@gmail.com

Gems of the Prairie Membership: 20____

___ **Yes or** ___ **No**: I approve of Gems using pictures of my quilting projects for publicity purposes.

___ **Yes or** ___ **No** : I have internet access to receive the Gems newsletter.

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_____New Member **DATE _____**

_____Renewing Member **DATE _____**

_____Change of Information **DATE _____**

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Name _____

Address _____

City, State & Zip Code _____

_____

Home Phone _____

Cell Phone _____

Email Address _____

Birthday (MM/DD) _____

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Membership $30 **January – December** **Student ½ Price _____**

Cash _____ **Check _____** **PayPal _____**

July-December $20

Cash _____ **Check _____** **PayPal _____**

Quilt Show_____