

Surgical Wraps Transformed for the Homeless

(INTRO)

The surgical staff at OSF HealthCare Saint James – John W. Albrecht Medical Center has seen its share of stiches and sutures. But now, the stitching is happening in the break room – with the help of a few sewing machines and one great idea.

(PKG)

TRT: 2:22

They say one man's trash is another man's treasure. The surgical services staff at OSF HealthCare Saint James Medical Center in Pontiac, Illinois saw treasure... and an opportunity to better their community... in a pile of surgical tray wraps.

After surgical instruments have been sterilized, the tray is wrapped until needed. The waterproof wraps are then thrown away after the tray is used, creating a large amount of waste.

(CG: Rachel Mattingly, Surgical Tech, OSF Saint James Medical Center) (:08)

“This is a big waste, because we will use 4-10 in a case. And then we just throw them away.

Rachel Mattingly is a surgical tech at OSF Saint James. After seeing the vast amount of waste the tray wraps created, she brought an idea to her team. A way to reuse the wraps and help the community at the same time.

(CG: Rachel Mattingly, Surgical Tech, OSF Saint James Medical Center) (:12)

“So we take our used mats, or our used wraps that we wrap our instruments in, and we sew them together and we make waterproof mats for homeless people and animal shelters.”

The mats will provide a waterproof place to sit or a respite from the weather for those who need it most.

In three weeks the surgical services team had collected dozens of wraps, and they spent an afternoon making the recycled mats – stitching two wraps together for each one – learning along the way.

(CG: Rachel Mattingly, Surgical Tech, OSF Saint James Medical Center) (:06)

“We’re now trying to figure out how to use sewing machines because not everyone knows how to use sewing machines any more. I own one and I don’t know how to use it.”

The Livingston County Humane Society has been the first organization to open its doors to the revised wraps, and OSF Saint James staff is reaching out to other social services organizations like the Salvation Army, to see if they have a need for the mats as well.

(CG: Rachel Mattingly, Surgical Tech, OSF Saint James Medical Center) (:11)

“I know there is a large homeless population, and I know in the summer, the homeless shelters aren’t open in the summer. And it rains in the summer, and they need someplace to put their things in it, they can lay on it.”

Surgical supervisor Elizabeth Diemer says she is proud of the team, and hopes their efforts expand in the future.

(CG: Elizabeth Diemer, Surgical Supervisor, OSF Saint James Medical Center) (:11)

“If we meet the needs of our county, we’d like to just extend it to other counties around us and maybe Bloomington will start doing the same thing, and we can just keep serving our communities.”

The surgical services team created 40 mats on day one of their effort. Mattingly says they should be able to collect enough surgical tray wraps to keep them steadily stitching for months to come.

For OSF HealthCare I’m Libby Allison.