Lots of Love From the NIC UWFaith for the Festival of Quilts

By Brooke Buzard Watson

We are delighted to announce that the 21st Annual Festival of Quilts brought in **$81,487** in total proceeds! Thank you for over 20 years of unwavering support for this treasured tradition. Your generosity, enthusiasm, and love have helped this event grow into a cherished tradition that continues to warm hearts and change lives. All proceeds from this signature fundraiser support Cunningham youth and families.



Steward UMC at Festival of Quilts

Steward United Methodist Church, first-time Festival-goers and home church to Brooke Watson in the Northern Illinois Conference, brought a wonderful group to the Festival—four Women in Mission members, current pastor Rev. Ilhan You, and a retired pastor. They came bearing Hope Gifts and contributed $200 combined donations to the United Women in Faith Hope Quilt. Brooke enjoyed spending time with them and showing them around. A couple of days later, during Sunday worship, the Festival was a highlight of the "Joys" shared—proof of the lasting impact and inspiration it left on everyone who attended. Here is an excerpt of what Reverend You shared:



Betty Erickson & Kim Starr from Baker Memorial UWFaith

Brothers and sisters, last Friday, I traveled to Champaign to attend the 21st Annual Festival of Quilts, hosted by Cunningham Children's Home. A few months ago, I received a kind invitation by Brooke Watson, and since then we've shared the news through church announcements and bulletin inserts over the past several weeks.

To my surprise, the exhibit was far more expansive and beautifully arranged than I had expected. It was hosted with great care and organization, and many volunteers greeted us with kindness and guided us with

hospitality. Even though I have very little knowledge of quilting, I found myself deeply moved by the intricate detail and creative touch found in each piece. As I continued observing the works, I began to understand the incredible amount of time, effort, and dedication that each artist poured into their creations. I couldn't help but admire them deeply. I even took photos of several pieces I enjoyed most. What I captured was only a small portion; there were many more delicate and creative works beyond what my camera lens could hold.

During our visit, however, it began to rain quite heavily. Water started leaking from the ceiling in two places in the exhibition hall lobby. Drops fell above people's heads, and then staff acted quickly to ensure no one would slip. And yet, what was truly remarkable was that no one seemed upset or disturbed. People continued to smile, admire the quilts, and remain focused on the beauty before them.

As I watched this, something stirred in me. I thought, "This... is what faith looks like."



Peggy Hansen from St. Andrew UWFaith with a friend

Reverend You's depiction of his experience at the Festival was right on point and so beautifully expressed. Thank you for supporting the Festival of Quilts year after year and for believing in the mission of Cunningham. Your faith in the work we do means the world to us—and to the youth and families whose lives are touched by your kindness.

Thank you again to all of our UWFaith NIC friends who joined us and supported our signature fundraiser!

I would love to share more stories of hope from the 130-year legacy of United Women in Faith serving children in need. If you would like to coordinate a Cunningham message for your unit, church, or district gathering, contact Brooke Buzard Watson at bbuzard@cunninghamhome.org or (217) 337-9073. I live in DeKalb and spend my weeks crisscrossing Illinois interstates between the Northern Illinois Conference and the Illinois Great Rivers Conference.

Cunningham Children's Home is a United Women in Faith National Mission Institution, located in Urbana, Illinois.