

WHAT WE SEE THROUGH THE EYES OF STATESMAN PHOTOGRAPHERS



Knitting teaches life lessons

Gail Saldana tries on a hat made by a teen at the Ada County Juvenile Detention Center during the teens' scheduled knitting time on Friday. Saldana began working there six years ago as a health supervisor.

Shortly after, she started teaching residents how to knit.

Saldana explains how the knitting project got started:

"At Christmastime the kids were stuck here, and they wanted gifts for their mom or their girlfriend. Even bad kids have moms that love them. ... Everyone who knows me knows that I knit, so I went to the craft store and got a set of the round looms and got the girls started first. They took to it like ducks to water. I'm not kidding.

"Then the boys got started, and I just



**kerry
maloney**

kept buying more sets. They just made great stuff, and I got people to donate yarn.

"I thought we need to do something to teach them about other people who aren't as well off as they are — they think they're the worst off.

"So we decided to do something for the homeless shelter, and we started that last year. The boys really liked it. We didn't have to twist anyone's arm.

"It's been a great project for me. It makes me feel good seeing them do this, and I really enjoy it.

"The officers can't really hug the kids, but people don't mess with me here so I can hug them. Even the boys sometimes need a hug, or I'll grab them by the neck — something to say 'hey.'

"The thing I want to avoid is getting them bored in here because bored kids get in trouble. Maybe sometime in their life they'll remember one person was good to them. It might make a difference.

"If they're going to do some crime and it's an old lady like me, hopefully they'll think 'an old lady was nice to me once, maybe I shouldn't pick on her.'

"They've had bad things happen; they've had bad families, maybe not all of them. They just haven't had a good chance in life. This gives them something they can say (they) made.

"We try to make them make at least two, one they donate and one they can keep. A lot of kids do more than that while they're here. It's just a great project.

"I think it's better for me than them because I just feel so good about it. I don't have kids. These are my kids."