

Spirit of Giving

Hats from the Heart helps give hope to chemo patients

By MICHAEL BECKER Bozeman Daily Chronicle Staff
Writer (October 28, 2006)

When Lisa Radick was diagnosed with breast cancer, she was a “long-haired, pony-tailed gal” who had never given much of her time to projects and charities. Now three months into chemotherapy, Radick, 37, is reaching out to help other cancer patients cope with one of the stresses of treatment: hair loss. Patients undergoing chemotherapy commonly lose their hair, which can impact their self-esteem. When Radick lost her hair, she took great comfort in a hat one of her friends gave her. “It brought me to tears,” she said of the brightly colored skull-cap. She said it reminded her how important it was to know people care. “Not everyone is as lucky to have that,” she said. Inspired by her experiences, Radick started Hats from the Heart, a program that collects handmade hats and distributes them to cancer patients. Now sporting



short-cropped, dark hair, Radick said Hats from the Heart has given her a sense of purpose. “I wanted to go through this with dignity and strength,” she said. The hats were her way to help others. “I wanted to help people feel good,” she said. Since July, the program has gathered almost 150 knitted and crocheted hats. Radick is working with schools and groups around the county, as well as with Stix, a downtown yarn store. “There are people all over making hats and donating them,” said Suzanne Colon, co-owner of Stix. “You can’t live to the age of 45 and not have someone close die of cancer nowadays.” The store’s graphic designer died of cancer in June. “That’s why this is important to all of us,” agreed Tove Hunter, who was knitting a hat at the store on

Saturday, at a gathering of knitters and crocheters held to promote the program. Colon said about 50 people picked up materials and patterns.

The store collects the finished hats and delivers them to Bozeman Deaconess’ Cancer Center, where they are hung on a birch hat tree.

Oncology social worker Wendy Gwinner said the hats brighten the faces of the patients. “For women in particular, our hair is our crowning glory, and losing our hair is a big deal,” Gwinner said. “To have this selection of beautiful things to put on our heads gives us this feeling of relief, that somebody cares.”

Deb MacPherson, who is being treated for breast cancer, said the hat she got from the Cancer Center has been a relief. “It’s nice to be given things like that from people who understand,” she said. “It just makes you feel better.” The hat tree has been popular, and the Cancer Center staff keeps it stocked. Radick said she would like to keep the program going, hopefully adding more men’s hats in the coming year. “It’s a long winter,” Radick said.