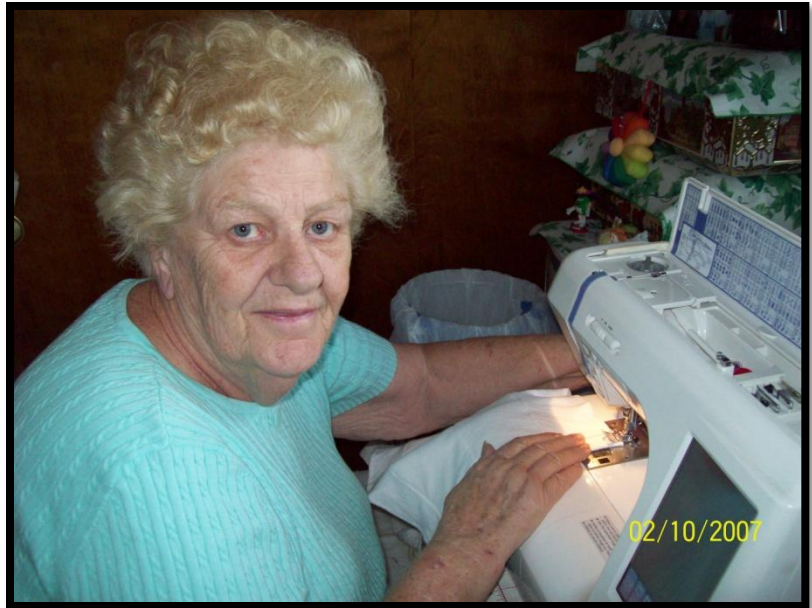


## Volunteer Spotlight – May 2010

### Erika Jansen

Erika Jansen, an avid seamstress, met her husband Jim in a small town in Germany while leaving church one Sunday afternoon. The young US military officer did not speak a word of German and Erika knew little English, yet years later they found themselves happily married with two handsome boys. In 1956 the family moved to a beautiful home in North Highlands, CA, where Erika still resides. Erika's passion for sewing has led to the start of a great project benefiting new parents and infants who utilize the Mother-Baby program at Sacramento Food Bank & Family Services (SFBFS).



Erika recently became involved with SFBFS' cloth diaper project, which aims to help families transition from costly disposable diapers to affordable, reusable cloth diapers. "A church leader gathered a small group of women and began talking about the need to help moms in our community. We came up with the idea of making diapers from t-shirts," she explains.

"I found an old cloth diaper at home and I figured out how to make my own, but the ones we are making today are much better. They are very absorbent, not like the ones I used for my kids. I had to double those up so they wouldn't leak." Erika remembers the days when her children were in reusable diapers and speaks frankly of hand-washing and line drying them. "I loved the smell of line-dried diapers."

For the untrained, sewing cloth diapers can be a challenging task. Erika, however, makes it look easy. "I've been sewing all my life. My mom showed me how when I was little and then in school they taught all the basics," she recalls.

Her cloth diapers are beautifully crafted with decorative embellishments and designs. "On sunny days I put a table outside and cut out all the pieces. Then I come inside and sew them. I love to sew, it relaxes me," she muses. "I come in here, turn on the T.V. and go." It took Erika about three months to sew 100 diapers and is now working on the next batch. These diapers are provided, along with instruction on cleaning and use, at no cost to families in need.

In addition to sewing and donating diapers and beautiful diaper bags, Erika has been volunteering her time for nearly two years with SFBFS' Food Assistance program, specifically at the mobile distribution at Bethel Lutheran Church. "Sometimes I volunteer to bag produce and other times to

distribute the food, but I really like connecting with the people,” Erika says with a warm smile. “I love helping out anyway way I can. It makes me feel good when people appreciate you.”

At the young age of 75, Erika is a perfect example of how creative thinking and a personal passion can help others in need. Whether it is bagging yams or making cloth diapers Erika does it with love and enthusiasm. On behalf of SFBFS and the people we service, we thank you, Erika.

Have a talent to share with SFBFS? Consider volunteering. More information can be found online at [www.sacramentofoodbank.org](http://www.sacramentofoodbank.org)