Part of the Fabric

As we kick-off 2017, it’s easy to feel like the pace of life has picked up to such an extent that we can hardly recognize the experiences of generations past. We are now able to look up knitting tutorial videos on YouTube, send photos of our latest knits to our friends, and “like” those of others in the Christmas at Sea Facebook group. But no matter what the latest technology, hand-knitting a garment for someone is still an intensely personal, human interaction: one person creating something for another person.

In SCI’s rich archives are numerous photos like the one below of the SCI “Women’s Council”, the group who ran the Christmas at Sea program which as you know is North America’s oldest continuous volunteer knitting program! This treasure trove of images documents the women—and men—who labored for SCI over decades gone by to ensure that no mariner felt alone or forgotten over Christmas. And they did it all with the same simple tools we use today: two hands, two needles and some yarn.

By knitting for SCI, we take our place in the history of the organization, alongside all those others who have given their time, resources and creativity towards supporting the men and women of the maritime. You are as much a part of the story as the SCI volunteers from years past—by hand-knitting garments and sending them to us, you become part of the fabric that we weave, taking your place in this chapter of SCI’s long history.

And of course, some things will always remain the same:

- the cold wind on a seafarer’s neck as he or she stands on watch, the damp chill seeping over a river mariner as he works on barges covered in ice. Life in the maritime industry has always been full of challenges and often hardship, but little things really do make a difference.
- As you’ll see from reading the thank you notes in this newsletter written to us by grateful mariners, knitted garments do so much more than just cover and keep the elements at bay. They warm the heart and soul too! Nothing can replicate the care that is put into making a hat or scarf, packing it up and sending it off to be carefully repackaged into a cheery festive gift. And nothing can compare with the feeling of being remembered and appreciated even when far away from one’s home and loved ones.

With your help, Christmas at Sea brought warmth to the hearts of many mariners and seafarers during this past giving season. Check out the 2016 numbers on page 3: this year was record-breaking!

Thank you for becoming a part of the fabric of SCI’s long history through your handicraft. We hope your heart is warmed by that thought too!
Dear Friends,

2016 was an incredible year for Christmas at Sea. With your dedication and generosity, we collected more hand-knits than EVER before, warming more heads and hearts than I dreamed possible! I consider myself incredibly lucky to be the steward of all your talent and effort. From the bottom of my heart, I thank you so much.

Although our program is called “Christmas at Sea” there’s no feeling that it’s time for a break… the shipping industry never stops, and neither, it seems, do we! It’s hard to ignore the rumble of trucks outside 118 Export Street, Port Newark; the impatient whistles from the train, and the enormous container ships passing daily by my window. Now, in the dead of winter, those ships, trains and trucks are carrying spring and summer merchandise, and in the heat of the summer, they contain the “latest and greatest” trendy gifts for winter. Just as nature cycles through the seasons, commerce also has its own cycle, and our Christmas at Sea hats (and scarves, cowls, vests and socks) play an important role in that. I know that we didn’t top our record for knitted gifts last year because all of our stitchers waited until December 1 to start buying wool, knitting the patterns, and sending the finished products to me… And believe me, I am SO thankful you didn’t! No—the reason that year after year we are able to continue warming heads and hearts with our Christmas at Sea gifts is because you think about us all year through.

Each and every year I am rendered speechless by your generosity and skill; our merit badges are only the tiniest token of our heartfelt appreciation. I have no doubt that many of you have already chosen yarn that will go towards making a cozy cap or scarf, and we aren’t even close to Lent yet!

Speaking of which, we have a lot to look forward to this year, and I am so excited to introduce our Anchors Aweigh cap and our Knit-Along for Lent project—a great kick-start to 2017 efforts, and if I know you all, I am certain that next January I’ll be writing again about a record-breaking 2017!

With greatest appreciation,

Paige

Paige Sato
Program Manager, Christmas at Sea

Come visit the Christmas at Sea knitting room in SCI’s Port Newark International Seafarers’ Center. Email psato@seamenschurch.org to find out how.

Looking for a PDF of this newsletter that you can read on your iPad or email to a friend?

Download a copy online. smschur.ch/knitb4xmas

The Knit Before Christmas

Winter 2017 • 2
2016 By Numbers!

2016 proved to be a year of surprises, especially for Christmas at Sea. Whereas typically the program receives something in the neighborhood of just over 21,000 hand-made accessories each year, this time a whopping 23,860 items made their way to Port Newark! And the best thing? All of these beautiful projects came from 1,271 knitters and/or groups of knitters, and 259 of those knitters were new to Christmas at Sea!

Where did they all come from?

Well, here's a breakdown by state:

And when did they come?

Month by month totals:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Jan</th>
<th>Feb</th>
<th>Mar</th>
<th>Apr</th>
<th>May</th>
<th>Jun</th>
<th>Jul</th>
<th>Aug</th>
<th>Sep</th>
<th>Oct</th>
<th>Nov</th>
<th>Dec</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hats</td>
<td>252</td>
<td>1190</td>
<td>1066</td>
<td>830</td>
<td>1324</td>
<td>1033</td>
<td>1090</td>
<td>1306</td>
<td>2234</td>
<td>4150</td>
<td>3867</td>
<td>1101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scarves</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>319</td>
<td>194</td>
<td>267</td>
<td>450</td>
<td>665</td>
<td>3687</td>
<td>728</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cowls</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>330</td>
<td>223</td>
<td>345</td>
<td>219</td>
<td>335</td>
<td>137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hats/Scarves</td>
<td>209</td>
<td>192</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hats &amp; Slippers</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>49</td>
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<td>49</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

And what exactly was in all those boxes?

- 4596 scarves
- 2669* hat/cowl sets
- 1895 cowls
- 1096 hat/cowl sets
- 317 vests
- 463 helmets
- 317 dirty bags
- 209 socks & slippers
- 42 misc. items

*sets = 2 items

Pre-Orders for KnitBoxes!

Launched last year, Christmas at Sea KnitBoxes are the perfect way to inspire, collect, and return your knits (and toiletries, if you choose) to Christmas at Sea. Whether you belong to a group of 2 or 20, the KnitBox is available for your group!

Here’s how it works:

1. Between now and July 1, 2017, pre-order your KnitBox by:
   - calling Paige at +1 (973) 589-5828
   - emailing cas@seamenschurch.org
   - ordering online here: smschur.ch/knitbox

2. KnitBoxes will be shipped the 3rd week of July
3. Decorate your KnitBox (all KnitBoxes come with stickers and instructions)
4. Leave your KnitBox in a convenient place to collect knits and/or toiletries
5. Use the return address label (included) to ship back your KnitBox to CaS by Thanksgiving!

KnitBox FAQs

Q: What comes in the KnitBox?
A: You will get a set of patterns, decorative and instructional stickers to decorate your box and a return shipping label.

Q: How much does a KnitBox cost?
A: Christmas at Sea ships you the box and stickers for free. You are responsible for the return postage, but that is the only cost involved.

Q: My group only has 3 people, and we knit in our living room—would the KnitBox work for us?
A: Why not order one and see! CaS doesn’t demand that the boxes are filled to the brim: the box itself is sturdy and it’s easily taped shut to return it. Another idea is to join up with other groups and make the KnitBox a joint project?

Q: My church has knitters but we also do a toiletries drive—can we use the KnitBox?
A: Absolutely—you are more than welcome to add toiletries or puzzle books in with your knits!

Q: Can we fill more than one KnitBox?
A: Absolutely—if you’ve filled one KnitBox just send it to us, and include a note indicating you’d like to have it emptied and sent back for another shipment.

Q: The box is pretty big—where should I put it?
A: It’s up to you! If you knit with a group, maybe put it in your group’s meeting room? If your church is active, perhaps there’s a spot where the congregation can see it and learn more about your group’s support of Christmas at Sea.
Christmas at Sea guidelines: A Review

The new year is always a perfect time to review and update our program guidelines, so take a peek for your reference!

1. **Patterns:** please use Christmas at Sea patterns whenever possible. If not possible, most importantly remember: NO EMBELLISHMENTS (tassels, fringes, pompons).

2. **Colors:** any colors are fine as well as self-patterning yarns, but keep in mind that mariners have to work in mucky industrial environments so pastels are not appropriate. Also, while there are female mariners, we don’t know in advance which vessels have women on their crew, so please avoid pinks and light purples.

3. **Hand-made cards, sample-sized toiletries, and candies/gum are always welcome:** please, no calendars or recycled cards.

4. **There’s no need to specially package your knits, or to enclose them in plastic bags.**

5. Please include your return address inside your box—we aim to acknowledge all incoming packages, but sometimes we can’t read the return label.

Thank you for reading these guidelines, and for your ongoing support of Christmas at Sea!

Knit-Along for Lent and a Surprise (or two, or more)!

Mark your calendars for Wednesday, March 1, the first day of Lent this year, for our 2017 Knit-Along for Lent. Given that Lent is traditionally a season of reflection and self-sacrifice, our goal is not quantity of output, but rather to use our knitting and crochet time as an opportunity for reflection and daily discipline.

And this is easy to do with our Christmas at Sea patterns. The longevity of the program means that many of our stitchers know their favorite patterns by heart, making Christmas at Sea hats and scarves an easy “go-to” project.

But what if you want to mix it up a bit? That’s no problem at all, and you can use any of the Christmas at Sea patterns as a template for your creativity!

**Surprise Number 1: Anchors Aweigh—a riff on the iconic Seafarer’s Watch Cap, with stranded knitting!**

Cast on 84 stitches. Place marker and join to knit in the round, being careful not to twist. Knit in K2, P2 ribbing for 2 inches.

Switch to stockinette stitch (when using circular needles or dpns, knit every round) and knit 3 rounds.

Rounds 4–20: Knit **Anchor motif** using the chart below. The anchor motif will repeat 6 times.

**Surprise Number 2: Yarn Give-away!**

To kick-start our Knit-Along for Lent, Lion Brand Yarns has generously provided 200 skeins of their top-selling Wool-Ease yarn. Wool-Ease is a lovely, washable yarn that’s 80% acrylic and 20% wool, and at 197 yards per skein, it’s the perfect amount for a hat. To get your free skein, just visit: smschur.ch/lion-brand

**Surprise Number 3: More How-To Tutorials!**

In addition to a stranded knitting tutorial for our Anchors Aweigh hat, check out our new video series focusing on different projects throughout the year! Just type smschur.ch/cas-youtube into your browser, or search for “seamenschurch christmas at sea youtube playlist” and you’ll find all of our instructional videos!

**Surprise Number 4: Anchors Aweigh Watch Cap, with stranded knitting!**

Cut yarn leaving a 6” tail. Using a tapestry needle, thread the tail through the remaining live stitches and pull taut to cinch shut. Pull the needle/thread through the center of the cap and weave in securely about 2” of the yarn. Cut remaining tail and pat yourself on the back—you’ve just made a lovely colorwork hat!

For a tutorial on how to knit with two colors, just type smschur.ch/cas-youtube into your browser, or search for “seamenschurch christmas at sea youtube playlist” and you’ll find all of our instructional videos!
Dear Friends,

The Captain and Crew of Container Ship MSC Chicago want to take this opportunity to thank you for your great gifts which were handed over in NYC on December 16th, 2016.

Onboard, it’s easy to fall into loneliness during this special season as we don’t have the luxury of spending this very special day with our families and friends. However, we are very honored and blessed to be part of your generous scheme. You are worth more than a handful of friends. It is very rare to find such a dedicated organization like yours and our crew could go on and on with praises because your magnificence and contributions are limitless.

There are no words that could describe our happiness as we received such gifts. However, we will say try to say thank you for being incredibly compassionate and we really appreciate the gesture you showed us and were moved by your thoughts and actions.

May God continue to use you as a consistent provider of smiles, comfort and help. May the new year bring you power and peace. Special thanks to all the children’s wonderful hand-made Christmas cards.

God bless you all!

Much love and thank you from Captain and Crew of MSC Chicago.

Sender: Jeremy Morton
Subject: A thank you

I would like to thank you guys for the hats and scarves that were sent to us here on the Steve Scalise with Blessey Marine, it was an awesome gesture of kindness.

Thank you and Merry Christmas!!

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Dear Friends,

On behalf of the officers and crew of MV E.R. India, I would like to say thank you very much for your very welcome gifts.

Your gifts warmed us up against the winter but more importantly they warmed up our souls giving us strength and a little happiness; it is a nice feeling when you realize that people still care for each other in this busy world.

Once again thank you very much and best wishes of health and happiness for 2017 and beyond :)

Happy New Year! God bless you all.

Capt. Florentin Moldoveanu and entire crew of M/V E.R. India

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To: The Seamen’s Church Institute
FM: Master - M.V. HEIJIN
DT: 24-Dec-16

Dear SCT,

Good day and a merry Christmas to you all.

May I express my heartfelt gratitude to you all for the extremely thoughtful gesture towards us, sailors of the oceans on board MV Heijin.

The gifts at Christmas time will always be treasured.

Not very often do we come across people who appreciate and understand the lives and work of us mariners.

The efforts by you all to knit the gifts and put them all together are sincerely appreciated.

Many thanks & best regards
P. D’Lima
Master

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Dear SCT,

Warm thanks and much appreciation for your lovely Christmas blessings received at Newark.

Please send my regards to all of those who spend time preparing them and who send a signal of care and appreciation for our work.

A happy new year to all of you and all the best!

Thank you and best regards,
Federschmidt, L.
Chief Officer, Northern Magnum
DCPZ2
Look out for our new Merit Badges!

If you stitched for Christmas at Sea in 2016, your merit badge is on its way, with an improvement! This year we’re doing away with “levels” and instead are recognizing the value of each and every single incoming gift.

Keep in mind—while we try to be as accurate as possible, given the volume of hats and scarves we receive there’s plenty of room for error so forgive us any mistakes. In addition to the mariners, we at CaS appreciate every single hat, scarf, vest, cowl, and pair of socks that makes its way here!

Time to Restock....

1898 Hat tags—for use only with the 1898 Hat.

A Gift for You tags—for use with ANY Christmas at Sea project, including the 1898 Hat.

Did you Know?

Here at Christmas at Sea we try to acknowledge every single package that comes to us, but sometimes packages get really beat up in the mail, and the return name/address are rendered illegible. Here’s a simple way to make sure we know exactly who you are:

NAME
ADDRESS
CITY STATE ZIP
EMAIL

I am sending on behalf of a group.

GROUP NAME:
GROUP ADDRESS:

This package includes:

- [ ] Hats
- [ ] Cowl
- [ ] Scarves
- [ ] Dittybags
- [ ] Vests
- [ ] Slippers
- [ ] Socks
- [ ] Toiletries (no need to count)