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## **SWIFT initiates program to recycle discarded fabric**

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### **Rooms To Go kicks off effort by collecting a ton of discards**

*By Heath E. Combs -- Furniture Today, July 29, 2008*

HOUSTON — A program initiated by **SWIFT**, the Sample Waste Initiative for Furniture and Textiles industries, has begun collecting discarded fabric for reuse in quilts, wheelchair bags and other items for children in need.

Named the Green Initiative for Furniture and Textiles, or GIFFT, the new program was created by SWIFT and by Houston-based recycling company **Avangard Innovative** and Yardley, Pa.-based charity **Quilts for Kids**.

"I wanted to get people talking about the problem of fabric waste," said SWIFT founder Sue Patroliia, product manager for **Regal Fabrics**. "The mission is to find ways to reduce, reuse and recycle and the GIFFT program is a huge step forward."

The new program was kicked off this month when about a ton of material from excess end rolls or discontinued fabric was collected from Rooms To Go's Lakeland, Fla., distribution center, said Joe Stalnaker, national account manager of Avangard Innovative.

Stalnaker, who spent more than a decade in warehouse management and is a former director of recycling for Rooms To Go, is leading the GIFFT program.

Avangard Innovative's recycling customers include Ashley stores, Victoria, Texas-based Lack's and Rooms To Go. The program aims to collect 10 tons of fabric this year, and Stalnaker said it is likely to top that.

"We've targeted the furniture industry and fabric manufacturers. It's not limited to that but that's who we've targeted. It can be open to whoever wants to drop off fabric. The goal is to ship at least a half a truckload full from each site," he said.

Stalnaker said the program will help companies reduce waste-handling expenses, be environmentally responsible, and provide a product to a child in need. All donations are tax-deductible, he added.

The program uses warehouse space donated by Avangard in Houston, Sonoco Recycling in Greensboro, N.C., and Sunburst Paper in Loxley, Ala. Transportation for the 2008 program has been donated by CH Robinson Atlanta South Division.

Stalnaker said stores can drop off fabric at the volunteered centers. The GIFFT program hopes to secure donated equipment soon, and more drop-off sites will be announced as they become available, he said.

"If furniture companies want to donate a warehouse site, we will add another collection site," he said.

After it's collected, the fabric goes to Quilts for Kids, a network of volunteer quilters with 50 chapters in North America and the Caribbean. Interior designer Linda Ayre founded the organization in 2000.

The volunteers create quilts for delivery to children in hospitals or other care facilities. The patchwork quilts often go to children with life-threatening illness or abused children who cannot bring stuffed animals into hospitals but can bring washable quilts. According to its Web site, the organization has kept over one million pounds of fabric out of landfills.

Several furniture and fabric suppliers already participate in Quilts for Kids.

"Seeing the waste generated by our industries was a major factor in my decision to create Quilts for Kids," Ayre said in a press



SWIFT founder Sue Patroliia stands in front of a dumpster filled with discarded fabric samples. Patroliia, Avangard Innovative and Quilts for Kids created the Green Initiative for Furniture and Textiles as a way to reuse discarded fabrics.

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release. "We're ready to handle whatever the furniture and fabric industries have in store for us."

SWIFT and Avangard Innovative are members of the [Sustainable Furniture Council](#).

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