

BARBARA DEMOREST

Using soft, durable yarn, this crafter knits knockers for breast cancer survivors.



WHETHER Barbara Demorest is working with a bright pattern or neutral beige, the feel and durability of the yarn is her top priority. It has to be soft, and it can't shrink or pill. After all, she's knitting breast prosthetics for sensitive, scarred skin. When the Washington-based knitter underwent a mastectomy in 2011, doctors told her she couldn't wear a silicone prosthetic for six weeks—then told her about a knitted alternative. Too feeble to knit, she called her friend Phyllis, who found a pattern and ran with it. Unlike silicone prosthetics, which some find heavy and sticky, those made with cotton yarn are soft and light. "I felt like I could get a hug and no one would know I just had surgery," says Demorest. Emboldened, she founded KnittedKnockers.org, mobilizing more than 5,000 knitting groups across the country to provide free knitted breasts to cancer survivors. Each knocker typically costs less than \$2 to make, "but we're very selective about the yarn," she says; only about 30 can be used to create the faux breasts. "We want the best," she says. — **AMY PATUREL**



- ▶ **Pima**, Egyptian and Sea Island are the longest cotton fibers grown—and the most desirable, with a length that can reach nearly 2 inches.
- ▶ **Yarn** of any type requires about 15 different fibers—a mix of both natural and synthetic.
- ▶ **People** can spin other plant fibers, too, including bamboo, hemp, corn, nettle, soy and even sugarcane.

HEALING THREADS

Crafters across the world weave comfort with yarn.



1 Doctors in Denmark discovered that when babies cradle **crocheted octopuses**, it helps them breathe easier, among other perks.



2 During the 1970s and '80s, Chilean women crafted **3-D quilts (arpilleras)** to document the harsh conditions under Augusto Pinochet.



3 In Japan, **people knit hats** for stone statues of Jizo, a deity who is adored as a protector of children, travelers and commoners.