



A FASHION DESIGN CLASS  
**LITTLE DRESSES FOR  
AFRICA**  
COMMUNITY SERVICE PROJECT

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**NYS AFCSE BEST PRACTICES  
NOVEMBER 7, 2015**

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## FAMILY AND CONSUMER SCIENCES

### Clothing and Textiles CORE

**TITLE:** FASHION, SERVICE AND GLOBAL AWARENESS

**GOAL:** Students will use pillowcases to make little girls' dresses. They will use this experience to gain construction skills while becoming conscious of the economic conditions in a third world nation. Students will see a direct connection of how their efforts impact those in extreme need.

**PREPARATION FOR PROJECT:**

- Show news clip from MSNBC on Making a Difference. Direct class discussion on how students could help with this global issue. How does this story relate to our class and objectives? Read the follow up news article.
- Gather supplies:
  - Pillowcases
  - 2 ½ yards double fold bias tape per student
  - 8" of elastic, ½" wide
  - Coordinating all-purpose thread

*Class lessons prior to the construction of the dresses:*

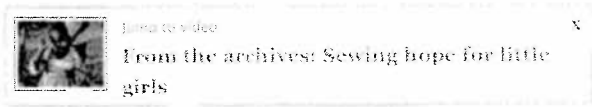
- Demonstrate basic construction skills and have students familiarize themselves with common vocabulary.
- Demonstrate measuring skills using measuring tape and measuring gauge
- Discuss the basic motives for wearing clothes
- Discuss the importance and benefits of recycling, repurposing and sustainability in garments.

*Constructing the dresses:*

- Have the students choose the coordinating materials for their project.
- Distribute the grading rubric prior to the beginning of the project and review expectations. Included are content and process skills: appearance, stitching quality, following directions, time management.
- Students will utilize the construction skills learned in previous classes to complete the dresses.
- Encourage students to help each other and seek assistance from the step-by-step display and teacher.
- If they want, the student will write and attach a note to the dress including a self-addressed, stamped envelope. This facilitates the possibility that the child who receives the dress will communicate with the student who created it.

**ASSESSMENT:**

- Students are evaluated individually on the process and final product of their pillow case dress.



Link to video

From the archives: Sewing hope for little girls

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[http://www.nbcnews.com/id/40967683/ns/nightly\\_news-making\\_a\\_difference/#](http://www.nbcnews.com/id/40967683/ns/nightly_news-making_a_difference/#)

By

**Anthony Galloway**

NBC producer

updated 1/7/2011 3:49:52 PM ET

Less than 24 hours after our original story aired, Rachel O'Neill sent me a text message: "Crazy! Love it! \$2200 in donations so far and emails by the truckload! Lots of great leads to get dresses to the kids. Lots of comments about the fact that I don't sew. Seems to encourage others with similar lack of skills."

Rachel is one of those people you know you're going to like, even before you meet. Her energy comes across on the phone, via text message and certainly in person. We first met her on a Saturday morning in November, in Trenton, Michigan, not far from Detroit. We arrived early but her operation—sewing, sorting, ironing and packing thousands of dresses destined for little girls living in a handful of poor African countries—was already underway. As the morning went on, the crowd of volunteers grew to more than a hundred. Women drove in from nearby states. Girl scouts came to help from a local high school.



Three years ago, Rachel never could have pictured what a success her idea would turn into. She started her project, "Little Dresses for Africa," in a church basement with five friends. Their initial plan was to sew 1,000 dresses using fabric from pillowcases and send them to needy girls. To date they've received and distributed more than 100,000 dresses, many of them much more intricately designed than the original pillowcase patterns they started with. And the dresses keep coming.

Because of the response Rachel received after our first story aired, we decided to go back to Michigan to document just how kindhearted our viewers can be. Instead of working from her home basement, Rachel now has a storage unit filled to the top with boxes of dresses. She'll soon move into warehouse space donated by a *Nightly News* viewer. She's received thousands in donations and thousands of emails from viewers asking how they can start their own sewing groups. Two women from another non-profit group in Indiana, Lavenir du Mali, saw Rachel's story and drove nearly 600 miles round-trip in a rented moving van to help ship the dresses abroad.

On our trip to document this amazing gesture, correspondent Chris Jansing and I arrived in Detroit on an 18-degree day, and that's not counting the wind chill. The ground was icy, and we were certain the weather would impact the turnout of volunteers who were supposed to help load the moving van. But like clockwork—and everything Rachel does runs like clockwork—the volunteers arrived at 10:00 am, the van arrived at 10:15 am, and the rush to load it was on.

That morning the truck pulled away with 24,000 dresses headed for girls in need, in countries all over the world. The storage unit was nearly empty. We went back to Rachel's house to warm up and do another short interview, and by the time we left another shipment of boxes filled with little dresses was waiting on her doorstep.

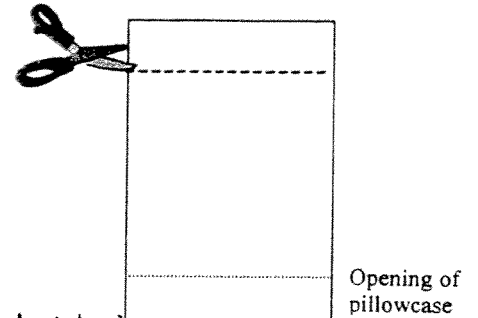
# Pillowcase Dress

## Materials required:

- 1 gently used or new pillowcase
- 2 1/2 yd. double fold bias tape
- 8" elastic, 1/2" wide, depending on size
- Coordinating all-purpose thread

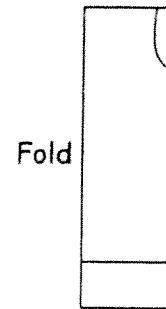
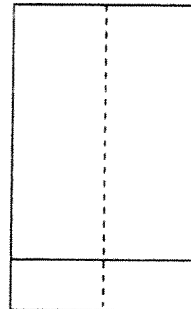
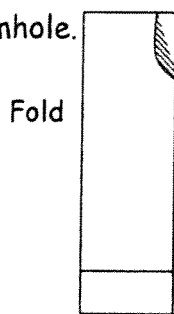
## Directions:

1. Lay pillowcase flat on table and cut off top of the pillowcase.

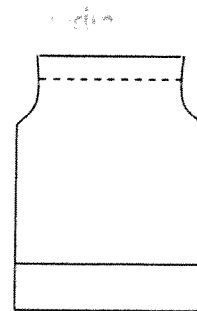


2. Lay pillowcase flat on the table and fold in half lengthwise (like a hotdog). Place and pin armhole pattern on open fold edge.

3. Cut out armhole.



4. Fold top raw edge <sup>3/4</sup> inch down wrong side of the pillowcase. Pin and stitch forming a casing. Repeat on the other raw edge.



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Step 6- start pinning center of bias tape

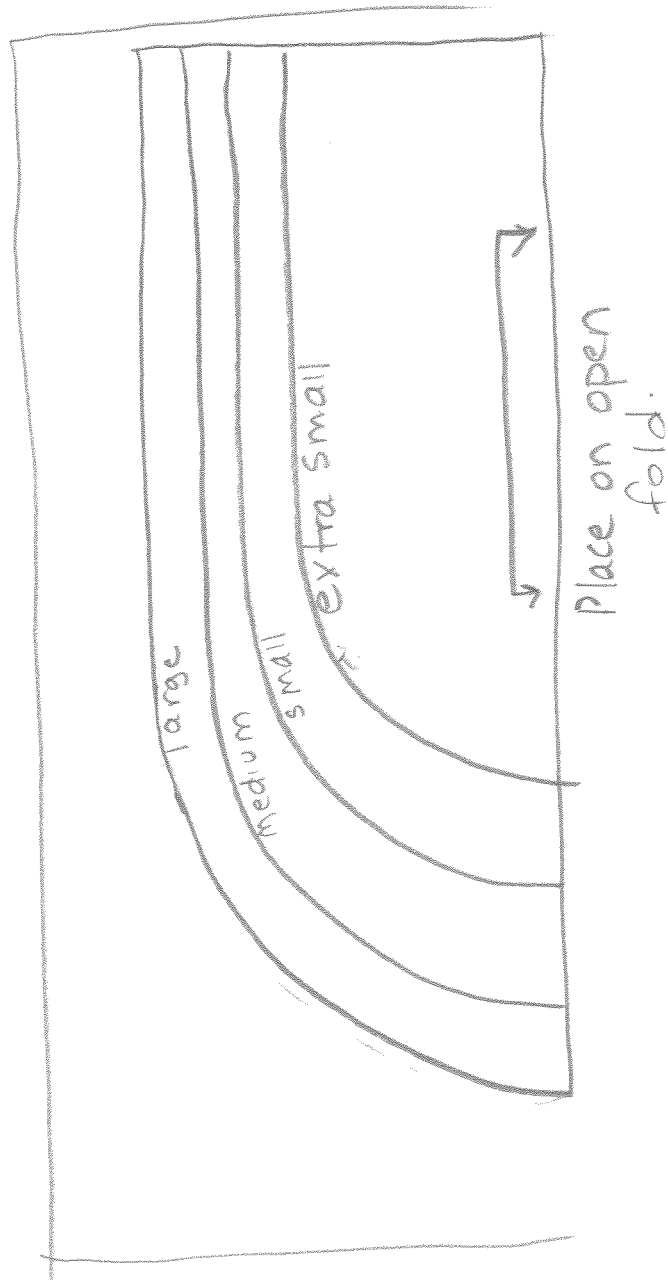
5. Using a large safety pin pull elastic through casing. Make sure to sew elastic to each end of the casing several times to secure elastic. Repeat on the other side.

\*This will create a gather in the front and back of the dress.

6. Cut bias tape in half (two-38" pieces). Open up folded bias tape but do Not press (use folds as guidelines). Mark the half way point on the bias tape (19") and pin to the center of the armhole. Right sides together matching raw edges, and stitch.

7. Refold tape and encase armhole, allowing equal tape extensions at each end of the armhole so ties can be made. The dress will be tied at the shoulders.

# Armhole Pattern



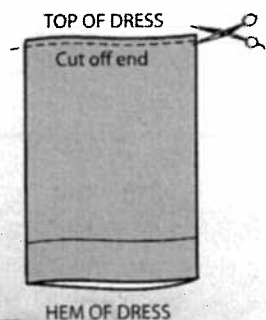
# Pillow Case Dress Instructions

*"We're not just sending dresses, we're sending hope!"*



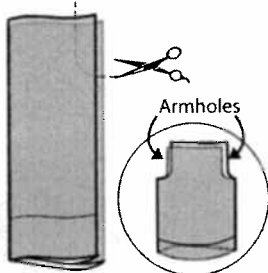
1

Cut off the sewn end of the pillowcase.



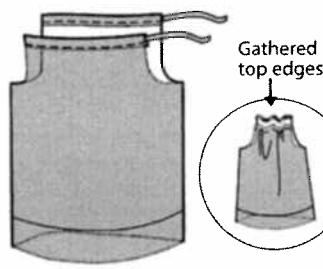
2

Fold pillowcase in half and cut armholes. Cut through all thicknesses, about 4 inches down and 2 inches in.



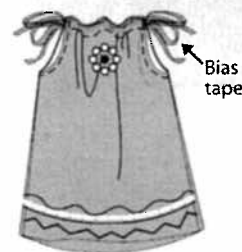
3

Fold down the top about 3/8" at the front and the back. Edgestitch to make a casing. Slide 6 inches of 1/4" elastic through to cause it to gather in the front and repeat for the back.



4

Cut two 38-inch lengths of double-fold bias tape for armholes. Fold each in half and stitch along armholes, leaving extra at the top to tie dress at the shoulders. Trim is optional.



Simple patterns  
**CHANGING LIVES**

*Donations and finished dresses can be sent to:*

**Little Dresses for Africa**

24614 Curtis Drive

Brownstown, MI 48134

734-637-9064

Thank you for your help with Little Dresses for Africa.  
Together, we can make a difference...one little dress at a time.

**Mulungu akudalitseni!**

*God bless your good works!*

Sizing the dresses really helps!

- Small: Infant, ages 2 to 4
- Medium: ages 5 to 7
- Large: ages 8 to 10
- X-Large: age 11 and up

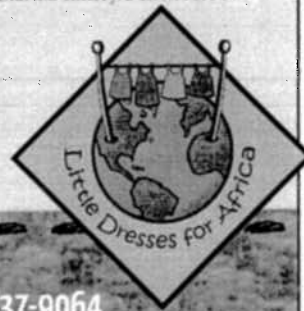
Shorts for boys any size are needed.

Also, any simple pattern is fine to use. Avoid buttons and zippers except as decoration since the children have no way to repair them.

Illustrations By Marika Thierry/Detroit Free Press



[www.littledressesforafrica.org](http://www.littledressesforafrica.org)



For more information on how to get involved, please contact Rachel O'Neill at 734-637-9064.



We're not just sending dresses,  
we're **Sending HOPE**

## How to Get Started

### There's something for everyone to do!

- Start sewing independently or start your own group.
- Donate financially to shipping costs or our other important and life-changing projects.
- Spread the word, blog it, post it, share it.
- Take them with you in your bags when you go on your mission trips. We are happy to mail them to your teams to take in your extra bags for distribution. For dresses for your mission team, have your group contact us.

Check the FAQ for more answers!

### How do they get there?

1. We send them with mission teams
2. We mail them directly to verified organizations
3. We take them personally

But, remember, our job is not complete until these little dresses are actually on the the little girls that need them so desperately. **This is an ongoing project and we send them every week.** We are not going to run out of kids, so please jump in and help us!

### How much does it cost to send them?

It costs an average of \$2.00/dress to get the dresses to the children. Although it is not required, **any amount you can send for shipping costs is very much appreciated.** Thank you in advance for your help! Donations are tax-deductible.

**Pillow case pattern** can be downloaded below, or use any simple pattern. We also need boys shorts desperately. Click here for pillow case dress directions. To confirm your dresses were received, please include a self-addressed, stamped envelope.

### What about pictures of my dresses on the little girls?

Check the gallery for pictures! Due to the amazing response, we can't promise specific pictures of your dress, but maybe you'll get lucky and spot your little dress in a picture on a precious little girl! Either way, trust me, they need and love them!

Thank you so much for your help!

### Finished items and financial donations for shipping can be sent to:

24614 Curtis Drive, Brownstown, MI 48134

or donate online

**Making a difference, here and across the ocean, one little dress at a time!**

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*We're not just sending dresses.*

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## Pillow Case Dress Directions

Following the simple steps below, any size new or gently used pillow case can be quickly turned into a prized possession for a grateful little girl in Africa. Pillow case pattern a suggestion, so feel free to use your own simple pattern and material if you'd rather! **PLEASE NO STRAIGHT PINS!**

Download and print the LDFA Pillowcase Dress Pattern.

**PLEASE SIZE before sending: group small, mediums, large sizes.** Feel free to add pockets or lace! All styles and patterns will be appreciated by the little girls. Avoid buttons and zippers!

We size them by length from the shoulder to the hem.

**Small** = 2, 3, and 4 (16-22 inches long)

**Medium** = 5, 6, and 7 (24-28 inches long)

**Large** = 8,9, and 10 (30-34 inches long)

**X-Large** – size 11 and above (anything over 35 inches long)

Any size boys shorts are welcome. Elastic or drawstring waist works well for boys shorts.

**Be sure to size your dresses before sending! Please!** Include a self-addressed, stamped envelope **so we can notify you that your dresses are received!** Thank you so much for your help! Feel free to use your own simple pattern. Tax deductible donations for shipping costs are also accepted through this site. **Thanks so much for you**

### Dresses can be sent to:

Little Dresses for Africa  
24614 Curtis Drive  
Brownstown, MI 48134

Enclose a self-addressed stamped envelope if you'd like to be notified when they are received.