

or Ken Casey, founder of Ahwatukee's Prickly Piecers quilting chapter, "piecing is my peace."

Casey, a grade-school teacher with the Mesa Unified School district for 29 years, picked up quilting 15 years ago, though he's been sewing since age 10.

"My nanny taught me to sew - I'm sure I was a hyper little kid and driving her crazy. I started with hand sewing - making clothes for my stuffed rabbit," he said. "She bought me my first sewing machine - a Kenmore - when I was 13."

Casey sewed his own clothes, entering several in the Arizona State Fair. He made his own North High School drum major uniform. His skills increased until he was asked to make a bridal gown for a friend's daughter.

"I'll never make that mistake again," he said, laughing. After graduating from Arizona State University and starting his teaching career, Casey took up making stained glass - a pastime that lasted until 1993.

"I got tired of the heat and being cut up and I was complaining about it to my sister when she suggested I try quilting. She said it's a lot like stained glass as you select colors and patterns and place them artistically," he said. "She taught me in three days. I went home and had a garage sale and sold all my stained glass supplies."

As he got more into quilting, Casey wanted to share his knowledge and learn more from fellow piece-makers. He searched for a meeting place, then networked through quilt shops and ran classified ads looking for others interested in quilting.

Now Prickly Piecers has more than 25 members of all skill levels who, as members of the Arizona Quilters Guild, are respected for their fine work and commitment to helping children.

The non-profit Arizona Blankets for Kids and the Juvenile Arthritis Foundation are regular recipients of quilts made by Prickly Piecers.

Lori Terfansky, an administrative assistant at Chandler's Ryan Elementary is one of the club's members. Terfansky started quilting at age 16 after seeing a fine-worked quilt in Los Angeles. She credits Casey for the club's continuing success.

"He's an incredible quilter but as far as color goes, he's just a master," she said. "And he's very patient with helping other people. We all love quilting and want to help each other."

Casey also teaches quilting classes at Zoe's Trunk in Chandler.

Prickly Piecers meet at 7 p.m. every third Thursday at the Desert Foothills Methodist