

Westview students providing comfort to wounded troops

Westview Elementary boxers drive with Sew Much Comfort

ERICA CHRISTOFFER • SUN NEWSPAPERS

With nearly every student at Westview Elementary School wearing boxer shorts outside their pants Nov. 2, it was pretty hard not to notice something big was going on.

For fun and a good laugh? Yes. But the boxers were also reminders that stu-

dents at the Apple Valley school were taking on the task of helping injured troops in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The Westview Elementary School Student Council decided to collect boxer shorts for the nonprofit Sew Much Comfort. Between Oct. 27 and Nov. 22, the council hopes to gather 1,000 pairs through Bulldogs for Boxers.

The items collected will be altered by volunteers to fit injured military personnel.

"We wanted to help the soldiers overseas," said Olivia Schiffman, fifth-grade

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Westview Elementary student council members (from left to right) Olivia Schiffman, Page Nelson and Grace Hoffa helped organize the Bulldogs for Boxers drive, benefiting injured troops overseas through the non-profit Sew Much Comfort. The boxer drive runs through Nov. 22.

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Comfort

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er and Student Council vice president.

Sew Much Comfort, co-founded by Debra Galligan of Apple Valley, Michele Cuppy of Burnsville and Ginger Dosedel of Ohio, adapts clothing to accommodate medical devices and situations, while providing ease of use, personal independence and minimizing the visual impact of their medical condition.

"We have this little treasure right in our own community," said Molly Anderson, Student Council adviser.

Galligan, a mother of three students in District 196, has twins in fifth grade at Westview. She said the boxer drive is a good way for all the students to get involved, while collecting a basic clothing item greatly needed.

"They've taken this whole thing and run with it," Galligan said.

Student Council President Page Nelson said she knew of one girl who has already donated 42 pairs of boxers.

"I really think it's going to exceed our goal," said Page, a fifth-grader.

In the first week of collection, the school received nearly 400 pairs of shorts.

"We thought we could give something back to them (the troops) because they gave freedom to us," said Grace Hoffa, fourth-grade Student Council member.

As a collection incentive, the grade that brings in the most boxer shorts will receive a movie and popcorn party and a

WHAT'S NEXT

What: Sew Much Comfort will conduct an informational workshop 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Saturday, Nov. 18, for those interested in volunteer opportunities. The meeting will be at Church of the Risen Savior, 1501 E. County Road 42, Burnsville. Information: Michele Cuppy at 952-431-6233 or visit www.sewmuchcomfort.org.

night of no homework. So far, fifth grade is in the lead, but third grade is close behind.

And for the classroom that raises the largest number of boxers, those students will receive a visit from a magician.

"We wanted to make sure it was something big," said Anderson.

Westview and Sew Much Comfort is also challenging the community to help surpass reach their goal of 1,000 boxers by making a contribution before Nov. 22. There will be a drop box at the school.

"We can't meet the need," Galligan said. "There are more troops out there getting injured that we just don't hear about."

Wanting to help

Galligan doesn't come from a military family, but she wanted to make a personal impact for the military personnel serving overseas.

Two years ago, Galligan, Cuppy and Dosedel developed the adaptive clothing idea to fit over the metal fixators service members have around their injury. They started with 15 volunteers, and grew to

include more than 2,000 volunteers in the U.S. and Europe.

Sew Much Comfort has supplied 15,000 clothing items to 40 different military medical facilities.

Oftentimes, an injured serviceman's clothes are stripped and they don't have access to new ones for some time. Sew Much Comfort strives to make comfortable, casual clothing to help those troops maintain their dignity and facilitate the healing process, Galligan said.

Boxer shorts are made with new boxers, which open on one side with Velcro added from the waist down.

"It's the foundation of getting dressed," Galligan said.

When the adaptation occurs, the shorts go down a size, so, Westview is asking for large and extra large shorts.

Galligan said it is also important that the colors are fashionable for young men in their 20s - something they wouldn't feel embarrassed wearing.

In addition to boxer shorts, Sew Much Comfort modifies T-shirts, pants and shorts. All the sewing is completed by volunteers, who are organized by 18 regional coordinators. Sew Much Comfort has developed a quality control process and outlines much of the need on its interactive Web site, www.sewmuchcomfort.org.

In August, the company received the Newman's Own Award and was recognized by President George W. Bush Oct. 21.

For more information or to get involved, visit www.sewmuchcomfort.org or contact Westview Elementary, 225 Garden view Drive, Apple Valley, at 952-431-8380.