

Spotlight

Sewing group alters boxers, T-shirts for injured soldiers

Claudine Kriss

News Journal correspondent

About two dozen women from Escambia and Santa Rosa counties are making sure that wounded soldiers can maintain some dignity while encased in bulky casts and other apparatuses.

The members of the Emerald Coast chapter of the American Sewing Guild are busy this month — National Sewing Month — adapting T-shirts and boxer shorts for wounded soldiers to wear.

"Many of the soldiers have to be in these large apparatus for months with no clothes they can wear other than hospital gowns," said Susan Kline, project coordinator.

On Wednesday, the members gathered in the Azalea Room at Baptist Medical Park on Nine Mile Road, cutting 100 T-shirts and 500 pairs of boxer shorts at the seams and sewing in Velcro.

One of the women said she decided to work on the project after hearing about a man who had to accept a medal in front of a large crowd while wearing only a hospital gown because that was all that would fit him.

Kline, of Pensacola, said the T-shirts and boxers were provided by a national nonprofit organization, Sew Much Comfort. Groups across the country are participating in the project. Once the clothing is adapted for the injured soldiers, it will be sent to Landstuhl, Germany, a part of the Ramstein Air Base complex and the largest American hospital outside the United States.

Chapter president Bea Hochmuth of Cantonment said this is the first community service project the chapter has been involved in since she joined two years ago.

"I'm so thrilled we are getting involved," she said.

Kline said her plan is to keep the group involved in community service projects.

Marge Heit of Milton is a charter member of the chapter, which was formed about five years ago. She said the group has done community service projects in the past, but it has been a while. She said the group was struggling until recently when it managed to attract new members such as Hochmuth, Kline and Deila Hiebert of Pace, who were willing to take leadership roles.

Now the chapter, which covers portions of Alabama and Florida, is thriving and has created several smaller segments known as neighborhood groups:



Pamela Whailey with the Emerald Coast Chapter of the American Sewing Guild attaches Velcro to the sides of a shirt that will be given to a wounded war veteran.

Want to help?

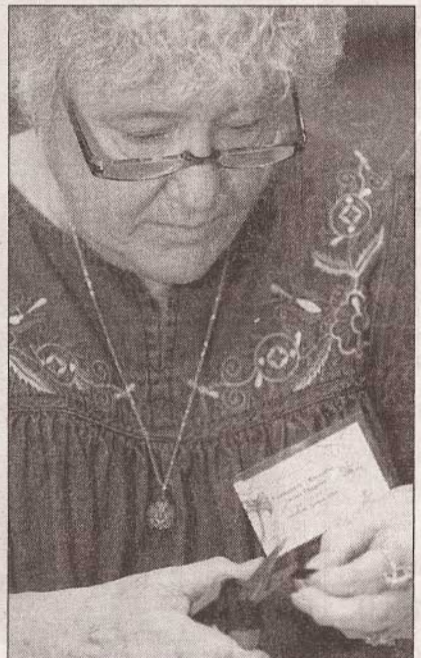
- **WHAT:** Adapt T-shirts and boxer shorts for wounded American soldiers.
- **WHEN:** 9 a.m. to 7 p.m. today.
- **WHERE:** Azalea Room at Baptist Medical Park on Nine Mile Road.
- **DETAILS:** Bea Hochmuth, 937-8951.

■ Material Girlz meets at 1 p.m. on the fourth Thursday of each month at Ken Mudge's Sew and Vac on Pensacola Boulevard. Contact: Pat Miller, 477-8734.

■ Love Sewing Notions No. 9 meets at 1 p.m. the first Saturday of each month at Derrel's of Pensacola on Pace Boulevard. Contact: Karen Hughes, 478-5148.

■ Sew In Fashion will meet on a Tuesday evening to be determined at Fellowship Baptist Church on U.S. 90 in Pace. Contact: Deila Hiebert, 994-2132.

■ The Dorcas group, which is not yet an official neighborhood group, meets at 10 a.m. on the fourth Wednesday of each month at the Quilting Station on Chumuckla Highway in Pace. Heit can be reached at 626-0042.



Marge Heit of Milton cuts Velcro "buttons" that will be attached to T-shirts and boxer shorts, making them easier to put on and take off.