

Citizens Government Academy holds graduation ceremony

By **MATTHEW W. QUINN**
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The Citizens Government Academy held its graduation ceremony at the Griffin Regional Welcome Center Thursday night.

Nikki Hill, a banker with First National Bank, was one of the residents who took part.

Hill said she participated because she wanted to learn more about how the city is managed and how that affects residents.

She said she greatly enjoyed participating.

The ceremony began

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Local woman uses sewing skills to help soldiers

By **VIVIAN MORGAN**
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When it comes to helping injured soldiers who return from combat, one Spalding County woman has found a way to put her seamstress skills to good use. Now, she is looking for others to join the cause.

Mary Harper has a personal interest in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Her son, Lt. Jeff Harper, is an F-18 Navy pilot who has served two tours of duty in Iraq. He's due to be deployed again in November 2009.

But that's not the reason Harper spends much of her time sitting at a sewing machine on the upper level of her home. Her efforts go toward modifying basketball shorts for injured soldiers as part of Sew Much Comfort, a nationwide, volunteer association of seamstresses.

Harper first learned of Sew Much Comfort while watching "The Today Show" two years ago. Co-founder Ginger Dosedel began replacing the seams in her son's pants and underwear with Velcro after he survived cancer and had to wear a fixator on his leg.

"This worked so well, she said, 'Well, what about our troops?'" Harper said. "Now, seamstresses across the country are modifying all types of clothing for injured troops through the association.

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VIVIAN MORGAN/DAILY NEWS

Mary Harper has been sewing clothes for wounded veterans for two years. "It's my charity," Harper said.

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"It gets them out of hospital gowns," Harper said. "And, even after they leave the hospital, they can contact the Web site and let them know what they need. This includes dress pants for work,

whatever. There are seamstresses who do all of that. Free clothing at no cost to wounded veterans."

While all types of clothing are available to wounded veterans, it is jogging shorts that Harper specializes in. That's why she was so excited to share information with a group of Sew Much Comfort seamstresses at Dobbins Air

Force Base about being able to purchase the nylon basketball shorts from Griffin's Sock Shoppe for \$3.95 a pair; while they had been paying \$15 a pair.

The Dobbins group was so impressed that members came down to visit The Sock Shoppe. That's when, Harper said, Bud Turner of The Sock Shoppe donated 80 pairs

of basketball shorts to their efforts.

"The next day they came back and bought 80 T-shirts," Harper said.

Locally, Harper's efforts have not gone unnoticed. While attending a Nov. 8 Veterans Day Celebration at Peach State Aerodrome in Williamson, Civil Air Patrol Cadet Tim Smith collected \$120 from peo-

ple attending the event to help purchase sewing supplies and cover shipping costs.

While Harper sews from her home, she is very much interested in establishing a local sewing group. Peach State Aerodrome has already agreed to donate a room for the group to work.

Once modifications have

been made on clothing items, they are shipped to a warehouse in Ohio, inspected by the staff, and distributed to returning soldiers in military hospitals. The Web site is www.sewmuchcomfort.org and anyone interested in sewing with Harper can call her at 770-227-2248 or e-mail marybharper@earthlink.net.