

BERTHOUD RECORDER



Your hometown paper for 27 years

Vol. 27 No. 18 • MAY 01, 2008

Sew Much Comfort for American Soldiers

By Megan Reece
THE BERTHOUD RECORDER

When Patty Fray and her camping group, the Northern Lights, went to hear Sew Much Comfort's Rocky Mountain regional director Linda Trumble talk, they did not expect her to change their lives. After the group participated in what Trumble calls her "dog and pony shows" about the non-profit organization, Fray's group was moved to donate its time, effort and fingertips to the cause. The group works in close solidarity with Trumble, who says that the seamstresses are fighting a war of their own, and that, "our weapons are our sewing machines."

"This is a small thing we can do to somehow improve a soldier's life," said Fray. The clothing makes being wounded simpler to bear, she added, and it makes it easier for soldiers to receive therapy.

Sew Much Comfort is a nationwide organization that collectively provides altered clothing to American service members who have lost limbs in the line of duty. Volunteers collect new clothes such as boxer shorts, T-shirts and pants and outfits them with Velcro so that the service members' health care providers can easily remove portions of the clothing while caring for the soldiers' wounds. These clothes save the soldiers the awkward inconvenience of having to be completely undressed in the hospital, and provides them with clothes – other than hospital gowns – that can be functional in a healthcare setting.

The clothes also help the soldiers to maintain their own independence, according to Trumble. Instead of being dressed by their mothers or by nurses everyday, they can take "great pride" in being able to do this for themselves.

"It gives them 'a sense of normalcy,'" said Trumble.

Sew Much Comfort started in December of 2004 when a group of military wives provided a pair of "fixator pants" (pants with one enlarged

pant leg that can be completely opened to allow for ease of dressing) to a female service member who had no normal clothes to wear since being injured nine months prior. From there, the organization quickly spread to all 50 states as volunteer seamstresses and contributors stepped up to help out.

"By creating custom adaptive clothing," the website stated, "our hope is to make their recovery more comfortable both physically and emotionally."

Fray and her team of camping women get together as a group to sew for the soldiers, and also work on the project in their own homes. Fray said that the soldiers are often amazed – and very appreciative – of their efforts; most are surprised that anyone would be willing to sew the special clothing for them. Trumble holds two monthly "sew-ins" for "all those local who choose to come." The sew-ins held the second Saturday and Sunday of each month offer an opportunity for seamstresses to get together and socialize while they sew for the soldiers as a group.

Volunteers have joined Sew Much Comfort in droves. Fray says that anyone can help the organization. Donations are always accepted, provided the clothes – boxers and t-shirts are needed most – are brand new. From there, sewing volunteers will alter the clothing, and Sew Much Comfort will ship the new clothes to military hospitals. Trumble calls the response to the organization tremendous. "It's me and 500 of my closest friends," she says.

"These men and ladies are giving parts of their bodies on a daily basis," Fray said. By providing the soldiers with these comfortable, practical clothes, the Northern Lights can come close to thanking them for their sacrifices.

If you are interested in donating clothing or time to Sew Much Comfort, visit the website (www.sewmuchcomfort.org) for more information, or call Patty Fray in Berthoud at (970) 532-1075.