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Sewing to comfort others

Teen hopes 4-H Program will provide clothes to injured soldiers

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If Erin Warren gets her way, her summer will be spend behind a sewing desk at home.

While most 14-year-olds are looking forward to hanging out with friends, Warren wants to sew items that she will never wear.

As part of a 4-H leadership and community service programs, Warren has teamed up with Sew Much Comfort, an organization that adapts clothing to fit soldiers returning from Iraq and Afghanistan with injuries.

Because of their injuries, many of the soldiers cannot wear normal clothing, so seamstresses across the nation replace the stitching in seams with velco to allow the war heroes a chance to dress like normal people.

"I have two cousins and an uncle who are in the military so this project just hit home with me," Warren said. "I didn't want something that was just one afternoon. I wanted something that was bigger."

As the president of the Lone Star 4-H Club, 4-H is not far from Warren's mind. While vacationing in Florida, she learned about Sew Much Comfort and knew it was the program for her.

Sew Much Comfort was started by Michele Cuppy and Ginger Dosedel, who began retrofitting clothing to fit her son who was battling cancer.

"Her son saw on the news that soldiers were being interviewed and they were only wearing hospital gowns," Warren explained. "He could relate to that so he told his mom she should sew some clothes for them. Sew gave a few away and one soldier actually cried because for the first time in nine months she had worn clothes."



Ready to sew

Erin Warren hopes to spend her summer behind a sewing machine, making specialty boxers to give to soldiers who have been injured in Iraq and Afghanistan. Warren hopes to sew 100 pairs of boxers.

(Photo by David Rupkalvis)

Since the beginning, the organization has given away 20,000 pieces of clothing, and there is a demand for an additional 1,000 a week. The biggest need is for an item most people take for granted – boxer shorts. So that is where Warren plans to concentrate her efforts.

“It’s really not that hard,” she said. “You cut out the seams and sew a strip of velcro in their place.”

With the velcro, soldiers who have had limbs amputated or are wearing bulky casts or fixator can still slip a pair of boxers on. Other seamstresses around the country are making shirts, pants and other articles of clothing.

An experienced seamstress herself, Warren chose the boxers because she hopes to get other 4-H members interested in participating on their own. Even someone with little experience can learn to retrofit the boxers, she said.

“I really want to set in place to go statewide,” Warren said. “This summer it will hopefully be district wide and then go statewide.”

Warren will present the program to the rolling Plains 4-H district at the end of June and to the state convention in January. But for now, she hopes to get started locally. To do that, she needs a little help. While Warren is prepared to start sewing, she is hoping area residents can help out by purchasing boxers or donating money so she can buy them herself. Boxers can be purchased in three packs for between \$7 and \$10. Large and extra large boxers are in the greatest demand. The velcro is provided by Sew Much Comfort.

“Personally, I hope to sew at least 100, but if I can get more that would be better,” Warren said.

Anyone who wishes to donate can do so by dropping items off at the Young County Extension Office. The Graham Leader or by calling Warren at (940) 521-0595.

“Soldiers, they’re like real heroes,” she said. “Everyone has super heroes but they’re out there trying to make a difference. I want them to have clothes when they get back from Iraq and Afghanistan.”