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## HRA senior helping wounded soldiers

### Student is involved with Sew Much Comfort

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NEWPORT NEWS—Several people find ways to give back to military members serving overseas, but for Jonathan Underwood, 18, it was personal.

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On Sept. 28, 2011, Underwood's cousin, Christopher Haley, lost one leg below the knee after stepping on an IED (improvised explosive device) in Afghanistan.

Haley, 22, had been on two tours in Iraq, and was serving on his third in Afghanistan.

"One of his fellow soldiers had stepped on an IED, and he (Haley), an army medic, went to help him," Underwood said. "That's when he stepped on a second IED."

Even after being wounded himself, Haley continued to work on his fellow soldier, efforts that earned him the Purple Heart and a nomination for the Silver Star, the third highest military award designated solely for heroism in combat.

Underwood learned about the Sew Much Comfort project after his mother visited Haley at Brook Army Medical Center in Texas.

"When she came home she told me about the clothing they provided for wounded soldiers like my cousin, and I thought it was the coolest thing," Underwood said. "I decided then, I wanted to get involved with Sew Much Comfort for my senior project."

Sew Much Comfort, a nonprofit organization that provides adaptive clothing free of charge to wounded service men and women at every military hospital in the United States, Landstuhl, Germany, and at combat surgical hospitals overseas, was founded in December 2004, according to its website.

"Once I heard about what Sew Much Comfort had done for my cousin, I knew I wanted to give back to others what they'd given him," Underwood said.

For his part, Underwood decided to alter boxers, since they're needed the most for wounded soldiers. But the project also alters shirts, athletic shorts and other items.

"When soldiers are wounded, they have a lot of medical tubing and things they're hooked up to, so to have boxers that can open on one or both sides, makes it easier on them, and allows them to look more presentable

when they have visitors," said Underwood.

To alter the boxers, they're split down one or both sides, depending on the injury, then a Velcro strip is sewn down the side(s), so they can be opened and closed from the sides, rather than having to pull them up.

Underwood's mission is to complete 100 pairs of boxers, a goal teachers at Hampton Roads Academy are helping him reach.

"When Jonathan sent out a flier asking for people to come to his Sew Saturday, I thought it was a wonderful cause he'd taken on for his senior project," said Jan Morgan, kindergarten teacher at HRA.

The first time Underwood sewed a pair of adaptive boxers it took him two hours. Now it takes him about 45 minutes.

I'd never touched a sewing machine before, so it was hard for me at first, said Underwood.

Underwood has received monetary donations from the VFW (Veterans of Foreign Wars) and the VFW Ladies Auxiliary for his project.

A memorable moment for Underwood since he began his project came right after he first started.

"I got a call from my cousin saying he needed a pair of boxers, so I was able to overnight a pair that I'd sewn myself," he said.

Underwood will present his senior project at HRA April 18. It will include video interviews his cousin, Haley, plans to conduct with fellow wounded soldiers to show firsthand how much the items are appreciated.

### **Find out more**

For more information or to donate, visit <http://www.sewmuchcomfort.org> or email [jounder@gmail.com](mailto:jounder@gmail.com).

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