



## Volunteers in Europe Help Wounded Warriors

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By **Christie Vanover/USAG Benelux Public Affairs**

**BELGIUM , Nov. 17, 2008** - The Department of Defense declared November as Warrior Care Month to highlight programs and initiatives available for wounded warriors at the installation level and nationwide.

Accordingly, there are military programs for medical health, mental health, finance, education, family care and more; all designed to support servicemembers through recovery, rehabilitation and reintegration.

While DoD finds these programs instrumental in the positive recovery of the more 35,000 troops who have been injured while serving in Operations Iraqi and Enduring Freedom, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff also recognizes the thousands of volunteers "who give so generously."

During Warrior Care Month, the U.S. Army Garrison Benelux Soldier and Family Assistance Center is educating military families on the local resources available to support warriors, but it is also introducing volunteer programs within Belgium and the Netherlands.

One program that is new to the Benelux is Sew Much Comfort. The non-profit organization provides clothing to wounded warriors recovering at Landstuhl Regional Medical Center, Germany. What makes the clothing unique is that it is all adapted by volunteer seamstresses.

Some wounds restrict servicemembers from sliding a T-shirt over their heads or pulling up a pair of shorts, but the Sew Much Comfort clothes are cut and sewn so they can be opened on either side.

"We have volunteers all over the U.S. and Europe," said Pamela Bartelle, a Sew Much Comfort volunteer here. "We're trying to get a sewing group together here to meet once a month or once a quarter."

"The need continues to grow," she added.

Liz Merkle, an Army wife here saw the Sew Much Comfort demonstration at the Chièvres Post Exchange, which prompted her to volunteer.

She said she will sign up online to receive her seamstress packet complete with materials, patterns and instructions.

"It's a great cause. Plus, I love to sew," she said. "I'm happy to do whatever they need because I know the need is there."

For those interested in helping who can't sew, Bartelle encouraged people to donate clothing to the cause. For example, the SHAPE American High School National Honor Society is collecting clothing at the Chièvres Post Exchange for two weeks and at Grandma's Attic thrift shop.

Bartelle said the seamstresses can adapt T-shirts, basketball-style shorts and boxers, but the clothes must be new and preferably dark in color and in sizes large and extra large.

She also encouraged Soldier and Family Support Groups and other military organizations to get involved by starting their own clothing drive or sewing groups.

Representatives from Sew Much Comfort and the SFAC are visiting Chièvres Garrison, USAG Brussels and USAG Schinnen throughout the month of November.

Visit the Sew More Comfort program Web site at <http://www.sewmuchcomfort.org/> and the Warrior Care Month Web site <http://www.army.mil/warriorcaremonth/> for more information.

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