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## **Metro Schools Care About Wounded Veterans**

Diocese of Arlington Catholic school students are taking a new approach to “sewing” and reaping, literally. Students from seven Catholic schools in Arlington, Alexandria, and Falls Church—collectively known as the Diocese of Arlington Metro Schools—collaborated on a service project dubbed *Metro Schools Care* to further the efforts of Sew Much Comfort, a Minnesota-based organization that adapts clothing for severely injured military veterans. Consisting of primarily athletic apparel, the clothes are tailored to meet the needs of service personnel recovering from amputations and are modified to fit easily and comfortably over their wounds, casts, or prosthetics.

“It’s a great way to give back to all of our troops who have sacrificed for us and who make a difference,” said West Connors, an eighth grade student at St. Ann School in Arlington whose father is an Air Force colonel. According to Connors, there was a lot of excitement for the project at his school because it had a very special purpose, especially amid the holiday season.

Soleil Sykes, a seventh grade student at St. Thomas More Cathedral School in Arlington agreed. “This is a special project because if soldiers get hurt, they can have clothes for Christmas,” she said. “We really appreciate everything they do for us.” Sykes’ father is a lieutenant colonel in the Air Force.

This grateful attitude was expressed by all those who participated in the *Metro Schools Care* project, but one student said the immensity and importance of it is really close to her heart. Sarah Moffit, an eighth grade student at St. Rita School in Alexandria, comes from a military family: Her grandfather was a World War II fighter pilot, her father is a retired two-star admiral, three of her brothers are active duty, and one is at the U.S. Naval Academy. The efforts of Sew Much Care means so much to her because one of her brothers is currently deployed in Iraq.

“I know if my brother got injured, he would be able to live more comfortably without being confined to a hospital gown because of Sew Much Comfort,” Moffit said.

Representatives from each of the seven schools gathered in the parking lot of St. Thomas More Cathedral on November 25<sup>th</sup> to drop off the clothes, which totaled over 800 pieces. The clothes will then be shipped to Minnesota, so modifications can begin.

“Military families are an integral component of our Metro Schools,” said Dan Ferris, the diocesan assistant superintendent who oversees the Metro Schools program. “We are especially proud of these schools not only because of the great things they are doing for our service men and women but because of their very nature. They serve the most diverse student population in the Arlington Diocese with students coming from

affluent as well as economically disadvantaged homes.” Ferris noted that at least a quarter of the 1,800 total students enrolled in Metro Schools are from military families.

The enthusiasm generated by this project extends beyond the students, however. Linda Lacot, principal of St. Charles School in Arlington, is the wife of a retired Army lieutenant colonel. She frequently sees injured soldiers when she visits her doctor at Walter Reed Army Medical Center, and she strongly encouraged her students to secure clothing donations.

“When I go to Walter Reed and see these young soldiers, I am amazed by their positive ‘can-do’ attitude,” Lacot said. “This service project, I’m sure, means a lot to them.”

While the spirit of the project was a promotion of Gospel values, the sense of giving back to those who defend America’s liberties was a real driving force behind the project’s success, which was picked up by Corpus Christi School (Falls Church) seven grade student Michael Norkus whose parents are both Air Force veterans.

“We care about the military, and we want to help them,” he said. “If the military wasn’t here, what would America be like?”

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