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LWR event collecting clothing items for wounded warriors

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LAKEWOOD RANCH — New shoes and clothing items with logos from favorite teams, sporting events, colleges and charitable runs can bring a sense of home to wounded warriors struggling to recover their health.

NBA referee Bob Delaney and members of the Lakewood Ranch Community Fund Board will be collecting donations of these types of new clothing items from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturday and 1 to 5 p.m. Sunday at Polo Grill and Bar on Lakewood Ranch Main Street.

The donated items will then be packaged and shipped to Landstuhl U.S. Military Hospital in Germany where members of the U.S. military wounded in Iraq or Afghanistan are treated.

The patients sent to Landstuhl arrive with virtually no personal items. They can pick up items, like those Delaney and the other volunteers will be collecting this weekend, from the Chaplain's Closet at the hospital.

Delaney, who recently returned from visiting U.S. troops in Iraq, has also visited Landstuhl's Chaplain's Closet, and was moved by the sight of shoes for either the left foot or the right.

Some of the patients have lost a foot in combat, and need only one shoe, a silent reminder of what they have been through, he said.

Marilyn Howard, executive director of the Manatee Community Foundation, said the gift of a polo shirt or hat with the logo of their favorite team can be a great lift for a recovering soldier, Marine, sailor or airman.

"It's just a great cause," she said.

Cash donations are welcome to help pay for shipping and other needs. Checks may be made payable to LWR Community Fund with a notation for Wounded Warriors, Chaplain's Closet.

"I saw the smiles on their faces when they got something with a logo from back home," Delaney said of the troops he has visited.

There will also be a display of some of the uniforms and other items Delaney has received from troops during his visits overseas.

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