



JIM STEVENS/STAFF

War veterans given support

An East Bay woodcarving group makes patriotic cane heads for veterans with combat-related injuries suffered in the Iraq and Afghanistan wars.

Canes

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gle Head Cane Project in 2004 after seeing former ABC "World News" anchor Peter Jennings report on veterans wounded after 9/11.

"So many emotions went through my mind when I saw that report," said Nitz, a member of the Eastern Oklahoma Woodcarvers Association. "You see these young kids badly hurt and you want to reach out. What can you do? I felt maybe just maybe these (canes) would have meaning for them."

According to a Congressional Research study done for Congress in September more than 1,300 soldiers had suffered an amputation in Iraq or Afghanistan from Sept. 1, 2001 to Sept. 1, 2010.

Nitz, with the help of fel-

low Oklahoma Woodcarver member Stan Townsend and the Soldiers Angels organization, has handed out hundreds of canes.

Long Beach resident Jack Park, 72, is credited with helping start the foundation in California after Nitz contacted him about a year ago. The retired Los Angeles firefighter is on the California Carvers Guild board and helped publicize the program at an woodcarver gathering.

In Pleasanton, Hill has completed one cane that is ready to be delivered to a veteran in Washington and is working on a second. The latest cane is for a wounded 21-year-old soldier who lost both his legs in his second week in Iraq.

"It feels good that I could do something to help these guys," Hill said. "There is not much we can do and they are going over there laying it all on the line."