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BATC gets behind tool drive for soldiers

The local group is urging members to donate tools that soldiers can use to improve their living conditions in Iraq.

By Brian Johnson/F&C Construction Writer

The Builders Association of the Twin Cities is encouraging its members to send guns to U.S. soldiers in Iraq. Staple guns, that is. And saws, hammers and other tools.

BATC member and local homebuilder Terry Vogt and his wife Debra, who regularly send care packages to military personnel in Iraq, have asked the builders association to help spread the word about the soldiers' need for carpentry tools and related accessories.

The Vogts came up with the idea of sending tools to troops in the Middle East after hearing from a soldier who requested building-related items for his unit.

SPC Robert Lyle, a framing carpenter from Idaho, told the Vogts that his unit needs tools to improve their living conditions in Iraq. Requested tools include framing saws, saw blades, framing guns and nails, finish nailers and nails, staple guns for exterior use, staples, air hoses, extension cords, tape measures and framing hammers.

Lyle told Vogt that the tools would remain in Iraq for use by other soldiers after his unit is replaced.

The Vogts first met Lyle through *anysoldier.com*, a Web site that serves as a conduit for civilians who wish to send care packages and letters of support to U.S. military personnel serving overseas.

"So many guys don't even get letters," Vogt said. "They really, really appreciate knowing that we care about them. Some of them didn't sign up for this kind of duty."

Sgt. Brian Horn, an infantry soldier with the 173rd Airborne Brigade, came up with the idea of starting *anysoldier.com* while serving in the Kirkuk area of Iraq in August 2003, according to the Web site.

Now stationed in Afghanistan, Horn was inspired to start the service after agreeing to distribute packages addressed to "Any Soldier." Horn passed out the packages to troops who weren't getting mail.

Anysoldier.com was initially set up to benefit soldiers in a specific Army unit, according to the Web site, but was later expanded to include any member of the armed services in harm's way. Overall, more than 115,000 soldiers have been contacted through the site.

Lyle noted in an e-mail this week that it's "very important" for soldiers to hear from people back home.

"It tells us that people do care and lets us make friends from all over the U.S.," Lyle wrote. "I came in the military in 1978 and saw how the U.S. military was treated at the end of Vietnam. That held over for quite a while.

"The morale of the U.S. soldier is important, and right now the people of America are helping to keep that morale

up. I would like to thank all the people who have written and sent care packages to my unit. It really helps. And a special thank you to Terry and Debra Vogt.”

BATC, in an e-mail to its members this week, provided information about the “tool drive.” Vogt said he has already heard from a number of BATC members who have expressed interest in making contributions.

Anyone who wishes to donate is welcome to contact Vogt at (952) 470-0671 or TVHI@MCHSI.com. Or, items can be sent directly to: SPC Robert D. Lyle, Attn: Any Soldier, HHC 116th BCT (FWD), APO AE 09368.

Hennepin County looks at the future of 66th Street

Hennepin County is taking a look at the future of the 66th Street corridor in Richfield.

The corridor, extending from Cedar Avenue to Xerxes Avenue, is a major thoroughfare in the city that connects the Minneapolis St. Paul International Airport area with Richfield’s western boundary with Edina.

The county board has authorized up to \$2 million to study the corridor as part of its Hennepin Community Works Program. The program aims to stimulate employment, strengthen community connections, and coordinate public and private resources, among other goals.

Three major intersections on the corridor — Cedar Avenue, Portland Avenue and Penn Avenue — will receive extra scrutiny.

Hennepin County is partnering with the county’s Housing and Redevelopment Authority, the city of Richfield, and Richfield’s Housing and Redevelopment Authority on the project.

Ellerbe Becket to design Sacramento State event center

Minneapolis-based Ellerbe Becket has been hired to design a multi-use event center at Sacramento State University.

The facility — which will include a large fitness center, a student health center and an intercollegiate basketball arena — will be connected to the university’s existing stadium, which will be renovated as part of a \$120 million project.

Ellerbe Becket’s Minneapolis, Kansas City and San Francisco offices will collaborate on the project, which could allow Sacramento State to host the U.S. Olympic Track and Field Trials in 2008.

San Diego Chargers owner Alex G. Spanos, a real estate developer, has committed \$10 million toward construction of the new center. University officials believe the center will help make Sacramento State a flagship campus of the California State University system.

Officials hope to break ground in summer 2006.