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**Eighth grader organizing care package effort for U.S. troops**

April 28, 2005

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Houghton Lake Middle School eighth grader William "Billy" Nielsen, the son of Mike and Linda Nielsen, is organizing a care package collection for U.S. soldiers serving in Iraq.

"He thought it was something he could do," Mrs. Nielsen said. After she and her son learned about the anysoldier.com website on television he decided he wanted to help American soldiers serving in Iraq. (The website has information about how to send packages and to whom, and is a way for Americans to get a better look at those who are serving in the Armed Forces.)

Each homeroom class has been asked to donate items the troops need, such as snack foods, hygiene supplies and entertainment items. He has also distributed letters to area businesses asking for monetary donations to cover the cost of postage. A 10-pound package will cost \$16.63 and a 20-pound package will cost \$26.07. At an average of \$21.35 per package times 28 homerooms, about \$600 or more is needed to send the packages. Nielsen said any money left over after shipping will be donated to a local charity.

"I'm pretty proud of him" Mr. Duane Updyke, Houghton Lake Middle School science teacher, said. He was not sure who came up with the idea, but said, "I'm just glad they're doing it."

Donations will be accepted until Friday, April 29. Checks may be made payable to Houghton Lake Middle School and mailed to: Houghton Lake Middle School, Attn: Mr. Updyke/Iraq Project, 6001 W. Houghton Lake Drive, Houghton Lake, MI 48629, or dropped off at the school.

Mrs. Nielsen said the packages will be shipped by Pak Mail, which has provided the boxes.

"All of us at the middle school would greatly appreciate it if you would donate some money to help send these packages to Iraq," Nielsen said in his letter. "We would like to be able to send packages the first couple of weeks of May."

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