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## Soldier's mom helps keep troops supplied

By **GAYLE SARAN**  
Jan 24 2007

For a Coupeville woman the simple act of packing a box full of goodies and hygiene products for men and women in uniform is therapeutic. Cathy Caryl has made it her mission to send care packages to those serving in the military in Iraq and Afghanistan.



Gayle Saran

**Cathy Caryl packs a care package for a soldier in Iraq in her home office headquarters.**

Someday it could be for her own son, PFC Erik Newton. Newton is Caryl's surrogate son and is stationed at Ft. Drum N.Y. 10th Mountain Division.

When he joined the Army in July 2006, she realized how homesick he was, so she started sending him care packages. That led her to thinking about those young men and women fighting a war.

"There are thousands of troops that do not have the everyday comforts we take for granted," Caryl said.

"They are living in tents and trailers in the deserts of Iraq and Afghanistan with just the basics for food, entertainment and hygiene products," she said.

Caryl, director of Island County's Central Services and Diana Vaughn, assistant director of Central Services, are spearheading an islandwide effort.

Since November she has sent 35 packages overseas. They are loaded with all types of snack food, toothpaste, lotions, make-up, shaving gel, DVDs, games, books and socks.

She finds the names of those serving in the military through the Website "Any Soldier."

Any Soldier Inc., started in August 2003 as a simple family effort to help the soldiers in one Army unit. Due to overwhelming requests, Any

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Soldier was expanded to include any member of any branch of service who is in harm's way. The Website includes contacts for soldiers on the "Where to send" page.

"Anyone can go to the Website and do what I do," she said. "But I have learned all the ins and outs of how to pack the boxes and submit the paperwork required."

Caryl does all the legwork and collects the donations in her home office. The floor is covered with everything from hair scrunchies and perfume samples to batteries and power strips.

"Although all of our soldiers need our support. We are concentrating on troops who are in harm's way — those living in the worst conditions," she said.

"We are also focusing on our female soldiers as they are in need of specialized supplies that are hard to get or run out quickly," Caryl added. "We send the women items like creams and make-up, anything to help them feel a little more feminine."

There are also requests for small stuffed toys, suckers and school supplies that the troops can give to children.

"The soldiers like to give local children toys and candy," she said.

The list of needed items is long and varied.

"Right now there are requests for cold weather items, like stocking caps and gloves. And they always want socks," Caryl said.

Donated items must be new or unused.

Caryl says by getting contacts through the Website, the packages are going where they are most needed. The cost of sending a package about the size of a sweater box is \$8.10.

"I have learned to really load those boxes. I don't use any packing material; everything in the box is useful," she said.

So far, much of her effort has been at her own expense.

Caryl doesn't expect thanks for what she is doing, but she receives e-mails and letters from soldiers who have received her packages.

Caryl said her plan is to continue to collect donations of goods and put together care packages every week. She said she will be happy to pick up donations from people's homes or businesses.

If you would like to donate funds or items to the effort, contact Caryl at 360-929-2551.