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ADVERTISING



Web site brings soldiers and those at home together

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Members of the United Lutheran Church of Bella Vista have stumbled upon a troop support Web site that can help connect soldiers serving in harm's way to people on the homefront who want to help.

Members of the church found the site, [www. anysoldier. com](http://www.anysoldier.com), while searching for a way to help the troops, member John Cornwell said.

Soldiers volunteer to act as goodwill ambassadors by offering their addresses to collect care packages and distribute them to the individuals in their units who do not receive a lot of mail, Cornwell said.

The site began in August 2003 as a simple family Web site built to encourage people to support any soldier within the 173 rd Army Airborne Brigade while they were in Iraq, the site states. However, the idea soon blossomed, and in 2004 the group incorporated as a nonprofit organization that supports thousands of men and women in any military branch serving overseas.

The church found two soldiers on the site who not only collect supplies for themselves and their units but for the people of Iraq, as well, Cornwell said. Members of the church decided to prepare boxes full of the requested baby blankets, Beanie Babies and dolls for the children of the war-torn country, he said.

The group has already been able to send around 10 boxes filled with

supplies to help ease some of the sorrows of the men, women and children of the country, he said.

The donation drive has been well received by the church's congregation, Cornwell said, and he would like to see other organizations start similar projects to help the troops and people in harm's way.

"The supply chain isn't perfect," he said, noting that care packages can mean a world of difference to a soldier.

Looking at anysoldier.com is a good first step to beginning a support effort, Cornwell said.

"It's a beautiful Web site."

The site contains requests from more than 3, 500 military contacts who, in turn, distribute the materials to approximately 108, 000 service members in more than 15 countries. Some contacts post updates on the site, acknowledging the items they receive; however, giving to the troops without anticipating a response may be the best bet, Cornwell said.

"Don't expect a thankyou note; they are too busy trying to stay alive."

FEEDBACK:

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