Carole Anderson is a financial analyst in Xerox's Intermountain Region (formerly called the Mountain West Region) of the United States Solutions Group.   Several years ago, she began coordinating care packages for soldiers in Iraq and Afghanistan.   Xerox employees from the Mountain West region have donated enough items for 56 care packages in 2007, and 51 care packages in 2008.

Carole comes from a military family – her father, father-in-law, husband and two sons have all served in the military. This has sparked a good deal of her passion for giving back to the troops. Several years ago, Carole started putting together care packages for soldiers at Christmas, and the project has now grown into a year-round activity.

Where did Carole get this idea?   As Carole explains:

Carole and other team members have put together 108 care packages in the past two years.

"Prior to 2000, we participated in columnist Ann Landers' Operation Dear Abby during the holiday season.   When Operation Dear Abby was cancelled due to the 9/11 attack, my son agreed to receive the packages and re-distribute them to unmarried soldiers whose leaves had been cancelled at Fort Bragg, NC. Now we ask the employees at Mountain West Operations to provide the names and addresses of their families and friends stationed in Iraq and Afghanistan.   We also find names and addresses from anysoldier.com, a non-profit website that lists military personnel who are willing to distribute the contents of care packages to their fellow service people."

In 2006, when the Mountain West team had boxes of left-over balloons, Carole saw to it that the balloons made it to Afghanistan, where soldiers distributed them to local children.   According to one soldier, "the kids were just thrilled because they had never seen a balloon before."   (For the full article about the balloons, click here).

Currently, Carole keeps a box outside her office, and when it gets full, she sends out a care package.   She tries to send care packages to soldiers who are family or friends of Xerox people, but for the remaining care packages, she gets addresses from anysoldier.com.   Care-package items typically include magazines, books, snacks, Girl Scout Cookies, toiletries, sunscreen, and cool-aid.   People can also donate money, which Carole uses to purchase items for the care-packages.

One soldier wrote Carole the following thank-you note:

Care package items typically include magazines, snacks, sunscreen, and toiletries. Girl scout cookies are always popular.

"Yesterday, I returned from a week-long mission with the Iraqi Army. We've been starting a support system with the local schools and orphanages […] As I got back to my 'home away from home,' I was delighted to find letters and packages from 'back home.'   It's not that my mission was so tough, or that life is so bad here, I've got it pretty good; it's just that some people took a little time, thought and love, placed in a box and sent it to me. I'm

almost 42, father of 5, seen more hard and unfair punches than most, you'd think I'd be pretty tough, and I am. But your package, along with everything else, made me cry. I sat on my bed with tears in my eyes, knowing that someone took the time to say 'thanks.'"

If you have a family member or friend who is currently serving in Iraq or Afghanistan, please e-mail Carole Anderson.   She will make sure that a care package is sent to that person.

How can you donate? If you or a group of co-workers would like to create a care package, please visit www.anysoldier.com for a list of names and specific requests.   Once you are ready to send the package, you can also obtain an address from the website.

Xerox and the "Let's Say Thanks" program: Send a free postcard to military personnel by visiting LetsSayThanks. Just select an image, type in a message, and hit "send!"