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Wednesday, December 1, 2004

## Reaching out

### Want to give something special this holiday? Write a soldier stationed overseas

**GINA DAUGHERTY** | CIN WEEKLY

At least once a week while her son Jason was stationed in Afghanistan, Donna Millay would write him a letter. It was the highlight of the Army soldier's week.

"Letters are the best thing you can possibly get over there, from anybody," Millay said in a phone interview last Wednesday, as he and several other Army soldiers drove home for Thanksgiving leave from Fort Drum in New York.

"As soon as you see it, you know who it's from. I would picture my mom with a pen - I could see her handwriting and see her at the kitchen table back home."

His mom updated him on the comings and goings of his siblings, nieces and nephews. She would also write to him about her week - the errands she ran, the repairs his father was making to the house, what she cooked for dinner.

Even the most mundane detail would take Millay's mind out of Afghanistan



Holding the many letters from home that he received while stationed in Afghanistan, Jason Millay of Independence is surrounded by his family on Thanksgiving. His mother and father are just behind him to the right. Millay noticed soldiers in his battalion who never received letters or packages during mail call. *David Sorcher/CiN Weekly contributor*

### ADOPT A SOLDIER

We adopted a soldier through Soldiers' Angels at [www.soldiersangels.com](http://www.soldiersangels.com). We will be writing staff sergeant Mike a letter each week and sending him a care package once a month. We'll keep you posted on what life is like for Mike overseas.


### WAYS YOU CAN GIVE BACK TO A SOLDIER

- Adopt one from Soldiers' Angels or Any Soldier Inc.
- Both organizations link

### Find an event

- [Advanced Search](#)
- [Submit an event](#)

### Email this story

-  [Email to a friend](#)

### It's Your CiN

- [The Last Word](#)
- [Staff Blog](#)
- [You Tell Us](#)
- [Dear Doug](#)
- [Ask Rocco](#)

### Promotions

- [Tickets to see comedian Heywood Banks](#)
- [Clau Your Wall](#)
- [CiN Live 12/08/04](#)
- [CiN Cook & Win!](#)

### CiN Weekly's Picks

#### Dining



- My Three Chefs**  
[Queensgate]  
Have a two-course dinner customized to your tastes.
- More Dining**
- [Boxed wine](#)
  - [Quick bites](#)
  - 2 for \$20: [Lebo's](#)
  - CiN cooks: [Opa!](#)
  - [Favorite dish](#)
  - [Reheated](#)

#### Music



- Free jazz**  
[Northside]  
Enjoy entertainment from Northside Tavern's ensemble tonight at 10.
- More Music**
- [Youth orchestra](#)
  - [Forbidden Music: Silenced Voices](#)
  - [Steel Drum Concert](#)
  - [Slick 57](#)

### Kids & Family

and into his family's house in Independence.

There are approximately 158,000 troops in Iraq and Afghanistan. And while there are many soldiers liklay who have family and friends to send him letters and care packages, there are many who do not.

Millay noticed soldiers in his battalion who never received any letters or packages during mail call.

"If we saw someone who didn't receive any mail or packages, we would tell our family, and they would send them packages," he said. "That was with everybody. A lot of people did that for different soldiers."

### HELPING OUT

Organizations such as Soldiers' Angels and Any Soldier Inc. link civilians to soldiers who would like to receive mail. It's as easy as filling out an online form and receiving a soldier's information through e-mail.

After we filled out a request form with Soldiers' Angels - an organization started in 2003 by the mother of a soldier for other soldiers who do not receive mail - the information for staff sergeant Mike (we're keeping his last name private) arrived in our inbox within 12 hours. All we know from the e-mail about Mike is that he is stationed overseas and wants mail. That's good enough for us.

civilians to soldiers.

[www.soldiersangels.com](http://www.soldiersangels.com)  
[www.anysoldier.us](http://www.anysoldier.us)

• Operation USO Care Package  
[www.usocares.org](http://www.usocares.org)  
Provides information on how to send a care package to U.S. soldiers

• Defend America  
[www.defendamerica.mil](http://www.defendamerica.mil)  
Information from the U.S. Department of Defense on how to show your support

### WHAT SHOULD YOU SEND?

Soldiers love to get mail, just like everybody else. When writing letters, introduce yourself, keep things positive and ask general questions about what he or she does in the military.

Even more than letters, soldiers love care packages with baby wipes, snacks, CDs, books, personal hygiene items, eye drops and lip balm.

Jason Millay, a soldier in the Army who was stationed in Afghanistan, lists these items as perfect for care packages:

- baby wipes
- snacks
- tobacco products (if the soldier smokes)
- items from home, such as newspaper clippings, sports scores, magazines, pictures and descriptions of the weather



### Annie, Jr.

[Downtown] Special school performances of The Children's Theatre's musical today through Wednesday.

### More Kids & Family

- Krohn's bloom
- Story times
- St. Nick is coming

Soldiers' Angels and Any Soldier Inc. encourage people to write to the soldier weekly as well as send a care package twice a month with snacks, baby wipes, powdered Gatorade and personal care items.

Millay said baby wipes were invaluable to him. "You get dirty, and you can't shower. Trust me, you just want something to wipe down with," he says.

Donna Millay also sent photos to her son.

"He just loved getting pictures from us, especially ones of the kids, his nieces and nephews," she said. "I wrote him because he is my son and he was over there and I was way over here, and I know that he enjoyed those letters."

Soldiers can now e-mail, blog and use cell phones to contact home, but Millay said none of them compare to the feeling he got when a letter or package would arrive. And having to leave a message on an answering machine before a mission was hard on him.

"You can't get a hold of anybody and you think about that on the mission," he said. "But then all of sudden, there is a letter, and that's the best thing. It means more than they probably will ever know."

Millay will return to Fort Drum after the holidays. He will likely be deployed to Iraq early next year.



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