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Duo seeking community help in mailing gifts to soldiers

By Brittany Edwards
brittany@jrpress.com

A mother and daughter duo wish to ensure that each soldier overseas receives mail during the holiday season. They need the community's help shipping the gifts.

Peggy Jones and her daughter, Stephanie McCoy, are collecting items and letters for the soldiers listed on the Web site www.AnySoldier.com.

"It's heartbreaking how the soldiers are that far away from home and nobody sends them stuff," McCoy said. "It's a tremendous moral booster for our troops."

Any Soldier Inc was launched by an American soldier to help care for his soldiers in August 2003. It is a listing of volunteer service members stating the needs and wants of their units.



The mail is addressed to the volunteer member listed on the Web site with the tag line "ATTN: Any Soldier." The military personnel receiving the package then distributes the contents to soldiers in their unit who receive little mail.

AnySoldier.com lists more than 700 contacts from all military branches. The Web site highlights items the units request and journal entries from the soldiers. Donators are asked to read the entire site before sending mail. Because the mail is addressed to a specific soldier, it is not unsolicited.

"Nobody has heard about this site," Jones said. "It's something people should know about, and hopefully others will send things."

McCoy, Veedersburg, started the local effort when she put her Cub Scout group to work making stockings and writing letters to the soldiers. She also utilized her daughter's pre-school class, asking them to draw pictures for the soldiers.

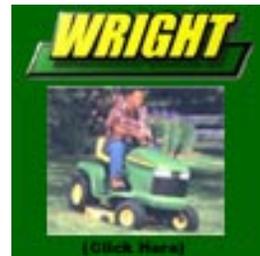
"I don't know how anybody could read their stories and not care," McCoy said. "My mother went on a mission and it's grown into this."

Jones and McCoy now need help raising money to ship the gifts and letters. To send a 70-pound box, the postage costs \$122. In order for the packages to arrive before Christmas, they must be postmarked by Thursday.

Wal-Mart and Covington IGA both donated \$50 gift cards to the local fundraiser. Wal-Mart Optical Lab associates helped by donating a couple of large boxes full of useful presents. Family Video associates agreed to collect money.

McCoy selected Capt. Thomas Barnett's unit of more than 100 soldiers to send packages to. Jones chose Staff Sgt. Jim S. Howard and his 15 men. The group lost their first leader to a roadside bombing in October. The soldiers often give toys and candy to the children and hardly ask for much.

Many of the soldiers are in dire need of hygiene products. Other popular requests include CDs, hand-warmers, warm socks, gloves, toys for children and reading material. Letters and cards are inexpensive, yet priceless



contributions to the soldiers.

The twosome plan to continue the effort after the holiday season. The soldiers deserve support and thanks year-round.

“It’s really important,” Jones said. “A lot of soldiers don’t get mail. It means the world to them. Let them know you care and appreciate what they are doing. If it wasn’t for them, where would we be?”



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