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Family reads of ideas for military

Monday, September 04, 2006

A library book inspired a Jackson family to spend part of its summer supporting military servicemen.

Nancy Osterhaus, mother of Ellen, 9, and Kenny, 13, said ideas in the book "Great World War II Projects You Can Build Yourself" prompted her children to create soldier care packages.

"The book contains activities, trivia and information about soldier care-package projects," said Osterhaus. "Both Ellen and Kenny chose to use their own money to send care packages."

To earn money for the project, Ellen picked blueberries with her mom at Sotd's Berry Farm, then spent an afternoon making blueberry jam. She offered her homemade treat to neighbors in exchange for donations to her cause, raising \$27. Kenny, 13, used a portion of his lawn-mowing earnings to buy items for a care package.

The kids chose soldiers to adopt from a list of active military personnel available at www.AnySoldier.com, a Web site that provides soldier contacts and wish lists.

Ellen selected Michigan resident Sanjay Gogate, who's serving in Iraq. She sent Gogate items he'd requested on the Web site, including candies, protein

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bars and jalapeno peppers.

Kenny's interest in the Air Force prompted him to chose Airman Turvon K. Casey, who's stationed in Afghanistan. Casey received the reading materials and junk food he'd requested.

The family mailed their care packages using free shipping materials from the U.S. Postal Service.

Sibling lifesavers

Vivian Signor is proud of how her grandchildren responded to a recent family medical emergency.

Signor's grandson Austin Slusser, 10, woke in an asthma attack Aug. 6. When a breathing machine set up by his mom, Kandy Slusser, didn't lessen the severity of his attack, siblings Matthew Hemminger and Robin Hemminger were quick to help.

"Austin collapsed while my daughter Kandy went to get dressed," Signor said. "She came back to find him passed out with no life in him."

Kandy Slusser dialed 911 and was instructed to roll Austin off his stomach, something she wasn't able to do because of her recent shoulder injuries. Older brother Matthew, 16, quickly took charge, rolling Austin over and clearing his airway.

"I'm real proud of Matthew for keeping his cool and handling such a scary situation," Signor said.

Austin was taken by ambulance to Foote Hospital and later taken to Sparrow Hospital, where he was hospitalized for three days. During that time, Signor said granddaughter Robin Hemminger, 17, worked hard to care for younger brothers Bruce Slusser, 9, and Damien Slusser, 6.

"These kids deserve recognition for all they did during our family's emergency," Signor said. "I'm real proud of them."

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