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Pocono Life

## Web sites, coupons can help soldiers

March 08, 2006

In a recent column I wrote about using coupons ethically, such as paying attention to expiration dates and being careful to use unexpired coupons. However, most of us cut out more coupons than we use and then face the dreaded task of clearing the expired coupons out of our organizers.

Did you know that you can actually turn your trash into someone else's cash? Overseas military base shoppers can use coupons up to six months after their expiration date. Because military families overseas do not get coupon circulars in their newspapers, they do not have a ready source of coupons as we do. But their military base stores commissaries do accept coupons, and most military families would appreciate being able to stretch their dollars.

In response to this obvious need, Martin Sloane, who once wrote "Supermarket Shopper," started a wonderful initiative to help get our expired coupons to military families overseas. He listed the addresses of military contacts where we could send our expired coupons on his Web site. Unfortunately, in his retirement he will not maintain his Web site.

Tools



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Many of you have asked me to provide a listing of addresses for military contacts that will distribute our expired coupons to overseas military families. In response to readers' requests, several military contact addresses are listed in the "Help Others... Easily" section of my Web site, [www.couponmom.com](http://www.couponmom.com).

One reader gave me a smart tip for saving on postage costs when mailing coupons overseas: "My daughter and family are in Germany where her husband is in the Army. I've been told that it takes forever for even first-class mail to get there since it goes by boat. Priority mail is best because it goes by air. You can stuff a ton of coupons in a priority mail flat rate envelope and send for less than \$4." Thank you for that tip, Kathleen!

Another great way that coupon users can help our military personnel is to take advantage of a helpful Web site called [www.anysoldier.com](http://www.anysoldier.com). One family started [anysoldier.com](http://anysoldier.com) in August 2003, and it has grown to serve more than 108,000 military contacts stationed in 58 states and countries. It provides information on how we can help soldiers and gives us an easy way to communicate with them.

Be sure to read their "Frequently Asked Questions" page to help you understand how to use the site and how to help soldiers with the site's information. Here are some of the basics:

- Find a unit's contact name on the "Where to Send" page. One volunteer contact from each participating unit provides information to the site. These volunteer contacts will distribute any letters or packages sent to soldiers who do not get much mail.
- You can find complete lists of much needed items, including various personal care items, food, reading materials, exercise videos and many other common items that are in short supply in the soldiers' various units. Every week, there seems to be at

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Your  
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...but one item at each store that is free, or practically free, with a coupon at most of our grocery stores. The national drugstore chains are also a great source of items that soldiers need. We can help our soldiers easily with our coupon deals!

- You can enter an item name in the search box, and you will get a list of soldiers who have specifically listed that item on their request list. This feature is very handy when you see an item on sale with a coupon that is free or practically free that week. Check the site to see who needs it, and buy as many as you can with coupons.

For example, I entered the word "bar" because several brands of nutrition and energy bars are free with a coupon at my local store, and I got a list of 624 contacts that had requested power bars, energy bars and granola bars, for example. I found that entering just one general word "bar" as compared to "nutrition bar" helped find the most contacts. I found a high number of requests for many other "coupon-able" bargains, including toothbrushes, shampoo, pudding cups, toothpaste, canned soups and many more items that any coupon user could get for only pennies.

Stephanie Nelson shares her savings tips as a regular contributor on ABC News' "Good Morning America." You can find more of her savings tips in her book "The Greatest Secrets of the Coupon Mom" and on her Web site at [www.couponmom.com](http://www.couponmom.com). She can be reached at [shoppingmom@unitedmedia.com](mailto:shoppingmom@unitedmedia.com).

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