

ONLINE

Gillette's
choice for news

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Gillette woman collects items to send to soldiers in Iraq

When Sue Todd goes to Walgreens drug store, she has a specific shopping list. But none of the items on it are for her.

She carries with her a printed list from a Web site that caters to the needs of soldiers serving overseas in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The 70-year-old Gillette grandmother has made it her mission in life over the last few months to make sure that those in the U.S. military don't feel ignored while they are serving overseas.

Todd has visited the Web site, www.anysoldier.com every day for the past eight months. She peruses its list of soldiers, reading lists of things they need.

Whenever she finds a soldier with a list of supplies she can meet, she downloads the lists and contacts the soldiers through e-mail to get their mailing addresses.

Once she has the address, she collects the supplies and sends them a box containing all of the items.

"Anytime that I see a name on that site, and I read what they need, and if I feel like I can fill that box, then I mail it to them," she said.

Todd found the site when she ran a search for "Iraq soldiers" at home. Since then, she has learned all she can about the site and helping soldiers.

She was interested because her grandson, Sgt. Chris Urman, is stationed in Kirkut, Iraq. Urman, the son of Steve and Dana Urman, has four months of service remaining.

She knew that Urman got plenty of boxes from family members, but many of the other soldiers did not.

Todd wanted to rectify that situation.

She started compiling lists and telling everyone she knew of the soldiers' needs, hoping

to get others involved. While some people do help soldiers through that Web site or other sites, most people would rather hand her money to buy supplies for the boxes she sends.

"I really don't want this on me," Todd said. "I want other people to hear about anysoldier.com."

She talked about a restaurant owner in Virginia who placed a box inside his three establishments for people to donate items for the soldiers through the site. She said he places a list above the box every day and when the box is full, he ships it to the soldiers.

She said the Web site president, Marty Horn, had to give up his day job to run the site full time.

Todd gets her rewards from soldiers who have shown their gratitude by sending her Christmas card thank-you notes.

That keeps her going to find more soldiers and fill more boxes for them.

Todd visited the Web site Thursday morning and found a new soldier to send a box to.

"It's the most rewarding thing I've ever done," Todd said. "I love it."

How to help

— Soldiers like snacks and goodies but personal hygiene items are the biggest priority. Toothbrushes, toothpaste, deodorant, soap and foot powder are some items in great demand.

— If a package is labeled "Attention Any Soldier," the receiving soldier knows to share the contents with the rest of the soldiers in his or her unit or to a soldier who needs it the most.

— To help, visit www.anysoldier.com. The Web site accepts monetary donations to help fill those needs and also allows browsers to send boxes to military personnel. The site requires viewers to input their e-mail address before an actual mailing address is given. The site also uses a "success stories" page for examples other people have given.

By J.D. STETSON News-Record Writer
