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News:

### Supporting the troops: Newman Smith students adopt airman unit

By Katy Moore, Staff Writer

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As the school year draws to a close, a group of Newman Smith High School students are doing their part to support U.S. troops deployed in Afghanistan.

Catie Moore, a history teacher who began teaching with the district only this year, said she was looking for an opportunity to help her students connect current events to historical ones when the idea of adopting a group of U.S. troops came up.

Moore said she was teaching a unit on World War I when her students watched a film on the historical period in U.S. history. Moore said the slogan for troops headed to Europe was "be back by Christmas," and that reflected a reality her students were starting to understand about the current conflicts in the Middle East and Afghanistan.

The more the students talked about the troops stationed abroad, the more they wanted to help. When someone suggested sending care packages, the students took on a freedom mission of their own - namely one concerned with supporting U.S. troops.

Moore said a few minutes spent searching the Internet led her to [www.ansoldier.com](http://www.ansoldier.com). The organization was started by the family of Sgt.

Brian Horn, who was serving in Iraq with the 173rd Airborne Briage.

Horn's family sent him care packages to show support, but eventually learned that their son was passing around the contents of his care packages from home to the other troops in his unit, since not everyone had the same support system at home.

According to the organization background on the Web site, Brian's father, Marty, served in the Vietnam era and didn't want his son's peers to feel the same lack of support he felt during that era.

The group also operates [www.anyairman.com](http://www.anyairman.com), [www.anymarine.com](http://www.anymarine.com), [www.ansailor.com](http://www.ansailor.com) and [www.anycoastguardsman.com](http://www.anycoastguardsman.com). Troops from all the military branches are able to submit requests online for hygiene items, batteries, phone cards and even toys and school supplies which are distributed to local families as part of humanitarian efforts in these war-torn regions.

One airman noted in his request that wrapped candy, toys, clothing and small gifts endear local civilians to the troops, who, in gratitude, "keep a watchful eye for trouble outside the wire."

Moore said her students are beginning to have an understanding of war they previously didn't possess. Her students have adopted an air unit stationed in Afghanistan. Moore said the unit is not trained

for land combat. The unit, comprised of 23 men and five women, has requested sanitary items, snacks, squirt guns and other items, which help break up the monotony of the day-to-day conflicts they face.

"They put in their letter that every day is kind of like groundhog day," Moore said. "They wake up every day to dust and sand."

Moore's students have involved their families and word has spread about the effort to support the troops. When sophomore Whitney Reynolds told her mother about the project, he mom wanted to pitch in. The two went to Sam's Club and bought candy, gum, cookies, Dove body wash, fruit snacks and sunflower seeds in bulk and brought it to Moore's classroom.

Reynolds said her grandfather died during World War II but in his letters to his family often commented on the lack of supplies and described the conditions he was experiencing. While Reynolds said she knows U.S. troops aren't likely facing the same conditions, they nonetheless need support from home.

"People lose their friends and family over there," Whitney said. "It's hard enough being there already and then to not have the supplies you need is even harder."

Another student said her uncle had served in a tour in Iraq and often said he enjoyed listening to music. Sophomore Andrea Kytte said she remembered her uncle's appreciation for the CD of the school's orchestra. Kytte plays the violin in the orchestra and brought in music to send to the troops as her contribution, at her uncle's suggestion.

"Some people don't have families and they're over there fighting for us," she said, explaining why she thought the project was important. "I just think we need to give back to them."

Moore said this project has allowed her students to become more selfless and to think about both the U.S. troops stationed abroad and the humanitarian issues brought about by the war. Requests for school supplies, small toys and wrapped candy are common, since they can be given to children in the region.

"It's kind of blown up into something I didn't expect," Moore said. "I just wanted to show my kids a way to connect with something today. They've been able to take the time to be very selfless."

Contact staff writer Katy Moore at [kmoore@acnpapers.com](mailto:kmoore@acnpapers.com) or 972-628-4087.

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