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Supporting our troops: Goin' Postal promoting patriotism, service to soldiers

By Linda Braden Albert
of The Daily Times Staff

A Maryville shipping center is doing much more than the mailing, shipping, copying and other services usually provided. It is also giving the public a way to support soldiers overseas through its Care Packages for Soldiers program and by being a drop-off site for Cell Phones for Soldiers.

Robert and Inessa Sloan, owners of Goin' Postal at 1776 W. Lamar Alexander Parkway, opened the store on May 7. They immediately began looking for ways to support the community. Supporting soldiers was one of these projects.

"This thing we pretty much made up ourselves," Robert Sloan said. "It's really not through a program. There's a Web site called anysoldier.com, and it allows us to connect directly to soldiers. We actually send directly to soldiers instead of through an agency."

Inessa Sloan said this allows the public to focus on what the soldiers need. A volunteer posts pertinent information and then distributes the items when care packages arrive.

Anysoldier.com allows people to search for soldiers according to state, Robert said. "Then we can target who to send it to. It will say in the unit how many soldiers they have, maybe 10 male and 10 female, and then they compose a list of items they need to help them live a little better."

The public may leave items at Goin' Postal, including foods (no pork or pork by-products); personal items such as baby wipes, toilet paper, soap, Chapstick, baby powder; practical items, including batteries, phone cards, paper and envelopes, CDs and DVDs; feminine hygiene products; and items for the soldiers to distribute to children, such as shoes, small toys, stuffed animals, school supplies and children's sunglasses. A complete list is available at the store.

"They mostly ask for snacks," Inessa said. "Also books, DVDs and candles."

Odors are a big problem, Robert said. "A couple of them had said the odors over there were bad, so air fresheners and that kind of stuff is good. Anything not pressurized is good to send."

When enough items are collected, the Sloans package them and ship them to the volunteer coordinator through the United States Postal Service. They pay the packing and shipping charges, but a donation jar is available for those who want to help defray these costs.

In addition, Goin' Postal is a drop-off site for used cell phones to be recycled through the Cell Phones for Soldiers Program. This program was started by two Massachusetts teenagers who read a story of a soldier who ran up a huge phone bill calling home. They began collecting donations of funds as well as old cell phones, which are recycled for cash and the proceeds used to buy calling cards for soldiers serving in the Middle East.

Inessa said, "We decided to do these programs because we wanted to help the soldiers. We have a lot of



Daryl Sullivan/The Daily Times

Goin' Postal, 1776 W. Lamar Alexander Parkway, Maryville, provides free shipping for soldier care packages. A list of suitable items is available at the store. The public can leave the items at Goin' Postal, which will then pack and ship them to soldiers free of charge. Used cell phones may also be left for recycling.

To get involved

Soldier care package items may be left at Goin' Postal, 1776 W. Lamar Alexander Parkway, Maryville. The items are shipped free of charge directly to soldiers, whose names are obtained from anysoldier.com. A list of items is available at the store. Used cell phones may also be left for recycling through the Cell Phones for Soldiers program. For more information, contact Goin' Postal owners Robert or Inessa Sloan at 379-5440.

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