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Woman sends 19,500 letters to soldiers overseas

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RIFLE - For Rifle resident Cathy Meskel, every word, every letter she writes fits into a larger effort to try and reach as many soldiers in Iraq as

she can.

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Owning a pet store in Rifle, Meskel surrounds herself with life. She has made it her life mission to help those who put their lives on the line.

"I know it's a really bad situation over there but if I can personally do something to make a difference, to make a difference in those peoples lives that's what I intend to do," says Meskel.

Days after the war in Iraq began, Meskel started writing letters to soldiers. That was four years ago. Today she says she has written and mailed 19,500 letters to men and women serving in Iraq or Afghanistan.

"Just to make those guys know that someone is thinking about them and praying for them," Meskel said.

She writes one letter generally about her family and life in Rifle, then copies that letter many times before mailing it in bulk. Maskel hopes others will do the same so that no soldier goes without mail.

"I write a letter to the soldiers because there's so many soldiers that go to the mail call and receive absolutely nothing," said Meskel.

Meskel's letter campaign actually started when she was a child, and sent a few letters to soldiers during the Vietnam War, and then she sent letters during the Gulf War.

In return Meskel has received certificates from combat units, as well as several pictures of soldiers all of which are now placed on her wall of honor.

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Meskel has also received several hundred letters and e-mails from those soldiers who have received one of her letters.

"I probably have 300 or 400 e-mail addresses from soldiers that have e-mailed me to keep in touch," Meskel said.

She says if you want to write a letter, don't worry about it being perfect, just put something to paper and mail it.

"They don't care what the form looks like, all they want is something that says, 'You know what? Tell me about you,'" says Meskel.

If you would like to send a soldier a letter you can do it, by going to www.anysoldier.com.

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