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Online Campaign Partners Americans With Troops

by Wendy Cloyd, assistant editor

One soldier's family helps thousands serving in the war on terror.

Marty and Sue Horn started AnySoldier.com in August 2003 as an effort to reach out to their son, Sgt. Brian Horn, who was serving in Iraq as well as soldiers in his unit who weren't receiving mail from family or friends.

"My son was in a desperate situation — him and his entire unit — which was not a real surprise," Marty Horn related to CitizenLink. "At the very beginning of this war he was one of the thousand men that parachuted into Northern Iraq. Use a little imagination and you know it's going to be hard on them because they were the only unit up there.

"We were sending him what we could," he said. "Then during one of those rare phone calls he told my wife, 'Can you send more stuff? Because I'm passing out a lot of it to the guys around me who don't get any mail.' "

And so AnySoldier.com was born.

"I built a very simple Web page and I told everybody I knew, 'Here's a way to support some soldiers,' " Horn said. "And it just took off like crazy."

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According to the Horns, receiving a letter or a care package can be a real morale booster for men and women far from home.

The AnySoldier.com effort is about support, not just "stuff."

"This is not about whether you support the war or not. These are mothers, fathers, daughters, sons — these are our people," Marty Horn said. "A simple letter is the most important thing that you could possibly send a troop over there."

Though the campaign initially included only the Army, he expanded the effort last year to include all branches of the armed forces. Packages addressed to "Any Soldier" are given to those who ordinarily don't receive mail.

The response has been overwhelming.

"Since we've started this we've had over 11,000 contacts," Marty Horn said. "We currently have 3,800 and they all write stories to us — everything from a simple thank you from an infantry soldier to a full bird colonel who's trying to rebuild an orphanage."

Horn's son has posted reaction from the receiving end on the site, as well.

"The 'Any Soldier' campaign has seen tears from some, given hope to most and has been inspirational to us all," Brian Horn wrote. "Your relentless support has provided the simple reminder that any one of us would proudly die for a grateful nation in our ongoing fight against terrorism."

The site lists the needs and names of thousands of men and women serving in the armed forces.

A chaplain wrote that not only do the letters and packages mean a lot to the troops, extras they receive provide the opportunity to reach out to the Iraqi people.

"Socks and gloves are also good for what we do not use we give to local civilians," he wrote. "(We) went on a humanitarian trip several days ago and many of the children did not have socks or shoes to

wear. (It) was tough for it was at least 32 degrees out — the water had iced up in places."

One sergeant wrote: "We have no PX here because of the location and for a lot of us here this is our second deployment. We do have a microwave and chow-hall food is not that bad. I guess the main reason why I am submitting this is because a lot of my soldiers do not get mail. And now that it is close to the Holidays morale is getting a little low. A card or a package can help brighten anyone's day. We love anything that is from the States and we have a long road ahead. Thank you."

Marty Horn said that as Christmas fast approaches, he knows some will wonder if it is too late to send items for the holiday.

"The soldiers are going to be there all year round, and they need the support all year round," he said. "So if you miss the holiday season, no worries. Send it after the holidays or any time during the year."

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

[Click here to visit AnySoldier.com.](#)

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