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Support for troops grows in Pacifica

By Kelly Molloy

It started off in January 2004 as a search on the Internet. Looking for a way to support the troops in Afghanistan and Iraq, I typed "soldier into the search engine and the AnySoldier.com site appeared. The site was started by the Horn family in Maryland. It was their effort to help support their son Brian and his fellow soldiers. What started as a small site supporting seven soldiers has since grown into an impressive list that literally reaches thousands of enlisted men and women.

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After reading every posting on the site, my two young daughters and I picked a name and got to work. We went to the store and bought batteries, candy, puzzle books, sunflower seeds, baby wipes anything we thought would be useful. I wrote a letter, "Dear American Soldier Sammy Rose drew a picture of a purple fairy and Alli sketched a Harry Potter card. We packed it up with love and drove to the post office. Little did we know that sending that one box would be the beginning of an almost daily project in the lives of our family, friends and colleagues.

Soon, we began to receive letters back from the recipients who were all young, grateful, patriotic, loyal Americans who seemed to be touched that a little family in Pacifica would take the time to send them



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love in a box. My daughters drew more pictures and we wrote more letters. We sent postcards of the beautiful Pacifica beaches and the Golden Gate Bridge. I wrote my first of three letters to the Editor at the Tribune telling people of the AnySoldier.com website and encouraged Pacificans to participate. The ever helpful and cheerful staff at Linda Mar and Manor post offices handled every box with care and honor. By the end of the summer, our family had sent about 20 packages. But the whole project was about to take on a life of its own!

When the 2004 school year started for my girls, the Parent Teacher Group at Good Shepherd School suggested that we open up my little "cottage industry to the entire community of Good Shepherd as a way of honoring the third anniversary of the Sept. 11 tragedy. Our plan was to send one package from each class. We asked families and staff to donate items and postage money for the project. With that first request, we were bale to send 12 boxes. A great accomplishment, we thought. Right? After that first request the families and staff at Good Shepherd School continued to send items and postage fundssso we continued to send boxes. And boxes and MORE boxes!!!

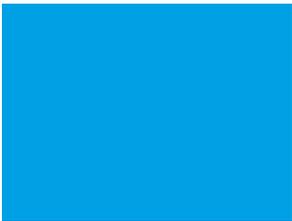
In December 2004, the U.S. Postal Service introduced a flat rate box that costs \$7.70 to send regardless of weight. We started loading down those boxes with everything; canned food, batteries, magazines, anything we could think of. We sent boxes to John Finsness, Staff Sergeant, U.S. Army, Alpha Co., 1st Battalion, 185th Infantry Regiment, stationed in Iraq and a Good Shepherd father serving our country. We sent boxes to many, many men and women in all branches of our armed forces. We got calls from mothers and grandmothers of Pacifica kids who were in the Middle East. Every student at Good Shepherd made a card, as did my students at Susan B. Anthony School in Daly City. We sent all of the cards off to our wounded in the 86th Combat Support Hospital on Baghdad and to Walter Reed Hospital in Washington, D.C. The contributions continued to pour in.

Along the way, a few other groups joined in our efforts to support our troops. We are very grateful to St. Peter Church, Susan B. Anthony School, Our Lady of Mercy School in Daly City, the Military Moms of Pacifica and Terra Nova High School for all of their donations of time and items.

Between Good Shepherd School and the organizations mentioned above, we have sent more than 300 boxes in eight months to our troops overseas in Afghanistan, Iraq, Uzbekistan and Kosovo. We have received emails and letters in return from many of our troops who are grateful for the amount of support they are receiving from ordinary Americans whom they have never met. A group of medics from Afghanistan, to whom our family has written and sent packages from the very beginning, sent our family two mission coins and an American flag signed by all of them. We will cherish it forever.

The AnySoldier.com project continues daily. Good Shepherd's office always has a carload of items brought in by the families and staff. Many, many people have contributed their efforts, time, money and prayers to this project. We hope to continue into the summer and through the next school year. In uncertain times, we are most thankful for those who have sacrificed so much so we may live in FREEDOM.

For now, we keep our troops in our thoughts and prayers God bless the



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