

AnySoldier.com



“Freedom Isn’t Free. Just Ask Any Soldier”

| BY NANCY TAYLOR |

Photo courtesy of AnySoldier.com

When Sergeant Brian Horn, an infantryman in the 173rd Airborne Brigade from La Plata, Maryland, noticed some of his fellow soldiers were not getting any mail from home, he did more than just feel badly for them. He knew that the single most important thing to keep up morale in the unit was for the soldiers to feel the job they were doing was appreciated and that they were not forgotten. He began to share the contents of the care packages he received from home with his fellow soldiers, and continually asked his family to send more for the people he was with. Brian’s father, Marty, had spent 20 years in the Army and knew how important mail was. He decided to send boxes addressed to Brian, but with “Attention: Any Soldier” on the label. Brian agreed to distribute letters and packages addressed to “Any Soldier” to the people in his unit who were not getting mail. The family contacted relatives and friends and corresponded by email to keep them informed about what and how to send.

The family decided in August, 2003 to post a web page to simplify things for those who wished to help. A radio station near Brian’s aunt in North Carolina agreed to help, and they interviewed the family several times. The outpouring of aid from the community there forced the organization to expand beyond Brian’s unit, and in 2005 added Airmen, Marines, Sailors and the Coast Guard to the domain. What started in August 2003 as a simple family effort to help the soldiers in one unit mushroomed. By January 2004 it included any member of any branch of the armed services

who is in harm’s way. Currently, Any Soldier has 2,789 military contacts who regularly distribute packages.

Brian returned to the United States in February 2004. In honor of the men and women Any Soldier was founded to support, the effort is still going strong. His father, Marty, updates the website daily. New soldiers are added all the time. President Bush says “...postings help our citizens show their support for our Armed Services, and I am grateful.” The organization estimates

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they have helped more than 517,000 service members, and they have received national recognition for their efforts.

Marty Horn stresses that this effort is not about ‘stuff.’ “People can send a 50 pound box with a note inside,” Horn says. “The most important thing in the box is not the stuff, but the personal letter they find in its contents.”

“Get yourself a cup of coffee and decide to look at our site for 15 minutes.” Horn challenges. “I guarantee you will spend a lot more time than that there.” ♦

For more information visit the Any Soldier website at www.ansoldier.com.

How it Works

Choose the branch of the service you are most interested in. All branches of the military are represented on the site. Names found on the site are of military personnel located in areas considered to be dangerous or in combat zones. The names on the site are volunteer soldiers who have agreed to distribute packages within their units.

Select one or more soldiers from the ‘Where to Send’ page. The Soldier’s address will include the line ‘Attn: Any Soldier.’ The soldiers are volunteers for this effort. When they see the ‘Attn.’ line, they will distribute the packages to those who do not receive mail. Help on where and what to send can be found on the ‘where to send’ page as well. Make sure you read both the FAQ page and the ‘Where to Send’ page so your efforts aren’t wasted! Consider using the ‘Search’ page. Any Soldier is the only website where specific requests are made and can be answered. It’s fun to know exactly what to send.

What and How to Send

The website gives very clear instructions for anyone who is unsure what to send or how to go about it. No effort is too small! Make sure to look at what not to send too. Believe it or not, home baked cookies are not a good idea, for example. Soldiers are warned not to eat anything that does not come in a factory sealed container. Packages and letters are sent directly to service personnel; nothing is filtered through the Any Soldier office.