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- [Local news](#)
- [My community](#)
- [Other news](#)
- [Sports Day](#)
- [Classifieds](#)
- [Business](#)
- [Entertainment](#)
- [Your Life](#)
- [Weather Center](#)
- [Tips and tools](#)
- [Archives](#)
- [Columns](#)
- [Message boards](#)
- [Multimedia](#)
- [Obituaries](#)
- [Opinion](#)



INLAND SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

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Community embraces family's close-knit effort

SUPPORTING TROOPS: An annual scarf-sending mission expands more than fivefold.

10:00 PM PST on Wednesday, November 22, 2006

By **JOHN ASBURY**
The Press-Enterprise

RIVERSIDE - When 73-year-old Ann Roberts began to ship scarves to soldiers in Iraq, she didn't expect the outpouring of support along with

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the postage pain.

Her package of

1,471

neckerchiefs

was too much

for an

overseas

distributor and

Roberts said

she nearly

canceled her

Thanksgiving

Day family trip

to Minnetonka, Minn., so she could finish sending the scarves.

Roberts and her husband, Fred, repackaged all but about 600 of the scarves at \$1 per scarf and sent them through the U.S. Postal Service instead.

"We have to support our boys," Fred Roberts said. "These are all strangers. We realized most of them are just kids. It was a moment of truth."



Stan Lim / The Press-Enterprise

Ann Roberts, of Riverside, began knitting scarves three years ago after hearing about one soldier whose life was saved with a scarf to cover a gunshot wound. This year the number of scarves jumped to more than 1,400 after she received donations from friends and local knitting groups.

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Designs for comfortable living

Roberts began knitting scarves three years ago after hearing about one soldier whose life was saved with a scarf to cover a gunshot wound.

Her previous 250 scarves jumped to more than 1,400 this year after she received donations from friends and local knitting groups. More than 1,000 scarves came in the final two weeks of the drive before Veterans Day. One 88-year-old Calimesa woman knitted 88 scarves, one for each year of her life. A blind woman knitted other scarves.

The Robertses' daughter Lisa Schmid helped her mother pay for the shipping by using contacts from her stamping and scrapbook business. Within a few days, neighbors, friends and customers offered to help cover whatever the family needed and someone even left a card with a check for \$30 on their door.

"My mom has the biggest heart in the whole world and everyone knows it," Schmid said. "People told us to consider this an early Christmas gift to the soldiers."

Other donations came as care packages and toiletries for troops from people who wanted to help but couldn't knit a scarf in time.

The family shipped the scarves through the Web site Anysoldier.com.

The site is operated by Marty and Sue Horn, of La Plata, Md., and connects donations with troops from each division of the military

overseas.

"A lot of these folks have wings and they don't know it," Marty Horn said.

Reach John Asbury at 951-567-2408 or jasbury@PE.com

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Advertising


Press-Enterprise Table of Contents

 [Home page](#)


 [Archives](#)

 [Banning](#)


 [Baseball](#)


 [Beaumont](#)

 **Business**


 [Business Wire](#)

 [California news](#)

 [Calimesa](#)

 [Canyon Lake](#)


 [Cars.com](#)

 [Church directory](#)


 **Classifieds**


 [College Sports](#)

 [Colton](#)

 [Columns](#)


 [Comics](#)


 [Commercial Real Estate](#)

 [Community](#)

 [Corona](#)


 [Coupons](#)


 [Crossword](#)

 [Dating Center](#)

 [Desert](#)


 **Digital Extras**

 [Dining Guide](#)


 [Driving/Automotive](#)

 [Eastvale](#)

 **Entertainment**

 [Epicenter](#)

 [Family](#)

 [Fontana](#)

 [Food](#)


 [Football](#)


 [Golf](#)

 [The Guide](#)

 [Health](#)

 [Highland](#)

 [High School sports](#)

 [Home & Garden](#)


 [HomeCenter](#)


 [Homes Sold](#)

 [Horoscopes](#)


 [JobZone](#)

 [Jurupa](#)


 [Lake Elsinore](#)

 [Lakers basketball](#)

 [Legal Guide](#)

 [Legal Notices](#)


 **Local news**


 [Loma Linda](#)

 [Lotto](#)

 [Menifee](#)

 [Message boards](#)

 [Moreno Valley](#)

 [Motor sports](#)

 [Mountain Communities](#)

 [Movie reviews](#)

 [Multimedia](#)

 [Murrieta](#)

 [Music news](#)

 [National news](#)


 [Newsletters](#)

 [Norco](#)

 [Obituaries](#)


 [Opinion](#)


 [Perris](#)

 [Personal Technology](#)

 [Politics](#)

 [PR Newswire](#)

 [Real Estate](#)

 [Real Estate professionals](#)

 [Recreation](#)

 [Redlands](#)

 [Religion](#)

 [Rialto](#)

 [Riverside](#)


 [San Bernardino](#)


 [Southwest Riverside County](#)


 **Sports Day**

 [Stock Market](#)


 [Style](#)


 [Submit photos](#)

 **Sudoku**

 [Sun City](#)

 [Teens](#)


 [Temecula](#)

 [Temescal Valley](#)

 [Ticket Center](#)

 [Traffic](#)


 [Travel](#)

 [TV listings](#)


 **Weather Center**

 [Wildomar](#)

 **Winter Sports**

 [World news](#)

 **Your Life**

 [Yucaipa](#)

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