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LAUGHTER for a cause

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Reporter

Becky Porter knows about service to country.

Not so much from personal experience, but from family - father, grandfathers, brothers and sisters and a son - serving in the military.

And she knows the tribulations that can come with such duty.

That, combined with the United States' ongoing struggle in Iraq, is why Porter is organizing a comedy show Friday at the Crawfordsville Holiday Inn. Instead of a regular admission fee, patrons are asked to donate perishable items that'll be shipped to troops overseas. Those without donations can still get in with a cash contribution.

"You can bring as much as you want," Porter said. "If they want to just bring one thing, that's fine, but I encourage them to bring more. Obviously, the more we collect, the better."

The show, which starts at 8:30 p.m., is sponsored by Any Soldier, a nonprofit organization that ships much-needed items to troops stationed around the world. The most commonly-requested needs include health and hygiene products like toothpaste, deodorant and body wash (not bar soap). Soldiers also need snacks, like beef jerky, they can take in the field with them and microwavable food products. Also popular are paper, greeting cards and writing utensils so they can write home. Twin-size bed sheets, blankets, gloves and socks also are useful, since it will soon be winter in Iraq.

More information can be found at www.anysoldier.com.

"Not only are they sponsoring the show, I want people to be able to associate what I'm doing with the show - why I'm collecting the donations - with that organization," Porter said. "I don't want people thinking I'm stocking up on toothpaste for the next year."

Porter, a Southmont graduate who now lives in Danville, Ind., is no stranger to these types of benefits. Last winter, she used her contacts as proprietor of the Elite Comedy booking agency to collect hundreds of comedy CDs to ship to Bagram, the largest U.S.-run airfield in the Middle East. She conducted a show similar to the one scheduled at the Holiday Inn in September at Timothy's Pub in Plainfield.

"I just want to keep doing them as long as they need to be done," Porter said. "It's just something I'm very passionate about. It's a little way to make a

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difference."

Friday's show features headliner Stewart Huff with special guest Will Hardesty. Huff recently placed fourth out of 100 comics at the Boston Comedy Festival. Both he and Hardesty have been invited to participate in the upcoming HBO Comedy Festival. Only about 21 comics out of potentially thousands receive the honor. Dario, a stand-up based in Louisville, Ky., will emcee the Crawfordsville show.

"The lineup is going to be awesome," Porter said. "It's going to be an incredible show. Not to be missed, that's for sure."

Porter has come to know many soldiers through her diligent volunteerism. She knows better than most how important even the smallest provisions are to the military.

"They still need our support, no matter what anyone's views of the war are," Porter said. "I've gotten e-mails and letters before from soldiers overseas, and sometimes they feel forgotten because (the war) has gone on for so long. Somebody's got to do things like this. I'm sure I'm not the only one doing something like this, but this is my contribution. I feel it's important to let them know they're not forgotten, and they get the things they need."

For more information on the show, contact Porter at beckyporter@msn.com.

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