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Web site connects citizens who want to give with soldiers in need

Thursday, April 12, 2007

By Randy Graham

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BLOGS

Kalamazoo Gazette 24/7

- Trial ordered in teen's shooting death 5:23 p.m. ET
- State pulls Paw Paw doctor's license 1:37 p.m. ET
- Fuel prices 9:30 a.m. ET

TOP STATEWIDE NEWS

I was glad to see the letter about collecting blankets for our soldiers in Iraq. Many people, who may or may not support the president, want to support the troops but don't know how. I found a program a couple of months ago that gives any interested person the information to help our service men and women.

The program is called Any Soldier. Found at the Web address <http://anysoldier.com>, Any Soldier lists soldiers (usually specialists, sergeants and field-grade officers) who have joined the program to become soldier sponsors. These sponsors, for various-size groups of men and women (usually squad-size units of 8 to 15 soldiers, but occasionally up to 150 or so) allow Any Soldier to publish the sponsor name and APO addresses. The sponsor's listing gives general information about who they are, how they are living, and what they need. Using the sponsor name and APO, people are able to send items to the sponsor soldier and he gives it out to his troops.

The Web site is very easy to use, and there are new postings (anywhere from 30 to 50 with more than 4,000 soldier sponsors total) every day. You can review the postings and decide whom to help. All branches of service are included. Locations include Iraq, Afghanistan, Serbia and many other overseas posts.

I expected to find listings for wanted items to what GIs have always wanted: snacks, treats, magazines, books, CDs or DVDs, letters and a touch of home. I found those requests, but much to my dismay and anger, I found a lot more.

I found more and more listings from men and women living in tents or metal shipping containers (called "cans") in remote forward operating bases who were asking for blankets, sheets, real food (as they had no access to closed Halliburton mess halls or who were tired of nothing but MREs).

Many soldiers have no access to PXs or post stores or the PX is sold out so they are requesting toothbrushes, toothpaste, soap, washcloths, underwear, socks, deodorant, tampons, pads, panties, bras, boots, gloves and more. (Some were not issued winter gear, their clothing and boots were wearing out and they have no way, other than families, to get replacements.)

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AP file photo
Lawmakers are lashing out at the Democrats' proposal to spend \$38M purchasing iPods as a learning tool for public school students.

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FORUMS

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Kalamazoo Talk

- [Inconvenient Truth by sportskid 04/13/2007 12:37 a.m. ET](#)
- [IMUS...good read by JohnGreen 04/12/2007 7:04 p.m. ET](#)
- [Schools by BRedSox 04/12/2007 12:24 p.m. ET](#)
- [Visit each school by rdaneel 04/12/2007 12:47 p.m. ET](#)
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Some requests made me mad at our fearless leaders and that escalated to thinking those political leaders who puff up and shout "Anything for our troops -- they are the best equipped in the world" should be charged with crimes. I have read postings that listed wants like cleaning kits and patches for weapons, lights and mounts for rifles or magazine pouches and optics.

Imagine that, after four years of war, our troops are asking the unknown public for needed items -- forget about armor kits for Humvees, some were asking for oil to keep their guns operating. As one Marine gunnery sergeant put in his posting, "Beggars are grateful for anything."

Anyway, this is a great way to support and help our forces overseas. Many postings are short, but many are long and detailed. A number of soldiers post pictures, I usually read listings every other day. This is very interesting by itself.

The post office has a priority mail, flat-rate box that you can get for free, and stuffing that box costs \$8.10 in shipping. No pornography, pork or aerosols allowed and you fill out a detailed customs form (the post office has a list of what not to send).

Many schools and churches send assistance or just letters to our troops through this program. The hardest thing for me is deciding who I am going to ship some items to as there are so many I want to help.

So, get off your rear ends and truly help our men and women in the service. It is more than a lot of our leaders are doing, in spite of what they say. Since its founding about two years ago, more than 30 Any Soldier sponsors have been killed in action in Afghanistan or Iraq.

And if you think the revelations about Walter Reed are sad and depressing, I just sent a box to a medical captain in a forward army hospital that is outside Baghdad containing bath towels, washcloths and other requested hygiene items. Imagine that, a combat hospital asking citizens here in the United States for washcloths and toothbrushes and Q-tips because they don't have them.

Randy Graham resides in

Mattawan.

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