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Residents make care packages for troops

BY GLEN BAITY

The Dispatch

ARCADIA | When Nancy Mellor, Pearl Carlton and Annie Andrews sat down at the table Thursday, they didn't know who they'd be writing, but it didn't matter. They knew what they were going to say all the same.

The three are residents of Mallard Ridge Assisted Living in Arcadia, only a few of the senior citizens who recently committed to assembling care packages for members of the military through AnySoldier.com, a free, Web-based service through which members of the military serving abroad can request items they need or want.

Shortly before lunch, the three women made cards that



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Mallard Ridge residents Annie Andrews (left) and Nancy Mellor talk while they work on homemade cards to send to soldiers serving overseas. The residents are also sending care packages with the cards. Photos by Bobbie Jamison/The Dispatch

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will go to soldiers deployed from [North Carolina](#), handwriting simple, poignant greetings for servicemen and women they've never met: "May the Lord keep you safe," some say; others, "We are proud of you."

Carlton said it gave her a rewarding feeling to know her actions might help a soldier on the battlefield.

"We're going to send them to the soldiers, and they'll know we're thinking about them," Carlton explained.

As chance would have it, Mellor, Carlton and Andrews all lost family members in World War II and are consequently well-acquainted with the sacrifices of members of the military.

"I know how important it is for the boys to get some mail from back home," Andrews explained.

Mallard Ridge's participation with AnySoldier.com is the brainchild of Residential Care Director Rebecca Johnson, who saw a presentation about the Web site a month ago at a [Lexington](#) Rotary Club meeting.

"We've been in a war for five years now," she said. "In the beginning, (Americans) did everything we could possibly do ... As time has gone by, things have gotten a little complacent."

The needs of soldiers, also, have changed in the four and a half years since the war in Iraq began. Phone cards, for example, were once in high demand but have become far less necessary in many quarters due to increased access to cell phones and the Internet on military bases.

Want to contribute?

Below is a list of commonly requested items that Mallard Ridge is currently collecting:

Off insect repellent; water flavor packets; gel shoe insoles; shower soap; Cup-o-Noodles; puzzle books; tooth brushes; razors; Life Savers; Chex Mix; DVDs (Movies & Series); music CDs; pens, paper and envelopes; blankets; sun block; washcloths (solid colors); ground coffee or filter packs; body lotion; small cans of fruit with lift-off lids; snacks;cookies; beef jerky; hard candy; deodorant; microwave popcorn; freezer pops; toothpaste; shaving cream; Pez candies; trail mix; Cheerios; baby wipes; assorted magazines; pillows; dental floss; personal hygiene items; bath towels (solid colors); powder coffee creamer; shampoo and conditioner; foot powder or spray; Pringles; tampons

For more information call Rebecca Johnson at Mallard Ridge Assisted Living in Arcadia at 775-2205 or e-mail rjohnson@ridgecare.com. Anyone interested in donating an item or a card for inclusion for a soldier can stop by Mallard Ridge Assisted Living, 9420 N.C. Highway 150 North in Arcadia.

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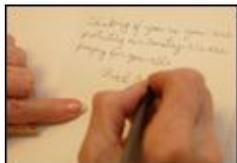
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Pearl Carlton writes a message on a card that she and other residents are making for the soldiers.

Wants and needs are also dependent on where the soldiers are - although many of the postings on AnySoldier.com are from troops in Iraq and Afghanistan, military men and women stationed anywhere in the world can log on. Some have access to running water and electricity while some bathe in bottled water; likewise, some have access to stoves, some only microwaves, others nothing aside from the mess hall. The needs vary widely, though a cursory look at AnySoldier.com does show many common requests, and the residents and staff at Mallard Ridge have started collecting many of them. Items like razors, socks, and foot powder are always in demand, and with the increased number of women in service, feminine products are a big request.

And no matter where the service members are, cards make a big difference. Mallard Ridge has partnered with Appletree Academy, a day care center across the street, to make and send cards to the soldiers.

Mallard Ridge is collecting items for the soldiers and will continue to do so indefinitely. Packages will be mailed out continuously, dropped in the mail as soon as they are assembled. Anyone interested in donating an item or a card for inclusion in a soldier can stop by Mallard Ridge Assisted Living, 9420 N.C. Highway 150 North in Arcadia.

For more information on items being collected, call Johnson at 775-2205, e-mail rjohnson@ridgecare.com or view the list online at www.the-dispatch.com.

Glen Baity can be reached at 249-3981, ext. 227, or glen.baity@the-dispatch.com.

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