



Remember veterans, active-duty military at holidays

By the Pantagraph Editorial Board

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There are ways to let veterans and active-duty military personnel know you support them and are thinking about them during the holiday season.

Unfortunately, contrary to what was said in a recent letter to the editor, sending letters to "A Recovering American Veteran" at Walter Reed Army Medical Center is not one of the methods.

According to a statement issued by Walter Reed officials, the facility is not accepting cards, packages or other mail addressed to "Any Service Member," "Any Wounded Soldier" or other non-specific person for safety reasons.

However, there are other ways to show you care.

Bob Robinson, chief of recreation therapy/voluntary service at the veterans medical facility in Danville, said cards sent in care of the Voluntary Service department will be distributed to patients by recreational therapists.

Robinson said the facility received a number of thank you cards around Veterans Day that were distributed by therapists or placed on meal trays. The facility also receives a lot of cards around Valentines Day. School groups, churches and youth groups often organize efforts to provide cards and letters, but individuals can do so, too, he said.

The mail should be sent to the VA Illiana Health Care System, c/o Voluntary Service • 11K, 1900 E. Main St., Danville IL 61832.

If you would like to send a card to someone deployed in Iraq or Afghanistan, Nancy Pounds of State Farm's Military Affinity Group suggests using the www.ansoldier.com Web site.

Clicking on the "Where to Send" button will provide profiles of military personnel willing to be contact persons for receiving such mail and distributing it to others.

The site requires users to submit their full address and e-mail when they request the full address of one of the military personnel on the profile list. Pounds said she has kept in regular contact with many people through this site.

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The deadline for sending first-class letters and cards to APO/FPO addresses of people stationed in Iraq and Afghanistan is Dec. 4 if you want the mail to arrive before Christmas.

If you would just like to send an e-mail expressing your support, you can use the Department of Defense Web site, www.AmericaSupportsYou.mil.

Monetary donations to organizations such as the USO and American Red Cross - or Bloomington-based Operation Porchlight - are another way to show support for those who are serving our country.

While we celebrate Thanksgiving, Christmas and the New Year's holidays with our families and friends, let's not forget those who are away from home who are serving us now or have served in the past.

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