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Comedy show to collect calling cards for troops overseas

By Wade Coggeshall

BROWNSBURG —

Marty Horn knows what life can be like in the military.

He and his wife are both retired military police officers from the U. S. Army. Their son Brian followed in their footsteps in 2003, joining the Army's 173rd Airborne Brigade.

"When my son jumped in, we knew he was going to be hurting for supplies," Horn said. "That's no comment on the (Department of Defense). It's just a fact of life."

They started sending care packages almost daily after Brian was sent to the Kirkuk area of Iraq, nearly going broke in the process. Brian called seven months later and asked them to send even more. The Horns were incredulous.

"He said, 'No Dad, it's not for me. It's for my guys who aren't getting mail,'" said Horn, recalling his conversation with Brian. "A light bulb went off. I knew exactly what he was talking about."

Any Soldier was born. So named because that's what Horn would write on the mailing label in care of Brian, who would then distribute the care packages to other soldiers in his unit who weren't getting any mail. Horn soon started a website for Any Soldier and told everyone he knew



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about it.

Initially he was only serving Brian's unit. Then "the thing just exploded." Within days of starting Any Soldier, Horn was getting e-mail from Australians wanting to help. Soon, other units started making requests. Four months after Any Soldier began, Horn opened it to every military branch.

The feedback was substantial. Horn says he hoped to have 50 contacts like his son by the end of the first year. Instead he had a thousand. He hit 3,000 three months after that.

"It seems to be working out extremely well, for not only the troops but also the supporters because we're the only organization I know that verifies and keeps contact with these folks," Horn said.

The generosity of citizens is the lifeblood of Any Soldier. That's where people like Danville's Becky Porter comes in. Porter, who runs Elite Comedy Productions, books stand-up acts. Coming from a military family herself, she recognized the need that Any Soldier fills. All of the comedy shows Porter now organizes serve as collection points for needed items for troops.

The next one is 7:30 p.m. Oct. 25 at The Crown Room, 900 E. 56th St., Suite 200. Comedians Rik Roberts and Dan Swartwout are performing. A Lovin' Spoonful will serve food. Horn will be a guest speaker, along with Bill Franklin, owner of Courthouse Grounds in Danville and a retired Air Force master sergeant.

To make reservations, call 858-2228.

Horn calls benefits such as these "absolutely critical."

"It brings attention to the public about Any Soldier," he said. "It helps the public actually connect to the troops instead of just hearing about them. I think the real benefit of our organization is its direct support. There's no middleman, no sending your money somewhere and having no idea where it went."

In this case, admission to the show is an AT&T worldwide calling card of any denomination or a cash donation at the door.

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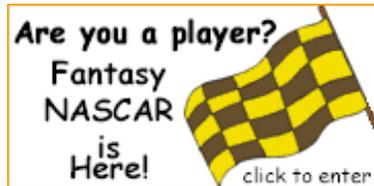
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