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Parents' Love Leads to Troop-Support Group

By **Carmen L. Gleason/AFPS**

WASHINGTON, Feb. 23, 2007 - When Army Sgt. Brian Horn deployed to Iraq in 2003, his unit was spearheading the war effort. He and his men were ahead of supply lines, and after seven months in country, they were still sleeping on the ground.

When mail and care packages started coming from loved ones at home, it had a huge impact on morale. But not all troops received the small tokens that did so much to boost the spirits of others. Brian, looking out for the welfare of his comrades, asked his parents to send packages that he could distribute to those who hadn't received anything. From that request, Any Soldier Inc. was born.

The Horns began a Web site in August 2003 as a way to let friends and neighbors in LaPlata, Md., participate in showing their support to Brian's unit. News of the effort spread, and a year later more military units had been adopted, with more than 1,000 troops volunteering to distribute care packages to their fellow servicemembers.

The family's site became so popular that, by August 2005, it had broadened to cover all the services with domain names and specific versions of the Web site for each. Since its inception, the organization has helped more than 700,000 servicemembers.

Any Soldier Inc. became a team member of America Supports You in May 2006. America Supports You is a Department of Defense program highlighting home front groups across the nation that are providing a variety of services and support to troops and their families.

"Being an America Supports You member has had a positive impact on our organization," Brian said. "Even if there are only a handful of people who are directed to the site, then it is successful. The relationship with America Supports You is priceless."

The Web site provides statistics tracking the number of contacts they have from each service in addition to ranks and gender. A message board is also provided so recipients can make special requests, post photos and messages or express appreciation to those who send items.

"Please let it be known that we thank you for all your wonderful support, gifts and words of encouragement," said Marine Staff Sgt. L.A. Hayes on the site.

Since his unit's deployment, he has periodically posted messages updating readers on his troops. "Most of the Marines on our team are 'kids' to you and I," Hayes said. "But, God bless them, they are doing great work in a mature and forthright manner. They would all make you proud; ... they sure make me proud."

"This has become my life," said Marty Horn, the organization's president. "It's wonderful to know that we're helping so many people."

Even though Brian has left the Army to further his education, Marty said that he will continue to dedicate himself to the support of troops.

"Morale -- without it we will lose," he said. "There's no way you can complete a mission without it. It helps with survival. Let's give our troops a reason to come home."

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