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Marines hold items sent to them by Danville resident Becky Porter. The items were donated at a comedy show Porter organized in November in Crawfordsville. She has scheduled another such show for Feb. 24 at the Royal Theater in Danville. / SUBMITTED PHOTO

Published February 16, 2007 05:20 pm - It began as a simple gesture of support.

Show will benefit troops overseas

By **Wade Coggeshall**

DANVILLE —

It began as a simple gesture of support.

Becky Porter, who's had generations of family members serve in the military, began corresponding with soldiers serving abroad through a pen pal program. Through her contacts as a comedy show booking agent, she collected hundreds of comedy CDs last year to send to troops stationed overseas.



Also starting last year, she began organizing comedy shows where admission was the donation of needed items to be sent to our men and women in uniform.

That idea continues with a stand-up comedy show at 8 p.m. Feb. 24 at the Royal Theater, 59 S. Washington St., on Danville's square.

Louisville, Ky.-based comedians Mark Klein, Will Hardesty, and Dario are performing. Admission to the 18-and-older show includes but is not limited to health and hygiene products like toothpaste, deodorant, and body wash (not bar soap). Soldiers also need snacks, like beef jerky, that they can take in the field with them and microwavable food products. Also popular are paper, greeting cards, and writing utensils so they can write home. Twin-size bed sheets, blankets, gloves, and socks are also useful, since it's winter in Iraq. A complete list can be found on Any Soldier's website, www.anysoldier.com.

All donations will be shipped to troops overseas.

"You can bring as much as you want," Porter said. "If you want to bring just one thing, that's fine, but I encourage you to bring more. Obviously, the more we collect, the better."

Cash contributions of any denomination will also be accepted at the door from anyone who doesn't have material donations. Those who want to help but can't attend the show can make a tax-deductible donation to the Hendricks County Community Foundation, directed to the Support the Troops Fund. Call 718-1200 for more information. Donations may also be dropped off at the office of Kendall Wood Lowry & Kessinger, 1 S. Washington St., Danville.

The non-profit Any Soldier is sponsoring the event. Local sponsors are the Courthouse Grounds coffee shop, Jones & Franklin Catering, SAC Graphics, and Sycamore Services (formerly Petri's Printing).

Porter staged similar shows at Timothy's Pub in Plainfield last September and the Crawfordsville Holiday Inn last November.

"I just want to keep doing them as long as they need to be done," Porter said. "It's just something I'm very passionate about. It's a little way to make a difference."

Porter has befriended many soldiers through her efforts. She knows how important even the smallest provisions are to the military.

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"They still need our support, no matter what anyone's views of the war are," Porter said. "I've gotten e-mails and letters before from soldiers overseas, and sometimes they feel forgotten because (the war) has gone on for so long. Somebody's got to do things like this. I'm sure I'm not the only one doing something like this, but this is my contribution. I feel it's important to let them know they're not forgotten, and they get the things they need."

Porter has been rewarded with appreciation she gets from those who've benefited from her endeavors. Marine Ssgt. Paul DeBord, who's been in Iraq since August, received a care package from Porter following the Crawfordsville show.

"Some of my marines don't have any support from families that are back home because of a loss of jobs, higher gas prices, or other financial reasons," he said via e-mail. "You all are the ones that came to the call during those possible sad times."

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