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Dalton welcome makes soldier feel 'like a star'

By **Charles Oliver**
Dalton Daily Citizen

It seemed that everyone in the Walnut Avenue Kroger wanted to shake Daniel Kuhlmann's hand Friday. Customers and employees stopped to thank the Army sergeant for his service.

"I feel like I'm a star," said Kuhlmann.

"You are," said store manager Renae Slater.

Kuhlmann, who serves with the 546th Military Police Company based at Fort Stewart, returned to the United States from 15 months in Afghanistan on May 12. He stopped at the Kroger on his way to visit family in Wisconsin. Kuhlmann wanted to thank Slater and other store employees for the packages they sent to him and other soldiers during their deployment to Afghanistan.

"We were glad to have gotten them. It's pretty barren out there, and we were in some remote places where it isn't easy to get Twizzlers or Cheetos or coffee," he said. "Small creature comforts were so great. The wet wipes, toilet paper, all that stuff comes in handy."

Kuhlmann presented the store with framed photographs and a signed letter of appreciation from his commander.

"I just wanted to present them with a small token of our thanks," he said.

Slater found Kuhlmann through the Web site anysoldier.com. The site hooks up people who want to help American military personnel stationed overseas with support letters and packages with soldiers. Soldiers such as Kuhlmann list things that the people they are serving with would like. People in the United States can sign up to send packages to them that they'll distribute to others.

"I was trying to get some folks that were close to home, and he was stationed in Georgia, at Fort Stewart," Slater said.

Photos



Kroger manager Renae Slater joins Army Sgt. Daniel Kuhlmann as they hold up a collection of photos of American soldiers in Afghanistan Friday. **None/Charles Oliver** (Click for larger image)

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"Kroger corporate paid the postage, and the whole store got together. Employees and customers got together and donated the things, and we packaged them up and sent it over there," she said. "We spent over \$3,000 on postage. We were sending packages every week for about a year."

Kuhlmann has been in the Army almost 15 years. He says his time in Afghanistan was challenging but rewarding.

"Things are improving. We are building a lot of schools," he said. "We trained Afghanistan national police. As a military police unit, that was a big deal for us."

Kuhlmann may be back home, but Slater is still sending support packages to Afghanistan.

"I still have four guys over there. Three of them are coming home in August. After that, I'll just have to find some more," she said.



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