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How to brighten troops' holiday Adopt a unit, send supplies or visit Web sites

By Sharon Kant-Rauch
DEMOCRAT STAFF WRITER

Want to send our troops some holiday cheer?

There's still a few days left to send a letter or care package, although you'll have to use Priority Mail.

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Here's what you can do:

- Send school supplies to Afghanistan: The 24 local National Guardsmen stationed in Afghanistan said they didn't need anything right now. Instead, they're asking for supplies for an Afghan girls school they've adopted. They're requesting paper, pencils, pens, crayons, chalk, rulers,

dry-erase markers, pocket atlases, folded maps (of Afghanistan, if possible) and science supplies.

The drive is sponsored by a local family-support group called HOOAH (Honoring Our Own American Heroes). Sgt. 1st Class Kevin Kjellerup wrote to one of the members saying, "Just the basics would send these kids through the roof with joy (by the way, the school has no roof so that really wasn't a metaphor)."

For mailing information, e-mail Vanessa.crisler@us.

MAILING INFO

- The parcel post deadline is past, but you can still use Priority Mail until Saturday for all military addresses except those with a ZIP code of 093. A military care kit - which includes a shirt-size box, Priority Mail tape and customs form - is available free. Call (800) 610-8734 and ask for a CAREKIT04. Packages can be sent by Express Mail Military Service until Dec. 19. All care packages must be sent to a particular individual. Use bubble wrap or paper filler to secure items firmly in the package. An itemized list of contents must accompany each package.

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army.mil or Candice.m.

walker@us.army.mil. Items also may be dropped off at Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 3308, 2765 1/2 W. Tennessee St., behind the BMW motorcycle shop, from 4 to 9 p.m. weekdays and 2 to 9 p.m. weekends. Cash donations for postage also will be accepted. Deadline is Dec. 21.

- Adopt a unit: The VFW can help an individual or group adopt a unit. To meet the Christmas deadline, you must drop off care-package items at the VFW by Sunday. For a list of what the troops need or for more information, call Mark Alvarez or Dean Showalter at 575-3308.
- Visit the Web site www.anysoldier.com: This site lists the addresses of more than 3,700 military personnel in the Army, Navy, Marines, Air Force and Coast Guard and a short description of what they and their fellow troops need. Requests are usually modest, such as CDs, movies, magazines, board games, shampoo and powdered drinks. You also may send a letter or card. Troops often appreciate that the most.

Tallahasseean Carol Beebe already has sent six packages to names she got off the site. She has sent coffee, sugar, powdered cream, soap, razors, disposable cameras, Beanie Babies and magazines, among other items.

After receiving one of the packages, Sgt. 1st Class Michael Currier wrote her back: "There are a number of soldiers within our Task Force who seldom, if ever, receive mail from back home. For them, we have set up an area in our Morale, Welfare and Recreation Building (MWR), where we place all the items that we receive from the AnySoldier Program. This gives all the soldiers the opportunity to enjoy a little something from back home."

- Visit the Web site www.americasupportsyou.mil: This U.S. Department of Defense site lists 175 organizations that are helping to support the troops, from sending care packages and gift certificates to donating computers and frequent-flier miles.

Even if you can't meet the Christmas deadline, consider using the above resources after the New Year to bring cheer to U.S. forces year-round.

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