



## Won't you be mine?

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Star Staff Writer

SHELBY — Soldiers in Iraq will soon receive a load of love — in the form of valentines decorated by area preschoolers and seniors.

The Shelby Senior Center's Daytime Friends group, along with children from First Baptist Church's preschool, decorated valentines that will be sent to two soldiers in Iraq. They, in turn, will distribute the cards and candy to the other soldiers around them.

The valentines will go to soldiers from Ft. Bragg.

"These are our soldiers," said Marcia Jackson, who works at the Senior Center and who organized the project.

As the children and their adult partners decorated the cards with stickers, several pairs were able to bond together.

"At first I was reluctant to work with the kids," said Bebe Borders, one of the women in the group.

She smiled as she looked down on her partner, 4-year-old Braxton Clifton.

"Now I'm glad I did because I ran across a sweet child," Ms. Borders said.

Braxton's favorite part of the project was sticking the stickers, he said, as Ms. Borders directed him on where to place the pink heart he had stuck to his finger.

Mrs. Jackson discovered the needs of soldiers overseas on a Web site, [www.anysoldier.com](http://www.anysoldier.com). The site allows people to send items to a specific soldier since sending generic packages to "Any Soldier" are no longer allowed.

"It just tore my heart out just reading what they were asking for," she said.

Those needs included things as simple as deodorant, toothpaste and hot chocolate, she said.

The preschoolers enjoyed making the soldiers' cards and students Lavery Hood and Grayson McGruder cut up with each other while making their valentines.

Both boys said they liked meeting the Daytime Friends during the project.

Daytime Friends is a group of homebound older adults who are brought to the Senior Center each Thursday for socialization.

The valentine project is an intergenerational activity paid for in part by Youth United Way.

“Not only is it good for the older adults and the kids to do something together, it’s a chance to do something nice for someone else,” Mrs. Jackson said.

Part of the valentines will be going to Army Staff Sgt. Margaret Ray, who will distribute them to the soldiers serving with her.

She asked for morale-boosting mail in her request on the Web site.

“Receiving mail is like receiving a paycheck when you are away from home. I just wanted to show the soldiers that I care enough to submit a request for items they may need,” she wrote.

Mrs. Jackson hopes the valentines will make a difference to the soldiers who will receive them and said the project is close to her heart because she has a son at Ft. Bragg.

“I guess that’s why my heart cries so, because that could be my son one day,” she said.

To send care packages for soldiers in Iraq and Afghanistan, go to [http:// www.anysoldier. com/ WhereToSend/](http://www.anysoldier.com/WhereToSend/)

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