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Let soldiers know they're appreciated

By NANCY DE GENNARO
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This past summer I wrote a feature about a mother and daughter who have worked tirelessly to send care packages to our soldiers overseas.

One of the biggest projects they put together was a Popsicle drive that raised enough ready-to-freeze Popsicles to send 150 boxes to soldiers. With the dry, desert heat, the cold treat hits the spot.

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Are you paying too much for auto insurance?

ZIP code where you park at night.

Do you currently have auto insurance? Yes No

Have you had a U.S driver's license for more than 3 years? Yes No

Has any driver in your household had 2 or more accidents or moving violations in the last 3 years? Yes No

Susan Westerfield and Rachel Smitty, who both have familial ties to the military, kept sending packages to soldiers over the holidays.

Now they are getting geared up to plan another Popsicle drive that will begin around the first of March. Along with gathering lots of Popsicles, they'll accept donations to help pay for the shipments. Each specially designated postal box costs \$7.70 to send.

But still, Susan encourages people to send their own care packages to soldiers. The everyday items are what they need most, she notes.

The Web site www.anysoldier.com is solely dedicated to connecting Americans with our soldiers. You can go on this site and find ideas of what to send, where to send it (you must designate who gets it), which troops are asking for certain items, information on ongoing projects, among a variety of other support-related news.

Also, be sure you don't forget the women soldiers. They have lots of needs many

might not even think about.

Things not to send:

- Home-cooked anything. Soldiers are told to throw away anything that is not in a factory package.
- Large shipments. Send small boxes (under 10 pounds) and no more than three to any single address in the same day. On a special note, if you send any CDs or DVDs, use a permanent magic marker and write something on the packaging to denote its intended destination, as these high-dollar items are being stolen off bases and resold to soldiers.

Make sure all liquids and pastes — even in cans — are doubled wrapped, one inside the other, in zipper-seal bags.

If you send T-shirts, here's a color code: brown for Army and Navy, green for Marines, black or brown for Air Force.

Here are some other ideas of things to send soldiers:

Deodorant

Body powder

Disposable cameras

Rice-Krispies treats

Mints/gum

Beef jerky

Snack mixes

Sunflower seeds/nuts

Long-distance phone cards

Various sizes of plastic zipper-seal bags

Coffee

Gatorade

Playing cards

Music CDs

DVDs

Toothbrushes/toothpaste

Inflatable pillow

Individually wrapped cookies (big bags often fill with dust quicker than they can be eaten)

Dominoes

Pasta and sauce

Canned food items

Spices, salt, pepper

Smoked oysters and sardines

Squeeze butter

Pringles chips

Individually-wrapped licorice

Microwave popcorn

Ramen noodles

Macaroni and cheese

Olives, pickles, peppers (Be sure to add lots of bubble wrap around these items.)

Cereal bars/granola bars

Microwave pasta that doesn't need refrigeration

Hot cocoa mix

Soup mix

M&Ms

DVDs

Can Koozies to keep water bottles and cans cool

Newspapers

Magazines

AA batteries

D batteries

Air fresheners (stick-ups, Febreze)

Canned air to blow dust out of electronics

Stress relief squeeze balls

Sewing kit

Lysol wipes/hand and face wipes

Poker chips

Board games

Shoe laces for gym shoes and boots

Boot socks

Underwear

Hand warmers

Inflatable seat cushions

Razors

Ink pens

Word puzzle books

Icy/hot patches

Air activated heat wraps for sore muscles

Foot spa

Microwaveable plates, bowls, paper plates

Foot powder

Vitamins

Paperback books

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