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# Students honor soldiers with Christmas packages

## Red Cloud seventh-graders send mail overseas

By Katie Brown, Journal staff Sunday, December 02, 2007

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With the Lakota phrase "Akicitaki uni oniyuhanpi" or, "We honor you, good soldier," in mind, the students at Red Cloud Indian School in Pine Ridge have taken on a project to make the holiday season more cheerful for South Dakota soldiers serving overseas.

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"The kids have really taken the project and run with it," Jamie Hoek, a seventh-grade teacher at the school, said.

About 80 students are involved in putting together care packages that will be sent to South Dakota soldiers serving in Iraq and Afghanistan.

"I expect we will reach about 30 soldiers," Hoek said.

The packages are filled with snacks, toiletries, books and other small gifts.

The boxes will be sent Tuesday, which is the deadline for packages to be shipped to Iraq and Afghanistan if they are to arrive by Christmas.

Hoek said the project stemmed from a Veterans Day project that involved the students researching veterans, especially those from their families.

While researching, students stumbled upon the Web site [www.anysoldier.com](http://www.anysoldier.com), which provides contact information for soldiers.

### Story Photo



Students in Jamie Hoek's seventh-grade classroom at Red Cloud School make cards for soldiers serving overseas. The cards will be part of a care package sent to South Dakota soldiers. (Photo courtesy of Robbie Pipe On Head)

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"We were all talking, and the kids said, 'This would be really cool to do for Christmas,'" Hoek said.

The students decided they would rather do the project than have a gift exchange among each other for Christmas this year.

"I'm just really proud of the kids for coming up with this idea basically on their own," Hoek said.

She said it will cost about \$100 to mail the packages.

Students could bring as much or as little as they could to contribute to the care packages. A craft night was also held for students to make cards to send with the packages.

"We're hoping it's something we can continue to do to support the soldiers, not just at Christmas, but throughout the year," Hoek said.

She said there is already a plan to do Valentine's Day crafts to send to the soldiers in February.

She said the students are excited about honoring soldiers.

"It gives them a sense of family and a sense of understanding of what goes on with their heritage," Hoek said.

She said a large percentage of Lakota people are veterans or are currently serving in the military.

"It really gives the students a sense of pride to know that they're doing something as well," Hoek said.

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