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Lorie Byrd: Many ways to say thanks to those who protect America

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Lorie Byrd, The Examiner

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Nov 23, 2006 3:00 AM (2 hrs 18 mins ago)

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WASHINGTON - This week I asked the readers of the blog where I write (www.wizbangblog.com), what would be on the list of things for which they would be giving thanks this year. Almost everyone listed their family, friends and good health, but also at the top of most lists were words of thanks for being born in the most wonderful country on the face of the Earth.

For generations, Americans have been reminded of their great fortune when witnessing world events. Americans have been largely spared the widespread suffering that is experienced in some parts of the world due to conditions of poverty, oppressive regimes and war.

In fact, many have risked their lives to come to the United States for the opportunity to enjoy the peace and prosperity most Americans take for granted. The opportunities available in the United States did not come about by accident and they are only maintained because brave men and women are willing to sacrifice their very lives. The blog readers I heard from were well aware of the human cost to secure our freedom and way of life and expressed sincere

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gratitude.

Don in Florida knows some of the costs first hand, but gladly pays them, even for those who don't appreciate it. He wrote that he was thankful for "having God's blessing to serve in the United States Army for the past 32 years so people can abuse, accuse ... besmirch, curse, defame, defile, denigrate ... disparage, insult, libel, revile, slur, smear, stain, sully, taint, tarnish ... and generally villainize me and my brothers and sisters, because ... I have to serve them, so I might serve those who deserve and appreciate. God bless America."

Thankfully there are plenty of those who do appreciate the sacrifices made by the men and women in the armed forces. The Department of Defense launched a Web site, America Supports You (www.americasupportsyou.mil) which "recognizes citizen's support for our military men and women and communicates that support to members of our armed forces at home and abroad." There are plenty of American citizens to recognize, too, who are not only giving thanks, but are putting that sentiment into action.

AnySoldier.com (www.anysoldier.com) whose slogan reads "Freedom isn't free! Just ask any soldier" helps those who want to send their support to a soldier in harm's way, but don't know what is needed or where to send it. Sgt. Brian Horn, an Army infantry soldier with the 173rd Airborne Brigade "agreed to distribute packages that came to him with 'Attn: Any Soldier' in the address to the soldiers who were not getting mail." Any Soldier began in 2003 as a way to help those in one Army unit, but due to popular demand, has now spread to include any member of any branch of the armed forces in harm's way.

Soldiers' Angels (soldiersangels.com) was "started by a self-described "ordinary mother" of an ordinary young man turned hero, Sgt. Brandon Varn" who was deployed to Iraq, but has since returned home. In 2003, he wrote to his mother that some of the soldiers did not receive support from home so she decided to ask some friends to write a letter or two.

In a matter of months her efforts spread to thousands via the internet. In addition to American soldiers, the Angels also send thanks to members of the armed forces of Great Britain, Poland and Australia who are serving in Iraq.

Operation Homefront (OperationHomefront.net) is a group dedicated to providing "emergency assistance and morale to our troops, to the families they leave behind, and to wounded warriors when they return home ... founded after Sept. 11, Operation Homefront leads more than 2,500 volunteers in 26 chapters nationwide. Since its inception, Operation Homefront has provided critical assistance to more than 40,000 military families in need."

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Fisher House Foundation (fisherhouse.org) is a group dedicated to helping the families of the wounded. Fisher House donates "comfort homes," built on the grounds of military and VA medical centers to enable family members to be close to a loved one during hospitalization.

There are many more ways to give thanks to those who sacrifice to make it possible to live in this land of great opportunity. Programs making it easy to donate books, DVDs and games (booksforsoldiers.com), unused frequent flier miles (heromiles.org), telephone calling cards (thor.aafes.com/scs/default.aspx), and even toys for kids in Iraq (operationgive.org), are just a few of the ways ordinary citizens can show their thanks to those who sacrifice is responsible for the bounty of freedom and prosperity enjoyed on this day.

Lorie Byrd is a member of The Examiner's Blog Board of Contributors and blogs at wizbangblog.com.

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