

telegram.com

# LOCAL NEWS

Worcester/Wachusett



CURRENT:  
77°

Home | News | Sports | Business | Deaths | Entertainment | Blogs | Shop | Real Estate | Jobs | Cars | Advertise | Contact us

World | City/Wachusett | North | South & West | East & Valley | On the Common | Living | Etc. | Health | Food | Court | Opinion

(+) (-) change font size print article email article RSS feed All RSS feeds

Tuesday, May 27, 2008

## Care package effort flourishes

### Troops get 'sunshine'

By Judy Powell CORRESPONDENT

**SOUTHBORO**— Lisa Braccio was thunderstruck three years ago when she realized some soldiers in Iraq and Afghanistan were lacking basic necessities.

"We're talking toilet paper, Kleenex and other hygiene items we take for granted," the 41-year-old mother said.

Visiting the Web site anysoldier.com, she and her husband, Matthew, read the requests and felt compelled to arrange a care package drive for American troops serving in Iraq and Afghanistan.

That first effort resulted in 607 boxes being shipped overseas in fall 2005.

Since then the Southboro couple, along with a dozen volunteers, have organized seven events, including their latest endeavor, held earlier this month.

"We shipped 354 copy paper-size boxes filled with American sunshine and going to deserving men and women in Iraq and Afghanistan," Mrs. Braccio said.

The "American sunshine" consisted of personal care items, food, beverages and handwritten notes tailored to the requests posted by individual servicemen and women on the Web site.

"What is truly amazing is how our communities have come together to do something for people they never met. They gave from their heart, and the countless letters we receive in response from the troops show just how much they appreciate the effort," Mrs. Braccio said.

Neither she nor her husband, an electrician who owns Braccio Electric, has ever served in the military, but they see the drive as their duty and plan to continue the biannual effort until "every last man and woman is home," Mrs. Braccio said.

"It's the least we can do as Americans," she said.

Apparently the hundreds of supporters from surrounding communities who turned out at the Southboro Senior Center May 18 and 19 with bagsful of donations share that sentiment.

"People we didn't know came with their donations and then stayed to help with the sorting, bagging, boxing and sealing of packages," she said.

This year's drive was so successful that Mrs. Braccio ran out of delivery trucks.

"We filled five postal trucks and needed a sixth due to the overflow of donations. We stored them in an enclosed trailer, and the post office picked them up later," she said.



**BREAKING NEWS ALERTS**

The latest news, emailed to you, as it happens. [Sign up now](#) ▶

WorcesterWorks.com  
**TOP Jobs**

More amazing than the response from anonymous adults were the young people inspired by the effort.

"We had an 11-year-old boy from Hudson, Jake Stenquist, who showed up lugging blue garbage bags filled with 300 Beanie Babies. When he heard about our effort, he took it upon himself to collect the toys to send to American soldiers for distribution to the Iraqi and Afghan children," she said. "It made me cry."

Another 25 students from the Fay School donated two hours May 18 to sort and pack the boxes.

"Each box from them had notes the kids wrote and carefully placed on top of the packages before they were sealed," she said. "These kids got it."

According to Mrs. Braccio, some soldiers are on outposts that have no PX and depend on family and friends to send them items they need.

While goodies such as snacks, drink mix, candy and gum are appreciated, even more important are the cards and letters of encouragement.

"I was put in touch with a soldier last year whose family had cut him off when he went into the military," Mrs. Braccio explained. "We sent him boxes as well as letters, and continued to support him through his deployment."

Most of the care packages go to units ranging from three to 300 troops in all branches of the service.

"With each unit averaging 10 soldiers, it makes the number of troops we have touched at around 20,000 to 30,000," Mrs. Braccio said. "What an amazing testament to our communities."

The drive depends upon public support and monetary donations to cover shipping. Mrs. Braccio estimated that her "kitchen table event" is probably the largest individual effort of its scale.

She intends to hold another drive Oct. 18 and 19.

"Our only goal in organizing these efforts is to take an active role in raising awareness and supporting our troops," she said.

For more information, call Mrs. Braccio at (508) 481-9939.



» Add your comments to this article..



**PRESCHOOL LEAD**

Teacher Worcester Comprehensive at Great Brook Valley is ...

**WIRELESS SPECIALISTS**

with a retail background and / or individuals who ...

**EXECUTIVE**

**HOUSEKEEPER** The areas largest full service hotel & convention ...

**Nurses & C N A's!**

Oriol Health Care has a variety of openings full time, ...

**MEDICAL**

Worcester Surgical Center, a multi speciality ambulatory surgery ...

**DENTAL HYGIENIST**

FT to join our great dental practice in Marlboro. Warm ...

**GAS STATION**

**ATTENDANT** Peterson Oil Service of Worcester County seeks a ...

**DENTAL TECHNICIAN**

Needed in all phases of C & B. Exc. pay. (508)798- ...

**SPRINKLER**

**INSTALLERS / FITTERS**

Cintas Fire Protection, located in ...

**TEMPORARY PRESCHOOL**

**TEACHER POSITION:**

Full- time, 3-6 months. Accredited ...

**More great jobs at WorcesterWorks.com**

**Employers Advertise Here**