

Flag journeys from Iraq to Wayland

By Benjamin Smith / Daily News Staff

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WAYLAND -- Georgia Craig has received hundreds of letters from troops stationed in [Iraq](#) and [Afghanistan](#) thanking her for the support she has shown them.

"Reading the letters just grabs at your heart," the Sudbury mother of two said.

Craig has sent around 300 packages to individual troopers through the Web site [anysoldier.com](#). A flag sent in one of those packages will be part of the dedication of the Wayland Veterans Memorial Monument on Sunday to represent soldiers still serving on the battlefield.

Anysoldier.com was started by the family of Sgt. Brian Horn of the 173rd Airborne Brigade. Sgt. Horn would pass out a lot of packages his family sent him to his unit, and soon they began sending packages addressed to "Any Soldier" to let Horn know it was meant to be passed to somebody else.

Eventually the group established contacts in other divisions who would distribute care packages to their units. Soldiers are able to use the Web site to request specific items that may be needed and to thank people for the support.

Craig and her daughters stumbled across the Web site in October and began sending packages of snack foods, toiletries, magazines and a personal letter of support.

"In times like this there are two fronts -- the war front and the home front. Just as the soldiers have their obligations, we as citizens have obligations to liberty and freedom," Craig said.

Part of those obligations, she said, was supporting the soldiers so they would have the desire and ability to do their jobs. "I would not make a very good soldier, so I do what I can do on the home front," she said.

Using her job at the Longfellow Club, Craig placed collection boxes in the locker rooms and has received overwhelming support.

"The Brownie Troop of 7166 left a huge box of goods for me. I never saw them or spoke to them about it, they just left it for me like Santa Claus," Craig said, describing just one example of the response.

Longfellow Club and Mailboxes Etc. have helped with postage, Shaw's Market and Kappy's Liquor Store have donated "mountains of snack foods," while the New England Region of American Coaster

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Enthusiast Association gave her boxes of hotel toiletries.

Among the more recent items Craig has sent was an American flag that will be used in the dedication ceremony for the Wayland Veterans Memorial Monument. The flag, donated by Town Line Hardware, was sent to Sgt. Maj. Jerry Craig -- who isn't related to Virginia Craig -- of the Third Infantry Division, stationed in Baghdad. He took it on patrols through the city and had it flown over division headquarters before sending it back.

It will be one of three flags, each with a unique story, on display during the ceremony. Another of the flags honors a local World War I veteran and was donated by his family.

"I haven't looked that closely at it, but it might even have 48 stars on it, so it's really got an interesting story to it," said Jim Burkley, a member of the Wayland Veterans Memorial Committee.

The veterans committee and volunteers have been raising money for the monument for two years, so far netting about \$78,000. The 13-foot tall structure is engraved with the names of the 37 Wayland residents killed in conflicts from the American Revolution through Vietnam.

Featuring three black granite monoliths clustered together in an abstract design, the memorial is meant to be a thought-provoking symbol, Burkley said.

"We wanted it to show a bit of a different scene than most veterans memorials, with no guns or soldiers," he said. "This is a celebration of freedom and those that had to make the sacrifice for freedom."

The dedication ceremony will take place at Wayland Town Building, 41 Cochituate Road, at noon Sunday.

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