

Overseas but not forgotten

By Lisa Gentes / Daily News Staff

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SOUTHBOROUGH -- This Veterans Day, Southborough mother Lisa Braccio is hoping residents won't forget today's soldiers who are serving overseas.

Braccio is holding her second "care package" drive this weekend to help the men and women stationed in [Iraq](#), [Afghanistan](#), Qatar and Serbia.

"It's a significant weekend," she said of the Veterans Day holiday.

She came up with the idea after visiting www.anysoldier.com, which features requests from troops.

With the help of her husband, Matt, and the local VFW commander, Steve Whynot, her neighbor Sheila Fucci and family friend Tom Dickey, they're gathering supplies, boxes and funds to mail out the care packs.

"It's the most humbling thing all of us have done in our lives," Braccio said. "It's amazing."

The Southborough resident said there is no goal for the number of boxes they want to fill, but, "We're going to ship whatever we can get."

Her family adopted a few soldiers after the August drive she held, and the family's been writing to them and sending packages.

Some of the service members' requests include candy, microwaveable food, oatmeal, cookies, nuts, crackers and toiletries for both men and women.

"Those are the main things they're asking for," she said.

"We're taking care of local soldiers...but some are from California, Texas, Florida, Utah and New England," Braccio said.

She said the volunteers are also creating doggie care packs, with dog toys and biscuits for the canine units serving overseas.

After the last drive, the group shipped 607 packages overseas, reaching more than 180 units, "which was unbelievable," she said. This time, they're hoping to reach more than 220 units. The last drive cost them \$4,700 to ship the packs, but she's hoping this time around will be a bit cheaper.

Whynot, commander of the VFW Post 3276 in Southborough and a U.S. Navy veteran of the Vietnam War, said the donated goods will be boxed and shipped in time for the troops to receive them between Thanksgiving and Christmas.

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"I think it's great," he said of the drive. "The neat thing is, here come these packages with all kinds of goodies, and people are saying, hey, we don't care if it's right or wrong, we're supporting you."

"The kids need the support and deserve the support," he said of the troops. "These guys and women are doing their duty."

The drive is being held Saturday, from 8:45 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Sunday, from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., at the Southborough Senior Center at 9 Cordaville Road.

Saturday will kick off with a small ceremony and blessing of the troops, with members of each branch of the military present. One family of a soldier stationed overseas is expected to attend Saturday's ceremony, Braccio said.

The thank-you letters from the troops will also be on display, she said. The letters are "so spiritual and uplifting. It's amazing to me."

She also is trying to get letters and pictures from local children to include with the care packages.

"Bring a letter and we're more than happy to insert it into the box," she said.

For more information, to volunteer or to donate items contact Lisa Braccio at 508-481-9939.

(Lisa Gentes can be reached at 508-490-7461 or lgentes@cnc.com.)

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