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For any soldier Church invites all to join in giving

By PAM FIRMIN
pfirmin@sunherald.com

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Jims
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JAMES EDWARD BATES/SUN HERALD

Dan Triplett shops at Sam's in Gulfport for items to send to military personnel.

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Gulfport head for Iraq today in four small care packages addressed "ATTN: Any Soldier" sent by members of Greater Life Church in Ocean Springs.

The church invites others to help with future mailings so it can send more goodies, plus introduce the community to the church.

Keying on the "anysoldier.com" Web-based effort that started in 2004, the nondenominational group began to participate three months ago with "initially small packages." It seeks to increase mailings, said organizer Dan Triplett of Ocean Springs.

Boxes marked "ATTN: Any Soldier" are addressed to specific military contacts whose names and addresses are on the Web site as volunteers who will "put your letters and packages into the hands of Soldiers who don't get much or any mail first. Everything is shared," promises the site.

"You can never send too much," Triplett said. He cites the Web-site list of 3,506 contact soldiers for 101,654 service members, adding "... and I've got four (contacts)."

Passing the hat among church members netted \$125 for this month's mailing, enough to fill four 10-by-14-inch boxes with identical contents. Triplett does the shopping at Sam's Club in Gulfport and usually adds some more money at the last minute.

More important than the snacks, toiletries or CDs in each box, however, are the handful of personal letters from church members. That's what the service personnel value most, just ordinary daily details and expressions of appreciation from home, Triplett has been told. He photocopied each letter so it can be given to several different people.

"Now, letters are coming back to us," said church member Rose Horman. "They are really big on letters. We've all been writing letters and putting them in the packages. Now we're getting responses."

Triplett said: "The soldiers pretty much tell you what they would like to have; things safe to put in a box and send halfway around the world. Walk through your house and look at items you take for granted every day. That's what they want."

Although Triplett now handles the shopping, packing and mailing of shipments, he said, "I would like to have a time each month when we all get together and put packages together. We're helping people who are putting their lives on the line for us."

At a glance

What: Members of the nondenominational Greater Life Church in Ocean Springs invite



people in the community to join in sending monthly care packages to any soldier in conjunction with the anysoldier.com Web site to support military personnel in Iraq and Afghanistan.

How: Call Dan Triplett, organizer, at 424-2786 or Milton Williams, pastor, at 219-0018; or visit church meetings

Where: People can also send independent packages through anysoldier.com.

The church: The independent, 30-member Greater Life Church meets at 10 a.m. Sundays at the Mary C. O'Keefe Cultural Center on Government Street, Ocean Springs; is about one year old and named for what members believe - "that living for God will give us a greater life," said Williams. More at greaterlifechurch.com.



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