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**Burbs' Eye View** by Marion Callahan [mcallahan@phillyburbs.com](mailto:mcallahan@phillyburbs.com)

**Good people are helping troops in need**

The Intelligencer

Next week marks the four-year anniversary of the war in Iraq — a mission with needs that continue to fade from the daily radar of our lives.

We hear about fatalities, the numbers. We hear about the political squabbles that bring into question our purpose for being there. We hear about the crises at the medical centers.

Basically, we're inundated with stories that leave us feeling helpless and defeated.

Politics aside, the troops need us.

And two local women are inspiring reminders of just how much we can do from a world away.

Jamison mother Wendy Miller transformed her home into a temporary drop-off center for Bucks Soldier Support, where for the past three years she has shipped off just about everything a service member could use, from a roll of toilet paper to a Play Station video game system.

She knows what they need. You see, they write her. They write her from patrol zones in Iraq, where they are embedded in villages far from a PX or any other store for that matter. They write her from orphanages in Afghanistan, where soldiers ask her to help them clothe kids they see walking in the snow without shoes.

One letter that came in last week was from a team of soldiers guarding the Iraqi border who need sunscreen, personal hygiene products and "sport drinks to help keep electrolytes in the body."

She's got letters, hundreds of them, pulled from anysoldier.com, the Web site designed to link soldiers with people who can help.

"These are my babies," said Miller one recent day while clutching a group of letters, responses and thank-you notes that remind her of the difference her community of friends and volunteers are making.

The letters reflect ongoing relationships she's built with units that have

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come to depend upon her support. This letter is from a medic who needs clothes and materials to wrap injured soldiers transported out of Iraq.

"... We can not allow our brothers to leave our hospital cold. We need sweaters and socks, bedding linen. DVDs are among items that takes a soldier's worry off his injuries. ... We are blessed to have folks like yourself. ... It reminds the troops here that we are in fact not forgotten but how ever most loved. ..."

A growing number of letters are coming from women who are without feminine hygiene products. One female Army Specialist wrote: "And some of the females would like some nice female pajamas to sleep in. Speaking of sleeping, we could use sheets and blankets for our beds. Thank you."



One private in Afghanistan explained why many of these personal supplies are so difficult to get.

Last fall, he wrote: "Where we are is really in the middle of nowhere and the closest PX (military shopping center) is an hour and a half away down IED Road," said the soldier, who

expressed a need for coffee, snacks and hygiene supplies. "... I really don't want to ask for a lot from you. You are nice people."

Well, a whole group of nice people are coming to their rescue Sunday.

A network of community volunteers is expected to meet Wendy at her Jamison home to pack more than 130 boxes of supplies for troops in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Heather Slewiski, a Warminster volunteer, plans to be there. Slewiski, who also regularly ships supplies to service members, mans the phone lines weekdays for "Operation First Response." She is the Pennsylvania director of the nationwide effort to make sure injured soldiers and their families get what they need.

Throughout the day, she fields calls from service members, many of whom are burn victims and amputees, who are having trouble making ends meet because of the injuries they suffered.

"Some need financial help flying their relatives in to meet them at the hospital, some need help getting settled into civilian life. It's up to us to help pick them up and get them back on their feet again."

Two local women are among many local residents who go to great lengths to comfort and support troops fanned out across the battlefields of Iraq and Afghanistan.

Their work is evidence that our reach is felt. It makes me proud to live in a community that does so much to bridge the distance felt between the

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service members across the globe and folks back home who want to help but aren't always sure how.

And from this letter, written to Wendy by a platoon commander in Iraq, it appears the troops are thankful, too:

"Wow, that is all I can say about people like you. ... Things like this lets me know that people back in the states do care. ... You guys have taken time out of your busy schedules to do this deed. ... You will be blessed for it."

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