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# BUCKS COUNTY Courier Times

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## Online connections bring help to the front lines

By **THERESA KATALINAS**  
Bucks County Courier Times

Art Miller's frustration with the 5-year-old Iraq war has inspired him for the past two years to deliver medical supplies to troops and civilians in Afghanistan and Iraq.

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With help from St. Mary Medical Center, the Newtown Township resident provided 700 bottles of vitamins to Iraqi children, as well as 2,200 sutures and syringes small enough for a pediatric surgeon to use on injured youth.

Perhaps most amazingly, Miller, a retired advertising businessman, used his laptop, Internet connection, persuasive demeanor — and little else — to get and send help to the war-torn countries.

“Most of the work was done out there, sitting on the patio,” Miller said. “This is what an individual can do on their own.”

Miller and his wife, Harriet, started small a few years ago, using [www.anysoldier.com](http://www.anysoldier.com) and [www.soldiersangels.com](http://www.soldiersangels.com) to guide them in sending sweat socks, hats, gloves and other necessities to soldiers.

In 2005, Miller read an article about an Afghan infant flown to the U.S. for a life-saving surgery. Soon after, Cmdr. Sheldon Chatman, a pediatric surgeon serving in Afghanistan, used the Internet to seek help for Afghan boys Abdul Basit, 8, and Bibi, 7. Both needed surgery for congenital heart conditions, but Chatman told Miller that it could not be done in their country.

A determined Miller reached out to practically everyone, desperately trying to bring them to the U.S. He kept hitting walls. The only way out was to go to Afghanistan and get passports.

“I’m not going to a war zone,” Miller recalled thinking.

After more Internet surfing, Miller found two German heart surgeons who were going to Afghanistan “and looking for things to do.” Without leaving his home, Miller relayed the dilemma and sent the kids’ medical records to the doctors, who performed the surgeries during their trip.

“They’re both doing well,” Miller said, noting that he does not keep in touch with the boys or their families. “Once it’s over, it’s like over.”

Then last year, Miller got word

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that 23 Navy corpsmen were deployed to Iraq without combat trauma bags. The bags hold necessities, including pressure bandages, Neosporin, aspirin, emergency blankets and surgical masks.

"What good is a medic without bandages?" Miller asked. "It's like having a car with no gas."

Miller contacted a California manufacturer and had 125 combat trauma bags shipped overnight to Iraq.

"We went around the government," Miller said.

In August 2007, a sailor stationed in Fallujah wrote to thank Miller for his good deed and explain the importance of the equipment.

"My team of Navy Corpsmen (23) were deployed here without some of our equipment and were having trouble functioning without," the soldier wrote. "We were cannibalizing and putting together, making our own kits with what we had left over after missions."

Congressman Patrick Murphy, D-8, an Iraq War veteran, recalled riding in a Humvee without doors during his deployment. Vehicles lack the necessary shields to safeguard against roadside bombs, Murphy said.

"It's pretty clear that all the troops that are there didn't have correct body armor," Murphy said Thursday. "I think we need to give our troops every piece of equipment, every bit of training that we can give them."

**Theresa Katalinas can be reached at 215-269-5081 or [tkatalinas@phillyBurbs.com](mailto:tkatalinas@phillyBurbs.com).**

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