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Web site provides 'any soldier' care package option

By [Leo Shane III](#), *Stars and Stripes*
European edition, Saturday, January 29, 2005

WASHINGTON — Marty Horn understood the security concerns behind the Department of Defense's decision to stop care packages to "any soldier" being sent to Iraq and Afghanistan.

But he still wanted to help, so he has spent the last year fine-tuning a Web site that follows the restrictions and still get supplies overseas.

"I had 20 years in the Army; I'm aware of the system and the hassles with getting mail overseas," Horn said. "But people across America and the world are saying, 'We want to do something to help the troops.' I think this provides a conduit for them."

In 2001, Department of Defense officials banned anonymous care packages being sent overseas — including the popular "Any Servicemember" program touted by the likes of Ann Landers — after problems with anthrax and hoax chemical attacks in the U.S. postal system.

But Horn's site, www.anysoldier.com, allows troops to volunteer as a distributor for anonymous care packages, by asking donors to send items under the volunteers' names to "any soldier."

It connects citizens and overseas servicemembers through an online bulletin board, where the military personnel can request items such as batteries, work gloves or potato chips.

The site has grown dramatically over the last year; Horn estimates nearly 46,000 overseas servicemembers have received care packages through the site over the last 12 months.



Courtesy to Stripes
Marty Horn, a 20-year Army veteran and founder of www.anysoldier.com, with his son, Army Sgt. Brian Horn. Marty and his wife figured out a system to help others get packages to servicemembers they don't know. The Horns want people to know that their Web site system is available to anyone to use.

“It’s not just Americans who want to support our people fighting; it’s from all over the world,” he said. “The people in Australia have been amazingly supportive. It’s just great to see.”

Donors from England and Canada have petitioned him to launch similar sites for their countries’ troops, and Horn said he hopes to coordinate with Department of Defense officials to keep his program going after troops withdraw from Iraq and Afghanistan.

Horn and his wife, Sue, launched their effort while their son, Army Sgt. Brian Horn, was deployed in 2003-04. Brian Horn is part of the 173rd Airborne Division, based in Vicenza, Italy.

The parents received little information of the paratrooper’s war experience until they stumbled upon photos in an October 2003 edition of Stars and Stripes showing his unit sleeping outdoors without tents or pillows. When his parents asked how they could make him more comfortable, Brian asked them to think of his fellow soldiers, too.

The family began sending two sets of care packages, one addressed to “Brian Horn, Attn: Any Soldier” to share with his unit. As more friends and family sent gifts, Brian recruited other soldiers to act as contacts, distributing the items as they arrived.

Horn said he expected to recruit about 50 overseas contacts when he launched the site. After a year, he has more than 1,100 troops willing to act as distributors.

“They tell us how many male and female folks they’ll be taking care of, what they need, and even post pictures sometimes,” Horn said. “The Marines who have responded have been amazing, and you heard that from an Army guy.”

Horn said troops stationed in other parts of the world have started to post their requests online too. Next month he’ll add another Iraq contact to his list. His son is scheduled to be redeployed there, and jokes that everyone in his unit is already bothering him for care packages.

“I’m actually a little worried about the attention he’ll get,” Horn said. “He’s become so well known because of this, he is going to need a whole train for the support packages for his unit when he returns.”

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