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LOCAL NEWS

Senior project ensuring no soldier feels forgotten

By **HOLLY LOEFFLER**--Times Reporter

SAYRE -- He's sending bits and pieces of home to those overseas and in harm's way in packages addressed Attn: Any Soldier. He being Scott Pinkard, a student going into his last year at Sayre High School and working on his senior project -- collecting and sending items and letters to soldier's on active duty who might otherwise not get any mail.

Scott Pinkard stands with UPS Store owner Doug Van Allen, who is aiding Pinkard in packaging and shipping items; Title 1 Reading teacher Martha Close, who organized a letter to the troops writing campaign at Lynch-Bustin Elementary School; and Taylor Maslin, one of the students who authored a letter to sent along with items collected. Photo by Holly Loeffler

"It seems to me that we don't do enough around the community to help out the soldiers," said Pinkard. "I thought this was the perfect opportunity to do it."

Pinkard says that basic needs items such as toothbrushes and toothpaste, toilet paper, deodorant and combs are always appreciated, as are candy, gum, nuts and beef jerky. Even such things as beanie babies can be included in packages and are welcomed by the soldiers because they can then pass them on to children in the area of where they are stationed. Prepaid phone cards are also welcome but the thing that soldiers request most often are simply letters.

"That's one of the things soldiers really like to see. I'm trying to emphasize letters from home," said Pinkard.

Three classes at the Lynch-Bustin Elementary School wrote and illustrated letters to the troops to be included in Pinkard's packages, an effort organized by Title 1 Reading teacher Martha Close. Classes from Chemung and Towanda elementary schools also submitted letters to be sent.

Those wishing to donate items may drop them off at the UPS Store in Sayre or on the porch of 307 S. Elmer Ave., Sayre. Please note that any items containing alcohol cannot be sent. Pinkard is hoping to collect enough items to send out 100 packages. His goal is to do this before September.

He said he thinks he can reach his goal by what he has seen so far.

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"I'm excited. I really enjoy this... trying to organize it and getting in touch with people," said Pinkard.

Doug Van Allen, owner of the UPS Store, is helping Pinkard out and not just by collection donations for him. He is also helping with the shipping, providing packaging material free of charge and aiding Pinkard in getting the packages to the right people.

"Number one, as being part of the community, it's good to be able to help out the up and coming seniors in the Valley and the project itself is invaluable to the troops overseas," said Van Allen, "To me, you can't go wrong."

Pinkard is participating in a effort started in 2003 by Sergeant Brian Horn of LaPlata, Md., called Any Solder, Inc. While stationed in the Kirkuk area of Iraq, Horn agreed to distribute packages mailed to him labeled with "Attn: Any Soldier" to soldiers in his unit who were not getting any mail. Since then the effort has expanded and now has 3,711 military contacts spread throughout the Army, Marines, Air Force and Navy distribute such packages. To learn more about this effort, and read the regulations and recommendations, visit the website at www.anysoldier.com.

Pinkard heard about the Any Soldier, Inc., website while watching CNN and later logged on to the website himself. Thus, his senior project was born. Pinkard is also going about establishing his effort as an Eagle Scout project as well.

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