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Posted March 17, 2006

**Students show soldiers they care****By Belia Ortega***Sheboygan Press staff*

RANDOM LAKE—When Sean and Ashley Mullane of Random Lake Elementary School packed a care package for their father, a Marine serving in Iraq, Ashley sent him something special — she blew a kiss in the box before it was sealed.

"I drew him a picture and wrote him a letter," 6-year-old Ashley said. Under her drawing of her father, Sgt. Mike Mullane, in fatigues, she wrote, "I'm proud to be an American because my daddy is a Marine."

Third-grader Sean, 7, held on to his father's dog tag as he said, "I'm proud of you (Dad)."

The Mullanes are two of hundreds of Random Lake School District children who helped gather items for relatives, friends and other soldiers serving overseas. Beef jerky, socks, batteries, magazines, puzzles and deodorant were just a few of the scores of things the students collected.

What started as a community service project for Batavia and Random Lake elementary schools grew to include the alternative, middle and high schools, the elementary school PTA and several members of the community.



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Ashley Mullane, 6, a kindergartener, Sierra Glass, 16, a sophomore, and Sean Mullane, 9, a third-grader, put together a box filled with soldier supplies at Random Lake Elementary School Thursday morning. Glass' brother Michael, an Army medic, and the Mullane's father, a Marine sergeant, were both deployed to Iraq Dec. 1. Press photo/Sam Castro



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Together, they filled 165 boxes to be shipped overseas.

"I'm proud of them (students) on a daily basis, but this just wows everything," said Sandy Mountain, Random Lake principal. "It blows me away. I'm constantly amazed by the heart of this community."

Elementary students began by getting an online list of soldiers' requests from anysoldier.com. Each classroom was asked to fill two medium-sized U.S. Postal Service boxes. As word got out to Random Lake residents, hundreds of items and cash donations started pouring in. Some came as far as Washington and Ozaukee counties.

Dentists donated cases of toothbrushes, tubes of toothpaste and dental floss. Motels gave boxes of soap and bottles of shampoo and conditioner. Avon representatives gave lip balm, sunscreen and bug spray, said Joan Plant, the Random Lake teacher who was in charge of the project.

"We thought if each class came in with two boxes that would be great ... this one just reached a little further," Plant said.

Students also drew pictures and wrote letters of encouragement and support for the soldiers. One letter read: "You're my hero ... you fight for the war. Do you like chips and dip?" Another simply ended with, "Go Army!"

Random Lake fifth-grader Karli Heimerl, 10, whose cousins are serving in the military, said she went shopping with her mother to buy items especially for them and other soldiers.

"I sent my cousin stuff like socks so he doesn't have to walk barefoot," Karli said. "And I gave him food so he won't be starving and will be healthy."

High school English teacher Dale Robson, whose son, Ellis, is serving in the Army north of Baghdad, said the project was a community effort that got the whole town involved.

"I'm very grateful for what these kids have done," Robson said. "He (Ellis) left from Alaska and this is great because we didn't get to see him, so it's great that he'll get a package."

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Random Lake students packed 165 boxes to be mailed to soldiers in Iraq. Press photo/Sam Castro

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