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The Journal Gazette

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A real patriot act

Teen gives time, supplies to troops

Stefanie Scarlett | The Journal Gazette

On Friday, our country will celebrate July Fourth, or Independence Day.

Helping out

To donate socks, send them to Operation Socks

Fred for Kids

Today's headlines

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So fred started thinking about patriotism and what that means. What can kids do to be good citizens, year-round?

Fred decided to chat with a local expert about this: Alison Mansfield, 13.

You might have heard about Alison, who will be an eighth-grader at Summit Middle School this fall. She started a project called "Operation Socks for Our Troops" last year – she collected more than 5,000 pairs of socks and sent them to soldiers in Afghanistan.

"These small things we take for granted ... can help. It's really good for them to know they're appreciated. They're protecting our freedom every day," she says.

She's doing it again this year, and she needs your help. She'll have a booth at the Allen County 4-H Fair, if you want to drop off warm socks in adult sizes. She's also collecting letters, snacks and personal care products, like toothbrushes and soap. She'll send the items to troops she finds on www.anysoldier.com.

The project involves a lot of time and organization, but Alison plans to keep it going for as long as it's needed.

"As long as people are willing to donate supplies, I'm willing to take them," she says. Right now, she organizes the project on her own, with some help from her parents. Maybe someday she'll turn it into a non-profit organization.

She also plays volleyball and is a member of 4-H. Alison was a semi-finalist for Build-a-Bear's "Huggable Heroes" contest. And she placed third in the 2007-08 Patriot's Pen essay contest in which she compared herself to Paul Revere, because "he delivered important supplies to the military and supported them."

If you want to start your own project to help others, Alison has some advice: Find a cause you really like and follow through. Don't be afraid to ask for help from others, even by asking for donations of supplies or money. Start small; one letter can go a long way.

for Our Troops, 7136 Pine Lake Road, Fort Wayne, IN 46814. For information, call 312-3916.

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Need Tickets?

“Every little bit can help,” Alison says.

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