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## Wentzville police dispatcher makes connections with soldiers in Iraq

By Jessica Bock

ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH  
01/03/2007

**WENTZVILLE** — Della Williams doesn't have any family members who serve in the military, but the 34-year-old police dispatcher has made it her business to adopt a few.

It started in 2003 when Williams and her co-workers at the Wentzville Police Department adopted one of their officers who was deployed to Kosovo. The following Christmas, Williams wanted to help again. She began reading websites that connected her with soldiers stationed overseas, such as [www.anysoldier.com](http://www.anysoldier.com).

"It just takes you through so many emotions. You feel their homesickness," Williams said.

Since then, Williams has raised money for care packages for soldiers and helped others learn of programs that help soldiers. She organized a softball tournament in 2005 and the first Support Our Soldiers Motorcycle Ride from Wentzville to the state Capitol in Jefferson City. She has set up booths at Wal-Mart stores in Lake Saint Louis and Wentzville. A trivia night also was held.

She estimates she has raised \$8,000.

If the fundraising doesn't keep her busy enough, Williams also is writing letters and e-mails to about 10 soldiers. She also sends them care packages. Some are simple, filled with shampoo and hygiene items. Others are less practical and more fun with snacks like gum and Pringles. She also sends care packages with holiday themes for Halloween or Christmas.

To help with soldier support events organized by Williams, call her at 636-456-8454 or e-mail her at [della@liasway.com](mailto:della@liasway.com).

"I stand behind my American military and I want to support them and let them know how proud I am of them."

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Each package can take a couple of hours to put together, when accounting for shopping for items, filling out customs forms, packaging it and sending it off. If she hasn't organized a fundraiser to pay for it, the money comes out of her pocket.

Knowing that her letters and packages lift a soldier's spirits and show him or her they have support is what drives her, Williams said. And trying to get others involved, she said.

Williams would one day like to run an armed forces support organization.

"I stand behind my American military, and I want to support them and let them know how proud I am of them," she said. "Just a letter or card can change the course of a day, lift a spirit and put a smile on someone's face."

The Missouri National Guard recently honored Williams with a plaque for her volunteer work.

Missouri National Guard Spc. Melinda Runyon helped Williams organize a trivia night for a group of soldiers.

"She works long hours, but she still puts a lot of time into doing this," said Runyon, 23. "She really wants to grow and expand (her work)."

It's likely Runyon will soon know what it's like to receive one of Williams' care packages. She is headed for Iraq with her Guard unit.

"There's no doubt in my mind that we'll all be getting packages," Runyon said. "She is such a dedicated person."

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