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Students send troops 'letters from home'

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Troops stationed around the world can expect something special today as Letters From Home, a student organization, sent out packages.



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President Lynette Kregel, a senior in the College of Pharmacy, Nursing and Health Sciences, and longtime member of the group, first organized this project to help boost military morale.

Founded in the fall of 2005, the group has grown to 20 members who meet on a regular basis to engage in different activities, such as writing letters, making cards and sending care packages.

Founder Caitlin Fitzpatrick, a senior in the College of Liberal Arts, said the reason behind the group's conception began with wanting to find a way to support all troops, not just those who are deployed. She realized other organizations gave support to troops stationed in one specific area of the world, but other troops, such as those stationed in California or Hawaii, were often less recognized for their services.

"(It) makes our organization unique," Fitzpatrick said.

Letters From Home receives addresses of troops to send packages to from students at Purdue and others who know someone who's stationed. The organization also finds addresses of anonymous troops by using resources like www.anysoldier.com.

Through her experience, Fitzpatrick said the organization has also been seen as a support group for members who have personal connections with friends or family in the military.

Purdue acknowledged the success of the group's mailings by awarding them two Community Engagement grants.

"There is definitely a need (for such an organization)," Fitzpatrick said. "That's why it's been so successful."

In the past, Fitzpatrick said with every 50 packages sent out, 10 to 15 responses are received in return expressing gratitude.

"People really appreciate what we are doing," she said.

Fitzpatrick recalled one occasion in which a soldier stationed in the Middle East wrote to tell them a fellow soldier of his had received a package. Since he was a graduate of Purdue, he felt proud to know there was an organization at his former school that supported the troops in this manner.

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