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A little touch of home in Iraq

Bellevue's 'adopted' Army unit gets frequent care packages

BY HOWARD MCEWEN | ENQUIRER CONTRIBUTOR

BELLEVUE - When members of the 526th Forward Support Battalion of the 101st Airborne from Fort Campbell open their mail in the Iraqi desert, they may get a piece of Northern Kentucky.

The city of Bellevue has adopted them.

The city has sent monthly care packages since the unit was deployed in October.

ADVERTISEMENT "We intend to have a project each month to show our support for the unit," said Mary Scott, the city's clerk and treasurer.

In November, troops received care packages of soap, toothpaste, pens and paper, beef jerky, mints, eye drops and playing cards. December brought holiday presents. In January, Valentines were sent by local school children along with candy. The latest package contained puzzles, pens, paper and Girl Scout cookies.

Sales of "Support Our Troops" bracelets for \$2 each have funded the purchases and postage. Senior groups, Friends of Bellevue and Bellevue Vets have also contributed. The city also raises money at community events like their Concert in the Park and at church festivals.

"This project is truly a community project and is such a positive reflection on what a great community Bellevue is to both live and work," Scott said.

The city has received several thank-you notes from soldiers in Iraq and posted them on its Web site.

"I received a care package yesterday along with about 100 other soldiers from my company. It is nice to know that there are Americans out there that are grateful for our service," wrote Staff Sgt. John Condy.

"It really helps every soldier's morale when they receive packages and letters in the mail," wrote Spc. Ronald Smith.

"We hope that through our efforts we will show the troops just how much they mean to us in the community of Bellevue," said Mayor Jack Meyer. "We want them to be aware that we recognize the great sacrifices that they are making on our behalf. We have assembled a great group of volunteers that are doing a fantastic job. I am extremely proud of the efforts of our group."

The unit adoption was organized by the nonprofit group America Supports Americans. The group started during the Vietnam era when San Mateo, Calif., responded to a woman's request to help the morale of her brother's unit. Her brother was lost but the concept has lived and spread nationwide. More than 60 U.S. cities have adopted units.

Locally, units have been adopted by Alexandria, Cold Spring, Covington, Crestview Hills, Edgewood, Elsmere, Erlanger, Florence, Fort Mitchell, Fort Wright, Independence, Lakeside Park and Villa Hills.

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