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Eula Wright, right, a Retired Seniors Volunteer Program member, assists 102-year-old Heritage Home resident Alice Cooper in making cards for the troops in Iraq. Heritage Home residents have made cards for troops on several occasions.
/ The Valdosta Daily Times

Published June 15, 2007 11:08 pm - "Them's our boys," the 102-year-old said. "We need to do what we can, but I wish they'd let them all come home."

Seniors send cards to troops

By Dean Poling
THE VALDOSTA DAILY TIMES (VALDOSTA, Ga.)

VALDOSTA, Ga. —

Leftover Christmas cards have made a local group of nursing home residents pen-pals with soldiers in Iraq.

"In December, we were making Christmas cards for the residents to give to family and friends," said Beth Williams, a VISTA volunteer with Senior Volunteer Connection of South Central Georgia. "At Heritage House, we had so many left over I suggested we send some overseas.

"This incredibly vibrant and vocal resident immediately spoke up, 'Oh, yes. Our boys need to know we are thinking of them and praying for them to come home.'"

That resident was Alice Cooper, who was 101 in December and has since celebrated her 102nd birthday.

Cooper and several of her fellow Heritage House residents sent 200 Christmas cards to the troops. Since, the Heritage House residents have sent additional cards: 165 at Easter and more than 300 for the Memorial Day "A Million Thanks" drive. This past week, they were creating more cards.

While they would like to send cards to Moody Air Force Base personnel and local military personnel, the residents do not have access to those overseas addresses. So, Williams collects the allowed three addresses per day through the Internet site Anysoldier.com. And the residents send the cards to the names and addresses she collects.

The residents occasionally hear back from one of these soldiers. Marine Lance Corporal Victoria Kratz sent a "Greetings from Iraq" postcard to the group.

"I would like to let you know that your support and the support of the people you volunteer with and for is most deeply appreciated," Kratz writes. "I sincerely hope that you have gotten a good amount of responses especially from my fellow Marines because I know without a doubt that knowing there are people out there who truly care about our well-being brings up morale. If it is possible I would like for you to relay a message to our 101-year-old supporter and tell her thank you from the bottom of my heart for her unhesitant willingness to support us."

Lisa Hamilton, Volunteer Connection director, followed Kratz's instruction and presented Alice Cooper with a framed copy of the postcard and a photograph recently.

"Them's our boys," the 102-year-old said. "We need to do what we can, but I wish they'd let them all come home."

Through Volunteer Connection, the Retired Seniors Volunteer Program seeks volunteers who are at retirement age or older to work throughout the community. Some RSVP members work with children while some work in various locations, including volunteering in retirement homes.

RSVP visits local nursing homes an average of three Tuesdays per month. Some Tuesdays are spent playing bingo or in other activities and some are spent making cards for the troops overseas.

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Flora Passmore, Olivia Nelson, Eula Wright and Eula Godfrey are four RSVP volunteers helping Heritage House residents prepare cards. Wright has been an RSVP volunteer for 26 years. In helping the residents send cards overseas, these volunteers are helping the people whom they volunteer to help serve as volunteers to help others.

"It's a good thing making the cards for the soldiers," says Heritage House resident Willie Ratliff. "A good thing."

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