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Statistics

Photo Gallery

National Rankings

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Purdue group shows soldiers love

By **BETH STUTSMAN**

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Capt. Brian Lohnes knows what it's like to have to serve in the military far away from home.

He says he's thankful for the people who took the time to remember him and his fellow soldiers during his recent tour in Iraq.

"It's wonderful," Lohnes said about receiving packages from people he doesn't even know. "It's not only nice to receive the contents -- good food, letters and little items you can't get there -- but it's very special knowing people back in America were thinking about us."

On this Valentine's Day, members of the Purdue University student organization Letters From Home hope to put smiles on the faces of soldiers who are serving in Iraq. The group sends multiple packages throughout the year.

With help from Purdue's Arnold Air Society, the Alpha Phi Omega fraternity and a \$1,500 grant from a Purdue Community Engagement Grant, the organization sent five large boxes filled with homemade Valentine's Day cards, candy, magazines and other goodies.

What you can do

Anyone interested in joining or sending gifts to soldiers through the Purdue University student organization Letters from Home should contact the group at purdueletters@yahoo.com.

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Statistics

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Statistics

Photo Gallery

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Lynette Kregel, president of Letters from Home, hopes the packages mailed earlier this week make it in time for the holiday today.

"It's a way to support the local community, Purdue graduates and just anyone" who is serving in the military, said Caitlin Fitzpatrick, former president and organizer of the organization.

The group sends packages to addresses given them from community members and from addresses it finds on the Web site anysoldier.com.

Packages have gone to active military stationed throughout the world, Kregel said.

ADVERTISEMENTKregel says sometimes the group receives return letters from soldiers.

"One letter we received last month sent Iraq money back," Kregel said. The bill had a picture of Saddam Hussein's face on it.

Lohnes says it's wonderful that groups such as this form to support troops.

"Despite what people's personal feelings of the war in Iraq are, they're still in full support of the soldiers. It's nice to know," he said. "We don't make decisions about where to go or when we go, but we're proud to do our duty and serve."

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