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Salon owner collects care packages for soldiers

By GERRICK LEWIS
Advocate Reporter

NEWARK -- The Nail Place stands out, and not just because of the large hand with painted nails that greets passers-by.

The outside of the shop, 15 N. 21st St., is decorated with red, white and blue banners, flowers, paint and multiple American flags. Even the nails on the hand received a patriotic touch.

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But these aren't leftover decorations from Fourth of July celebrations. It is shop owner Lura Nickel's way of supporting U.S. troops overseas.

But Nickel's support doesn't stop at decorating her shop. For the past month, she has collected items to send off to the troops in Iraq as part of a care package drive she organized.

Along with her husband, Joe, and with the help of

local businesses and her customers, Nickel has made care packages for two soldiers she adopted through the Web site, <http://anysoldier.com>.

Her shop is littered with a number of toiletries, snacks -- including the oft-requested tuna and oysters -- and candies, small stuffed animals, cigarettes and comfort items that she packs throughout the night to mail out.

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Morgan Wonorski, The Advocate

Lura Nickel, owner of The Nail Place in Newark, is shipping care packages to soldiers stationed in Iraq. She and her husband, Joe, have been collecting items from customers and other businesses.

On the Web

- Information about the Nickels' efforts and how to contribute can be found online at thenailplace.net.
- To adopt a soldier, log on to <http://anysoldier.com>.



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"I send off five packages every other day, which is all you're allowed by the post office and customs," she said.

Nickel said she got the idea to start the drive after watching CNN reporter Anderson Cooper one day and saw a soldier talk of being let down by the media coverage of the war.

Finding a soldier wasn't easy. After talking with a local soldier, she was referred to the Web site, where she compiled a list of items and posted it on her Web site.

She said she wants more people to take it upon themselves to send items to the troops. "Anybody can go on <http://anysoldier.com>, adopt a troop and send them the stuff they need," she said.

She said the hottest commodities among the troops are beef jerky, travel-sized toilet paper, phone cards and undergarments. She said the items made by children mean the most to the troops. She had a package of illustrations by children ready to send.

Joe Nickel said they received a large number items from businesses across the city.

"Not a lot of people get involved, which surprises me," he said. "You don't know how much these care packages mean to the troops."

Lura Nickel said she the biggest obstacles are making sure the packages make it through customs and that she has packed enough for the soldiers she adopted because she wants to make sure no one is left out.

"This (drive) isn't about whether or not you think we should be at war," she said. "We're there. So now we need to support them and get them the things they need."

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Originally published August 1, 2007

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