

JACKSONVILLE

DAILY PROGRESS

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News

Locals keeping service men and women in their hearts

By Samantha Swindler - Progress Managing Editor

Scrolling through thousands of names and stories, Bill Thompson found one soldier's story who stood out from the rest - that of Rusty Crane.

Thompson, a Jacksonville resident, was a first time visitor to Anysoldier.com, and he recommends anyone who clicks on the site should have a box of tissues handy.

"I found out about this through a lady I worked with whose son was in the Marines," Thompson said. "I spent over four hours on the computer."

Anysoldier lists e-mails written by soldiers and gives mailing instructions and wish-lists for donators to fulfill. The unit of Rusty Crane that Thompson has chosen to support is a group of eight soldiers who spend weeks at a time on field missions.

"I've seen some letters where they are asking for CDs and batteries and all this," Thompson said. "This man, he is just asking for a letter. Some of these people have not even gotten a letter. These poor boys, they are out there (away from camp) weeks at a time. Some are getting tons of support. Some are getting none."

Thompson set up a collection jar at Rainbow's End Salon in Jacksonville, and is mailing three boxes with \$150 worth of goods overseas - boxes filled with water bottles, socks, beef jerky, tuna fish, Gatoraide, foot powder, and supportive letters to the troops. Thompson said he thanked Rainbow's End, Grace Visiting Nurses & Home Health Services and Jacksonville Healthcare Center for their support in this project.

"Our government is not doing enough. Our companies are not doing enough. There's a lot (of soldiers) who are not getting anything, so that's what I'm doing," he said. "I'm just a citizen trying to get other citizens involved."

Those who wish to help Thompson send his goods can leave cash donations at Rainbow's End Salon, 101 E. Commerce St.

For those who cannot make a donation, Thompson said, "It only costs 37 cents to write a letter to them. Get the Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts to write a letter to them. Mail is the most important thing when you are at war or when you are away from home."

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The Daily Progress is also seeking information, stories, pictures and letters from local soldiers who are currently serving anywhere overseas for a series on local heroes and heroines.

Anyone who has a friend, child, spouse or loved one stationed overseas can contact the Daily Progress news room at 903-586-2236 or via e-mail at editor@jacksonvilleprogress.com

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