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Girl, 12, collects Christmas cards for U.S. troops

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LEISA THOMPSON | THE ANN ARBOR NEWS

Destiny Lanay Eadie, 12, has collected more than 7,000 Christmas cards to send to U.S. troops in Iraq and Afghanistan.

"I figure every card is one smile on someone's face," - *Destiny Eadie, 12, who has collected more than 7,000 Christmas cards to send to U.S. soldiers in Iraq and Afghanistan.*

BY LIZ COBBS
The Ann Arbor News

Destiny Eadie has learned the art of networking.

But it's not for social or financial advantages. The 12-year-old Van Buren Township resident wants Christmas cards and she's found people from across the country willing to give them to her.

The grateful recipients are U.S. troops serving in Afghanistan and Iraq.

As of Friday, Destiny had collected 7,200 Christmas cards from schools, businesses, individuals, friends and family members. The cards, which include greetings from the signers, are shipped to individual military members.

"When I get e-mails from the people receiving the cards saying how much they like them, and with my family, friends and teachers helping out a lot and saying I was doing a good thing, that inspires me to continue," said Destiny, a seventh-grader at Van Buren's South Middle School.

A U.S. Army chaplain thanked Destiny on Friday in an e-mail in which he wrote in part, that the "cards were very uplifting and my soldiers really enjoyed having them. I want to commend you on achieving that many cards in such a short amount of time. I see the makings of a leader (maybe a military officer like myself one day)."

Destiny was also recognized Thursday by the Washtenaw County Detachment No. 414 of the U.S. Marine Corps League.

"We made her an honorary member," said Dale Cutshaw, the league's commandant.

Destiny said she was also honored by a Marines squad last year that sent her an American flag, after flying it in Al Asad, Iraq, as well as on a Prowler jet during a combat mission while supporting ground troops.

"I feel very honored to have it," she said of the flag.

The "Cards From Destiny" project began in 2005, when Destiny wanted to send a card to the son of a coworker of her father, Michael. Destiny never met Air Force Staff Sgt. Cody Green, who at that time was in Kirkuk, Iraq, but asked if he would like a Christmas card.

Destiny said she was told to visit the anysoldier.com Web site where she could read Green's request for Christmas cards "from people back home."

Reading postings from Green and other military personnel gave her an idea, her mother Shada (pronounced "Shayda") Eadie said.

"Destiny told me she could have people sign cards and she would mail them with the \$20 in baby-sitting money that she had," Eadie said.

Amazingly, Destiny collected 578 cards in three weeks.

The card project gained momentum in 2006. Destiny's goal was to send 2,000 cards. She collected 3,600 cards.

This year, Destiny set out to collect 4,000. She's now more than doubled her goal.

"Basically, I had a lot of the same people asking if they could do it again this year and more businesses and more schools helped," she said.

Destiny also went to different places, like a craft show at Davison High School in Davison, Mich., where she set up a table for card-signing. Destiny recalled one woman, holding a 6-month-old baby cried "because she was so touched by what I was doing."

"Her husband is fighting in Iraq now," Destiny said.

Periodically, a military member contacts Destiny to thank her for what she's doing. Recently, Destiny said an officer of the 107th Engineer Battalion out of Ishpeming, sent her an e-mail to "let me know how much they loved reading the letters from the younger children."

Although Christmas is about two weeks away, Destiny still plans to send cards. About 250 cards can be shipped in flat-rate boxes that cost \$9 to mail, her mother said.

"We're not going to turn down any cards that come in," Eadie said. "A card can make a soldier smile whether it's before Christmas or after."

Destiny said she sent the 7,000th card to the one who inspired her to begin the project: Staff Sgt.



LEISA THOMPSON/ANN ARBOR NEWS

Destiny Lanay Eadie, 12, gets a hug from Lori Mull, a mother of a soldier who just returned home from Iraq. During a ceremony at the Ypsilanti American Legion Post #282, Mull placed a Fleet Marine Force pin on Destiny's sweater that makes her an honorary member of the Marines.

Cody Green, who's now in Afghanistan.

"I sent the card to him to show my appreciation for all he's doing," Destiny said.

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