

## Greeting card drive brings warm Holiday wishes to more than 9,000 Canadian servicepersons



Canadian soldiers are set to spend the holiday season scattered across the country and around the globe ? but thousands service persons will receive an extra-special greeting this Christmas thanks to community efforts.

Last week, Dianne and Brian Harrison of Aurora sent their final batch of Christmas and Holiday cards to members of the Canadian Armed Forces. Over the last few months, the couple has been organizing groups and individuals across Ontario to write a single or a batch of cards for the initiative, each of which has been packed and mailed to military and naval bases throughout Canada and to many overseas.

Through this collective efforts, 9,122 cards packed into 55 festively-decorated boxes were collected, winging their way to their recipients.

?It was a phenomenal year,? says Dianne, noting the Optimist Club of Aurora produced 4,000 cards below, with more coming in from groups in Barrie, Niagara Falls, Ingersoll, and London, ON.

One of the earliest boxes sent reached its destination right before Christmas and Dianne says they were particularly heartened to receive an email response back from servicepersons now in Jerusalem.

?We got a letter that they received our boxes, they were thrilled to get them and glad we remembered them,? she says. ?The letters were really heartwarming. I think because there is so much in the news and people know what's going on, they want the military to know that we care back home. The thing that blew my mind is [all these people] wrote the cards, got them to us, and we got them all out on time.

?I want to thank them for taking the time. It only takes five minutes to write two or three cards. If everybody sat down and wrote one card of gratitude and respect, can you imagine the boost they would feel overseas not being home for Christmas? That is one thing that was in the email from the fellow in Jerusalem. He said he was so glad we were thinking of them back home. I know every card, they feel that? I have always said in the past, sender and receivers are truly blessed with these cards.?

While this year's Christmas Cards for Soldiers campaign is wrapped for 2023, Dianne Harrison reminds residents its never too late to get started on 2024. Boxing Day sales, for instance, are just around the corner, so think about picking up a box of cards ahead of the

next round.

?We must remember our military,? says Harrison, noting she would love the Federal Government to allow free mailings to servicepersons year-round rather than just the holidays in order to reach them around Canada Day. ?It's because of them we have our freedom.?

By Brock WeirEditorLocal Journalism Initiative Reporter