

Send goodwill to soldiers stationed at home and abroad with holiday card initiative

On Saturday, November 11, thousands of people from across Canada gathered at Cenotaphs to pay tribute to the fallen, standing alone with their thoughts through moments of silence and the playing of the last post.

While some who paid tribute to the men and women who paid the ultimate sacrifice for King, Queen and Country have seen service themselves, so many more can't begin to imagine the realities they faced back then, and still face now as serving personnel.

This holiday season, you have the chance to show your appreciation for the Canadian men and women serving at home and abroad thanks to a holiday card initiative being spearheaded once again this year by Aurora residents Brian and Dianne Harrison.

For close to 20 years now, the couple has organized efforts across Ontario and beyond to collect thoughtfully-written cards to help spread the joy of the season to those far from home.

Each year, they fan out to scores of communities across the Province with colourfully-decorated boxes in which participants can drop off their cards and notes. After the deadline, which is set for November 24 this year, the hard work begins: packaging dozens upon dozens of boxes of cards which are subsequently mailed to our naval bases on the Atlantic and Pacific Coasts, and also to Belleville where the Canadian Armed Forces distributes them to all parts of the world where Canadians currently serve.

With the turmoil now facing the Middle East, and the war that still rages in Ukraine, Dianne Harrison believes it is more important now than ever before to show your support through the written word.

"Our goal this year is 8,000 cards and we want to hit 30 bases around the world," she says. "We just want them to be safe. You can't imagine what they are going through. They are seeing things that no one should see in their lifetime. It breaks my heart what is happening to these people and the children, and our military are witnessing this. They may be thinking about their own child at home, thanking the Lord that their family is safe. It's just not in our minds that these things can be happening."

"We want people to send caring words. It's about the sincere message. On the return envelope, if they would like to include their return address or their email, they could possibly hear back from a soldier. If they don't, that's okay. That isn't the reason why they sent that card. The reason they were sending that card is just to touch that person's heart."

This year, more organizations than ever are helping to support the cause.

In Aurora, for instance, the Cubs and Scouts that are based at the Salvation Army's Northridge Community Church have, over the last couple of months, taken 20 minutes out of every meeting to write cards.

"They have done a fantastic job and they really mean what they are writing," says Harrison. "We're also really pleased this year the residents of Kingsway Place Retirement Residence are taking part and writing cards this year."

Additional support is coming from the Optimist Clubs of Aurora and Barrie, community groups in London and Niagara Falls, ON, and businesses such as the Royal Rose Gallery.

For more on how to become a part of the program, you can reach out to Brian and Dianne Harrison at bdharrison2012@gmail.com.

By Brock Weir
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