

Christmas Card campaign for soldiers in full swing for Remembrance Week

At Remembrance Day services across the country, we pay silent tribute to the men and women who paid the ultimate sacrifice for King, Queen and Country.

But if you had the chance to tell them what their service meant to you, what would you say?

Well, you can express your thanks to serving members of the Canadian Armed Forces this holiday season with a simple card in a drive spearheaded by Aurora resident Dianne Harrison.

Now in the second half of her second decade leading the charge of collecting thousands of cards from residents that are then distributed to Canadian servicepersons stationed from coast to coast to coast, and all around the world, Ms. Harrison is visiting schools, libraries and other gathering places to help reach her goal of 8,000 cards for the troops.

Each year, Ms. Harrison is moved by the messages that come in from everyone ranging from Grade 1 students to seniors, but says this year's messages have added poignancy as youngsters remain concerned about Russia's illegal war in Ukraine and the impact that might have on the rest of the world.

"I am getting notes and emails back from our students who are making cards this year, so we're going to have a lot of cards this year made with love and respect," says Ms. Harrison. "I tell the kids to just let [the soldiers] you're writing to know you care about them back home. People forget that their families are giving up so much with them being overseas. The cards are made with so much love and respect. We were overwhelmed and touched last year by what the kids were saying. I think the kids are more aware of what's going on now and what's happening. They know more about the world and COVID has opened their eyes.

"One family on Golf Links Drive said their kids want to know more about the world and Canada. They got a note last year from the northernmost part of Canada at a post and wanted to know where it was. I think it has given the kids a good idea of geography, because in a lot of cases they haven't heard of these places before."

While cards aren't addressed to any specific serviceperson, rest assured they will all reach good hands "and one of the bonuses of writing is you simply don't know what kind of response you'll get, or from where.

One serving member wrote to kids last year from the Arctic and said, "It's so cold up here that when we got your cards we smiled, our faces froze, and our smiles lasted for quite a while," Harrison recalls.

"Kids know what's going on in the world [including Ukraine]. Even our grandchildren are talking about what's going to happen. Is there going to be a war? That's a concern. One of our granddaughters said, "Are we going to have fighting and bombs here in Canada?" and this is from a 12-year-old."

At the end of the day, these cards are just a simple way to say "thank you" to the people who put themselves in harm's way for King, Country, friend and neighbour.

"People don't have to put a stamp on it, it's free of charge," says Harrison. "I encourage people to take cards into work and have their coworkers sign them, too. What does it take to go out and buy a box of cards? A box of cards is nothing compared to what these soldiers are doing for us. It's the least we can do back home."

Completed cards can be placed in drop boxes located at Aurora Town Hall, the Aurora Public Library, the Aurora Seniors' Centre, and the Aurora Family Leisure Complex. Writers can also contact Dianne Harrison and husband Brian to arrange pick-up at bdharrison2012@gmail.com.

Cards and letters must be received by November 28.

By Brock WeirEditorLocal Journalism Initiative Reporter