

Let them know you care: Cards and letters to Canadian soldiers collected through November 16

By Brock Weir

A few kind words can pack a punch, especially if you're away from home over the holidays. If you are serving your country, this can have an even more powerful impact.

People across the country are taking the time this week to sit down and write a few words to Canadian Servicepersons stationed around the world in the lead-up to the Holiday Season, including here in Aurora.

Local resident Dianne Harrison, as she has done for the past thirteen seasons, is once again making the final push for cards and letters. It is a mission that has become a passion, and she has dedicated the last few weeks to going into local schools, seniors' centres, municipal facilities, and residential buildings to deliver cards and drop boxes which, she hopes, will be groaning under the weight of your greetings and kind words.

'We set our goal last year at 3,000 card and we hit 5,500,' says Ms. Harrison. 'This year, we've set our goal for 4,000, so we will probably hit more than that. We try to increase by 1,000 a year and we seem to get 1,000 to 2,000 more than we thought. I like to lowball it and get really excited when we go above our target!'

Boxes to drop off your cards are now available at a number of area locations, including Aurora Town Hall, the Stronach Aurora Recreation Complex, the Aurora Family Leisure Complex, Aurora Seniors' Centre, Northridge Community Church, Switzer Carty Bus Lines in Bradford, and in the lobby of the apartment complex of 15 Brookland Avenue.

Christmas, Hanukah and other seasonal cards are available from Ms. Harrison upon request if you do not have the means to provide the material yourself.

'We had kids in Calgary, British Columbia and Nova Scotia doing cards and now they have their students doing them,' says Ms. Harrison. 'One response we received last year was fantastic: the writer had sent their email address with their card and they got an email back from a fellow stationed in Iraq. He sent pictures and wrote about the day in the life of a soldier. He wrote that the first thing he does in the morning is shake out his boots and make sure there's nothing inside. One morning he shook out a scorpion. He showed the letter-writer inside the mess tent, camels and all sorts of things. He's a pilot and showed himself in the plane fuelling up another plane. The kids were just so excited about this letter and that he took the time to reply.'

'Another lady at the Seniors' Centre called me last year and said, 'Dianne, it's my 85th birthday today and I just got a card from a soldier!' It was pretty exciting. Even if people don't receive a letter back, the fact they have taken it out of the goodness of their heart to take the time and let someone know they care is just so important. We're moving further and further away from the World Wars, but we have veterans from Afghanistan and people now who are fighting for our country. Let them know you care!'

To send a message to our service men and women, you can drop off cards at any of the locations listed above, or contact Ms. Harrison directly at bdharrison2012@gmail.com to arrange pickup or to obtain cards. All letters received will be delivered by Ms. Harrison to CFB Borden and, from there, they will be sent off to recipients around the world.