

Organizers mobilize to collect 10,000 holiday cards for serving soldiers

As she looks toward the 20th anniversary of mobilizing the community to write Christmas and Holiday cards and messages to Canadian soldiers serving at home and abroad, Aurora's Dianne Harrison, along with husband Brian, have set a goal of 10,000 cards this year ahead of their milestone.

"Our troops need to know that we are thinking of them at this special time of year and that we honour the sacrifices they are making by not being home with their families," say the Harrisons in their annual outreach to GTA communities. "Our goal this year is 10,000 cards to let the soldiers know that the community cares."

By Saturday, the Harrisons had collected nearly 4,000 cards from community members, and, with the help of community organizations like the Optimist Club, are confident they will hit their mark by the time of the final card pickup on November 25.

With ongoing conflict raging in Ukraine and the Middle East, with the US Presidential election as an added stressor, Dianne says these examples of strife "makes us more aware that we need to show more compassion."

"Sometimes we're so wrapped up in our own world and we live in a peaceful world, so we don't realize what our military is giving up. They are giving up so much and they have a chance of losing their lives and I think we take that for granted," she says of soldiers and service personnel. "We're so concerned about the elections and the impact it is going to have on us, but also the impact of what is happening around the world - all those children's lives. Those kids don't even have a life to start; how does that impact our military when they see a dying child or have a dying child in their arms and they have a child of a similar age back home? What does that mean to them?"

"I think everyone is scared. I think they are having a reality check, they really are. Give up your Tim Horton's coffee one time and buy a box of cards. Don't think of yourself buying a cup of coffee; think of your military who are giving up their time for you to have your coffee. Let's give back because they are giving so much."

For more information on writing the cards, or to arrange for pick-up of completed cards, email the Harrisons at bdharrison2012@gmail.com.

The first batch of cards will be sent to branches of the Canadian Armed Forces on November 18, with the second batch set to go on November 25. The absolute deadline for submissions is December 2.

By Brock Weir