

# **How To Run an Adopt A Soldier Project**

**Courtesy of the Rotary Club of Asbury Park, NJ**  
**AsburyParkRotary.org**

## **Introduction**

Every Rotary Club is impacted when a unit of soldiers is deployed to a battle zone. It may be a family member, a friend, or a neighbor in your community. A club can use this opportunity for Community Service by helping to meet critical needs of the deployed unit.

## **Identify a Unit of Soldiers**

Once you have found a deployed unit of Soldiers, you must establish a contact individual in the war zone. A Chaplain, a Medic or an officer in the Headquarters Company is the best contact. Make sure you have their precise address. Also, find their stateside contact, usually their spouse or parent, to be a channel of communication. You can also reach out to the unit's rear detachment commander if that fails.

## **Organizing the Effort**

Select a Chairperson to run with the project. First step is to find out specifically what the adopted unit needs. Use the list on the last page as a starter. Make sure you communicate with your stateside contact to insure you will be collecting and sending things the troops really need.

## **What to Send**

Each deployed unit has its own set of special needs. It may be a female unit with insufficient feminine supplies. It may be soldiers sleeping in tents on the ground needing extra blankets. It maybe troops that need specific personal supplies like dry socks, chapstick, Q-tips, simple medical supplies, etc. It may be entertainment items to make the time pass quickly like used magazines, DVD's, playing cards, paperbacks, etc. There may be an issue with bugs and sand so large zip lock bags are needed.

List the items you want to collect with do's and don'ts. Once you have all the information, prepare a fact sheet for your members. Use attached Asbury Park project worksheet as an example. Make sure you have people at work, boy scout troops, church groups, etc. help with the effort.

Learn about the unit you have adopted. What base or fort they come from. Get recent news articles about their deployment. Make it a very personal story for the club's members. This will help to gain interest in the project.

Letters and Cards are also wonderful to send. Have school children, seniors, etc write a letter of thanks to be passed around to the troops. An arousing photo of your club is also good to send with each box.

## **When to Send**

Troops need many of these items through-out the year. So anytime is a good time to organize an Adopt-A-Soldier Project. It is best right after they deploy because they discover what they need. If you want the items to arrive before Christmas, run the project in early November and send the items by Thanksgiving. It takes 3 to 4 weeks for all the boxes to arrive.

## **How to Send**

Here comes the tricky part of dealing with the USPS. The Post Office does give a small discount when sending to the troops. For us on the East Coast, it's best to send to the APO in New York. Sending to the Marines and Navy will cost more since via the FPO in California. Secure plenty of packing materials prior to the packing party. Use the Post Office's large flat rate boxes for the heavy items such as magazines, batteries, granola bars, etc. Use regular size boxes about 12 x 16 x 20 for the lighter items. If the box is too big, the

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Post Office charges a higher weight price to ship. Go to [www.USPS.com](http://www.USPS.com) to determine the postage rates by the pound so you will know what the cut-off is for the flat rate boxes. (Only heavy stuff in the flat-rate boxes.)

All packages must have a "Customs Form". Get a good supply. Have a couple of people fill them in ahead of the packing day. Also, ask your local Post Office for 1<sup>st</sup> Class packing tape. They will usually give the tape to you for free.

Have a *packing party* at someone's home on a Saturday or Sunday afternoon. Have the items collected dropped off just prior or use their home as staging area. 12 to 15 volunteers are enough to pack. Have a scale to weight the flat-rate boxes.

Separate the heavy items from the light items. Pack the heavy in the flat-rate boxes. Use the special flat-rate document box to ship all the magazines. Number each box and as they are packed, record in general terms what is in each one. Do not purchase insurance.

Since it may take as much as a minute to process each box, arrange a time with your local post office to bring all the boxes in.

## **Money for Postage**

Sending these items isn't cheap. Figure about \$1.25 per pound. Many people will find it inconvenient to buy or donate items so let them help pay for the postage.

*Good luck with your project!*

**God Bless out Troops!!!**

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Rotarians,

We are adopting a large Battalion of Marines stationed in the SW corner of Afghanistan attempting to secure an area the size of Vermont. Their unit is the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion 4<sup>th</sup> Marine Regiment also known as the 'Thundering 3<sup>rd</sup>'. Our contact is a Naval Corpsman (Medic) by the name of Matthew from New York State. He will make sure the items we send go to the soldiers who are in true need.



Here is a brief word form Matthew's father:

*Here is a picture of Matthew and his new born daughter (one week old here, Kierra Anne was born on 9/11/09) and his wife Kim as he was departing for Afghanistan. Matt arrived in Afghanistan approximately one month ahead of the main body of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion 4<sup>th</sup> marine Regiment to help get things set up. We want to thank you and all the members of the Rotary Club for your concern and devotion to our deployed troops in Afghanistan. God Bless you.  
Best Regards,  
Ray and Leslie*

Traudy knows Matthew's father and Ray is thrilled that we would do this for his son's unit.

Here's a great article that talks about the 3 / 4 BN deployment back in October.  
<http://abcnews.go.com/WN/Afghanistan/afghan-town-us-marines-crossroads/story?id=9152057>

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Here is this year's list for items these marines need.

**Money for Postage** – We always need contributions towards shipping. Because we ship through San Francisco, the cost will be higher this year.

## **Comfort and Food Items**

Micro-Fleece Blankets (twin sized)  
Warm Socks - black or green and wool is best  
Granola Bars, Cereal Bars, and Energy Bars  
Powdered Energy Drinks (Propel and Gatorade)  
Hot and Cold Drinks (Hot Cocoa, Coffee and Tea)  
Dry Soups  
Gum and Candy – **must be individually wrapped**  
Beef Jerky and Slim Jims – **no pork products**  
Peanuts, Nuts and Sunflower Seeds  
Cookies and Crackers that travel well

## **Entertainment & Personal Items**

Chap Stick with SPF 15, Q-Tips  
DVD's (new or used) – Look for old movies, westerns, etc  
**Powdered** Laundry Detergent w/o optical brighteners (Bold, Cheer, All and Surf are okay)  
Baby wipes  
Disposable razors and shaving cream  
Head Phones  
Used Magazines – Golf, Car & Driver, Sports, Motorcycles, Hunting, etc.  
Game Books – Sudoku, Cross-Word, Word Find, etc  
Batteries – AA most common  
Playing Cards  
Zip-Lock Bags – both 1 gal and 2 gal size

Start to buy the items and hold on to them until details come out when we will have a packing party.

Thank you to everyone who contributes. These soldiers who are serving appreciate everything we do for them.