

Caring for Our Soldiers

The U. S. casualties of Iraq war reached landmark of 2,500 dead and 18,490 wounded in mid June. The tragic death of two soldiers who were kidnapped by insurgents prey upon the conscious of every service men and women, as well as their parents and families. Our service men and women several thousand miles away from home are in the very alienate desert land. Many of them have broken relation, dissolute marriage; many of them miss their children dearly. They all carry the emotional baggies – fear, grieve, love, longing. Worst yet, they need to stay constant guarded because everybody knows the price of being kidnapped. It is the kid of enemy that has no regards to civilization.

“Caring for our solders” is a project initiated by Vandy Chang of NATWA Kansas Chapter last year. During May and June this year, Kansas Chapter sent out more than a dozen Care Packages to our troops in Iraq, Kuwait, and Afghanistan. We want them to know that people back home understand their sacrifices and appreciate them. NATWA Care Committee chairs (Vandy and Jin) are both very involved in this project. This is an endeavor that any participant can do wherever they live and whenever their time allow. We are encouraging NATWA sisters and their families to join us. The more contributing volunteers we have, the more soldiers we can reach.

About this endeavor:

Caring for Soldier - Initial Information

Our Care Co-Chair Vandy Chang provides the initial information to all volunteers – name, APO/FPO (Army Postal Office), hometown, and nothing else.

Safe Guard Information

We abide by the military protocol. We can't reveal soldiers' identity, no publicize. This is a low key operation.

We follow the general instructions at beginning; but as we know our soldiers better, then we tailor into their needs.

How do we ship the packages?

We get the flat rate priority boxes from local post office. We pay \$8.10 per package with no limit on weight. It takes 7-10 days to reach Iraq. The \$8.10 covers from our address to the nearest Army Postal Office (APO) in the U.S. The Army pays from U.S. APO to Iraq/Kuwait/Afghanistan.

We pay 39 cents stamp for sending letter to soldiers, instead of international postage.

Do we decide who to ship to?

We don't.

We take it on as soldiers' name is given. Urgency dictates what we sent. We put Iraq as priority, but the recent events turn out Kuwait and Afghanistan are just as dangerous as Iraq.

How many soldiers can we reach?

It depends. Some are individual soldier; some are platoon leader or a unit.

We would like to reach as many as we can, that is why we are encouraging more contributors to join us. The more budget or the more volunteers we have, the more soldiers we can reach.

What should a volunteer do?

You can start with one or two soldiers. Send them Care Package, write them letter. There is no limit on how much or how little you can do.

Both Co-Chair of NATWA Care Network, Vandy and Jin will provide you with form letter, answering your questions until you feel comfortable to do it.

If you prefer we do the work and you foot the expense for one or two packages, as your gift to an American Son or Daughter, then we will do within the budget comfortable to you.

What is inside the package?

Though every package is different, but following is the norm -

A **letter** describing the Care Package is from North American Taiwanese Women Association with brief introduction of who we are and why we are doing this.

A \$10 AT & T **phone card** with approx. 60 minutes talk time to allow them to call Mom and Dad, wife/husband and children.

An **Under-armor T-shirt** and/or socks. With heat above 100 degrees beating down from the sky, heat reflects from the ground and wearing the body armor, there is no ventilation for the body sweat to evaporate. It is miserable. A 100%-cotton, absorbent T-shirt is a basic need.

Chewing gum: Because running water is not available in the desert and they can't brush their teeth, the chewing gum serves as oral hygiene and keeps their saliva moistened.

Fruit candy, dry fruits, raisin, peanut, banana chip, pineapple, beef jerky and **nutritious food supplement** to sustain their physical exertion under the heat.

Coolaid & fruit powder to mix with water for their canteens

Smoke, dust, fire, and heat runs down health fast while fruits and vegetable are hard to come by. Life in the desert or inside the gun truck creates bleeding gum to soldiers. The above items explain why we send what we sent.

We insert a poem inside the package, to show appreciation, care, and understanding from North American Taiwanese Women Association.

Cost

The cost per package varies. For food items only, \$40 does well for an individual soldier; but if you want to include personal care or personal hygiene items, then it runs higher.

We file a postal custom declaration, as required, for every package. We keep all pertinent papers as our obligation to the contributors.

If you are an employer, a business owner, or an independent associates -

If you have an employee, a client, a friend, a co-worker who has a child serve in Iraq, I would encourage you to foot the expense for one package as a gift to them. They'd gratefully thank you. You wouldn't believe how much it means to a mother!

Is NATWA working alone?

Though there are civilian support groups, but NATWA will stand out. We can't expand this endeavor until more NATWA sisters and their families join us.

Join us!

The situation is getting harder for our service men and women. It is enormous mental strain to stay vigilant and heavily guarded.

We need you! Please contact

Vandy Chang
913-897-7493
vandychang@mdc-ks.com

Jin Barnsdale
951-926-8788
care@natwa.com