

Kristen Hafferty assembles packages for our troops

Wakefield native's job at Logan Airport sparked the idea

After repeatedly seeing soldiers at Logan Airport, Wakefield native Kristen Hafferty knew she needed to "show my appreciation for their sacrifice. It's the least that I can do." The daughter of Jim and Judy Hafferty, who still live in town, Hafferty currently resides in Peabody.

Hafferty has joined a greater-Boston effort to assemble care packages for soldiers in Iraq and Afghanistan. As a coordinator in the ramp tower for Delta Airlines, Hafferty realized she has access to the toiletries and hygiene items needed by soldiers.

"Whenever I stay in a hotel, I take home the little

bars of soap, shampoo, etc. Many flight attendants, pilots and agents have piles of toiletries at home, so I began asking my colleagues to bring in their hotel samples. The response has been great!" she said.

Between soliciting her co-workers, friends and family, Hafferty was able to donate everything from soap, tooth-

paste, deodorant and moist towelettes - which are critical for some soldiers, who don't have access to showers for months at a time - to decks of cards, CDs and batteries, as well as food items and powdered drink mixes.

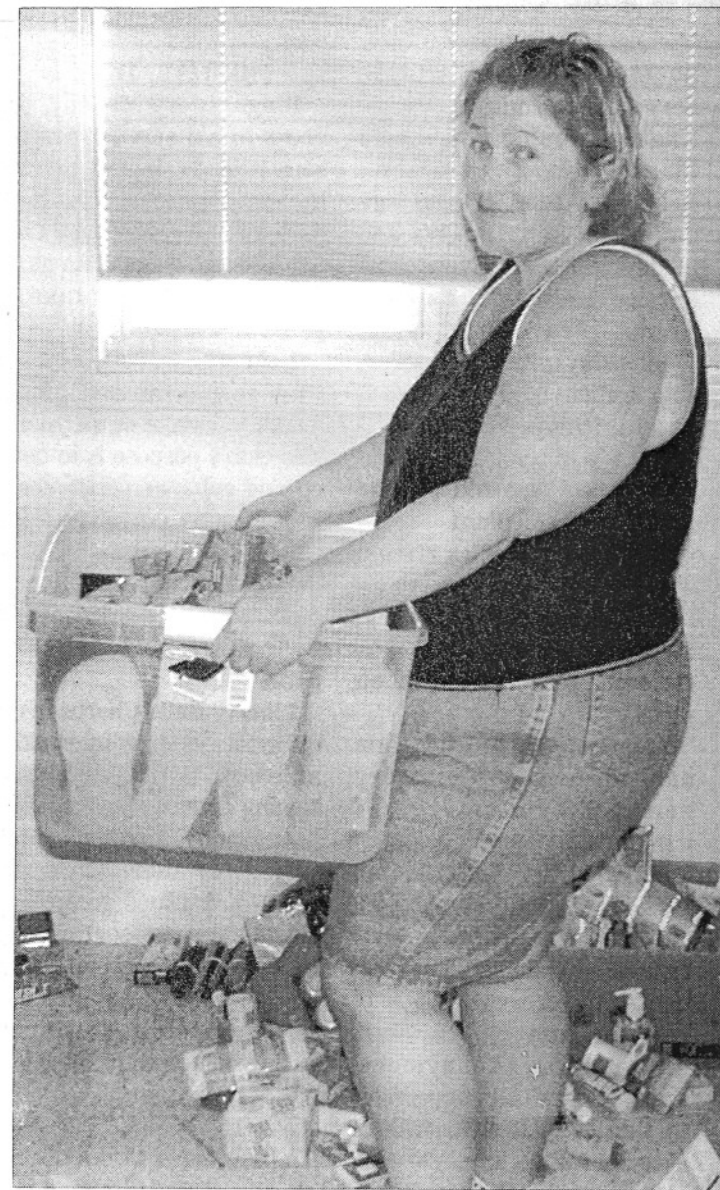
The donated items are funneled through Rebecca Kushner, a Boston resident who began collecting items for care packages in May 2008. This past Sunday, Hafferty joined Kushner and other volunteers in assembling 25 packages. Hafferty spent her time bagging toiletries, such as toothpaste and razors, as well as other essentials, including Band-Aids, bootlaces and socks.

The completed packages are turned over to Cape Cod Cares for the Troops, which mails them to soldiers in Iraq and Afghanistan. Many of the packages go to soldiers who have been referred by their chaplain or commanding officer because they don't receive regular mail.

"Kristen has been a wonderful volunteer," Kushner said. "So enthusiastic and full of energy. In fact, she gave me the idea of asking a



PACKAGES FOR U.S. troops serving overseas can include everything from flip-flops, toothpaste, mini boxes of cereals, deodorant, moist towelettes and cans of beans, to name just some items.



KRISTEN HAFFERTY at home carrying a tub of items donated by her friends, family and co-workers.

● Support

flight attendant to donate items when I was on a flight recently."

After learning about Kushner's efforts through an online posting at Single Volunteers Boston, a volunteer group, Hafferty said, "This project struck a chord with me because I work at the airport and I see service men

and women coming home on leave, returning from leave, etc. Watching the families and their emotions when they see their loved ones, moves me to tears."

The care packages contain hygiene items, such as soap and toothpaste, as well as granola bars, nuts, books, sunscreen and batteries -

everything needed by soldiers who often have limited access to a PX (army store). "But just getting the package is the biggest gift we can make," Hafferty explained. "It shows them that Americans are thinking of them and supporting them. In fact, it doesn't matter what you think of the war - we all have

an obligation to support our soldiers."

Hafferty also donated some small gifts for Iraqi and Afghani children, which are used to both help the soldiers develop relationships with local families, as well as to

cheer up children living in war-torn countries.

"I had a great time assembling the packages," Hafferty said. "But my work isn't over. I'm going to keep collecting toiletries and other items. As long as the soldiers

are over there, I'll be here collecting."

For more information on donating cash or items for the care packages, go to www.rebeccakushner.net/soldiers or call Kristen Hafferty at 978-536-9976.

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