

Bishop, school district, get behind Operation Soldier

By Hannah Disch

Observer correspondent

Eight former Oregon School District students, some training for the military and some currently serving overseas, will soon be receiving packages that will brighten their days.

A group of students from Oregon Middle School is working on an initiative called Operation Soldier. They issued a call to the community asking for donations of items to send, including candy, personal hygiene items, socks, cards and letters.

The cards and the letters are what mean the most to the soldiers, says Mary K. Bishop, Guidance Counselor at Oregon Middle School, and the organizational force behind Operation Soldier.

Friday, May 30 was the deadline for donation of items to be contributed to this shipment, and Bishop has her hands full sorting them out and packaging them up.

"You should see my office," Bishop said. "Actually I have two offices that look like this. I'll come in and things will have just mysteriously appeared in my office."

Bishop is overwhelmed by the generosity

of the Oregon community, and adds that many of the notes and letters that have been contributed "just about bring tears to my eyes."

Oregon School District students from elementary school to high school have contributed letters, cards and notes to be added to the soldiers' packages. A member of the community donated eight boxes of Girl Scout cookies, so each soldier will receive their own box.

Among the many other items included in the packages will be some recycled school supplies, copies of the *Oregon Observer*, and gift certificates for Broux Nellie's Diner.

Bishop says she went to Broux Nellie's and asked them if they could donate gift certificates for a slice of pie, and was told "we won't give gift certificates for a piece of pie; we'll give gift certificates for a whole pie." She hopes that each soldier will be able to enjoy an apple pie from their hometown upon their return.

Bishop and Operation Soldier try to organize at least one collection and shipment to the troops per year. Bishop says the soldiers love receiving packages from their hometown, and she is very touched by the support that the Oregon community shows for the military troops who are serving our country.



FESTIVAL: Bad weather blamed for poor attendance

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Ruthie Krause (fiddle) and her dad Rick Krause (center) are joined by Madison-based guitarist Tom Waselchuk Saturday as The Krause Family band performs at the Brooklyn Bluegrass Festival.

Bill Livick photo

end of the tent had to be secured to a pickup truck to prevent it from taking flight. Festival organizer Nadine Walsten, Brooklyn's village president, placed a frantic call to the company that rented the tent to come back and reset its stakes.

Then on Saturday, at just about the time a big crowd might have turned out for some high-octane bluegrass, the wind returned accompanied by a torrent of rain, putting a literal damper on the picturesque setting. But at least this time, the tent withstood the onslaught.

"I was very impressed at how secure the tent was during

camping fees and contributions from our businesses in the village, we didn't do too bad," she said. "We definitely did not meet our goal of breaking even. But we were just notified on Thursday that we've been awarded a grant from the Wisconsin Arts Board for our festival in 2009. So that makes our festival next year that much more financially secure."

The \$6,900 grant would have gone a long way toward paying the \$7,400 cost of the 10 bands that performed this year.

Walsten said the festival committee will have to decide, however, whether to continue

served "great food and great beer," and Walsten praised the local churches, service organizations and the organizing committee for their contributions.

"Everybody did their part so well. It's not for lack of organization or the vendors and the music that this festival was not successful this year," Walsten said. "It clearly was due to circumstances beyond our control."

She wasn't alone in her assessment. Jeff Van Stelle and Sue Holy, who live about nine miles west of the village, said they've attended all four of Brooklyn's Bluegrass Festivals