

TO: THE 180 TH ENGINEERING COMPANY VIRGINIA NATIONAL GUARD SOLDIERS	FROM: DEBBIE ELAM, CHAIRMAN VIRGINIA MEMORIAL QUILT PROJECT P.O. BOX 534; POWHATAN, VA 23139
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Sunday, 17 May 2009

Dear Each Soldier,

My name is Debbie Elam and I live in Powhatan, VA about 3 miles from your Armory in Powhatan.

One morning about six weeks ago, a very dear friend of mine, Sandie Terrien, called at about 7am. Her voice was shaking and she was crying. When I finally was able to understand what she was saying, she said that her nephew, Robert Terrien, who is with your Company, had been shot but Robert said he was going to be OK.

Several hours later, Sandie called again and she had calmed down quite a bit. She was very anxious and said she wanted to do something for the soldiers now serving in Iraq. She said that Saturday, 16 May 09 was Armed Forces Day and she wanted to have a "drive" to collect items to send to the soldiers. Then she calmly said, 'YOU IN?' That conversation launched one of the most rewarding things I have ever done. I never imagined it would lead to such a success.

Well, emails started flying, radio stations were called, newspapers were called, and the Home Team Grill in Powhatan agreed to let us use their patio for staging the event. Flyers were sent out by email and by regular mail.

One email that I sent was requesting someone from the Virginia National Guard to attend and possibly bring a vehicle. I did suggest a tank, but they were fresh out because they had all been checked out for that day. I was very excited to get the email that my request had been accepted and that a Hummvee and a 941 Troop Carrier would be coming. Remember how a kid at Christmas felt...I can't even begin to tell you how many emails and phone calls I made over the planning process. Lord knows how much my cell phone bill will be.

The Powhatan Pharmacy agreed to provide us with balloons. We created a flyer that was sent home with 4,700 Powhatan County school children. We had a special banner made "SUPPORT OUR TROOPS" that we put up at the entrance to the shopping center where the Home Team Grill is located. Early drop off at Elam Animal Hospital on Anderson Highway.

At about 9:10am – right on time on the morning of 16 May and here came the Virginia National Guard just as promised...It was so exciting – yes, I do not have prior military experience and am a civilian. I did volunteer with the Virginia Defense Force while living in Chesapeake for about a year. I didn't know my feet could hurt as bad as breaking in a pair of new leather boots until yesterday. We were on our feet from about 8:00am until 7:00pm. I can't imagine how many hours you are on your feet hour after hour, day after day, week after week. Our pain was worth every minute to give you these gifts.

The Virginia Search and Rescue K-9 Group came out with 5 trained search and Rescue Dogs. We had a young lady doing face painting for the kids. Powhatan Fire Department brought one of their big fire trucks and the kids had a ball getting in and out of the fire truck as well as the Hummvee and the Troop Carrier.

The community started arriving around 10:30am – 11:00am. What a wonderful turnout we had! We were able to fill 67 boxes to send you.

The boxes are packed with love from us back home. We commend you for your service and sincerely thank you for every moment you are away from your family. You are brave men and women.

The Virginia Memorial Quilt Project, which co-sponsored this event, has a website – www.vmqp.com. We will have pictures on our website of this day and if you get a chance to see them, well, that would be great. Take care and God Speed. Bless each step you take and return home safe to us back in Powhatan. You are in our hearts and minds. God Bless You!

Most sincerely,
Debbie Elam, Chairman