

Washington Volunteers & Special Stockings Help Wounded Soldiers This Holiday Season

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by Lara Yamada Reporter

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WOODINVILLE - Thousands of soldiers have died in Iraq and Afghanistan. Thousands more have come home with their bodies and minds wounded. But a special program here in Washington is helping - in more ways than one.

"Start with the toe and start filling," barks Theresa Roberts.

Tables stacked with treats, a steady stream of volunteers and hundreds of stockings are getting stuffed to the brim.

"What's Christmas without a candy cane!" shows Roberts who is a retired army major. She's running a stocking stuffing operation in Woodinville like a boot camp - not that anyone seems to mind.

Retired Army Major Theresa Roberts is running this operation like boot camp - not that anyone seems to mind.

"We ran out of supplies and had to go shopping again!" she yells over the Christmas

music with a smile.

"It means a lot, it does because the soldiers need help," she says, her eyes and her tone softening.

Dozens of volunteers are rushing to pack a 1000 hand-crafted stockings for a special group of soldiers.

"This whole organization is a passion in my heart," says Janice Buckley, who started "Operation Home Front Washington" in 2004. Early this year she branched off and founded "Heartbeat Serving Wounded Warriors."

"It's always an exciting time of year," she adds. "We have so many programs going on during Christmas, our stocking program for our wounded warriors, it's really exciting because it touches hearts."

This is just one aspect of what this organization does for our wounded warriors. They do therapeutic services, emergency services, they also do an adopt a family program all for the sake of our wounded warriors.

"You know the troops have done so much for us sacrificing their lives and their families too this is the least I can do for them," chirps Jenn Whitley who is also a volunteer coordinator.

Support, when sometimes there isn't any. Buckley says when wounded soldiers come home, spouses often have to cut back on work, and financial help can be a problem.

"For them to get connected up even with their VA benefits can take months and so I think sometimes it's just that the community doesn't realize how long that process can be," she says.

"Now that's what I call a full one!" says Roberts proudly, showing a room packed with volunteers how to stuff 'em and go.

A small gesture, a helping hand, making this holiday that much sweeter.

"We want to celebrate you," says Buckley talking to the countless wounded soldiers out there, "we want to honor you, we want to tell you that we love you."

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