

In Touch

Idea update for military families facing separations

Based on the books "I'm Already Home" and "I'm Already Home...Again"

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What's up at:

www.ImAlreadyHome.com

1. **Readiness Training** tab to read about having Elaine speak at your conference.

2. **Blog link** directly to a blog where you can read and comment on ideas.

3. **Flat Daddy™** page to bring you photos and instructions.

4. **Submit Book Ideas** tab to watch a video and submit your great ideas.

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Message from Elaine:

Help ME to help YOU...Now!

Every time it gets to the end of a year, I find myself thinking... "Where did this year go?" Just once I'd like to look back on a year and actually have completed even 1/2 of what I said I was going to do! Does anyone else ever feel like that? Oh well...I can't beat myself up, I can only make a last ditch effort to wrap things up. So that's what this issue is about. I found lots of information, ideas and resources in my "newsletter" folder that I hadn't shared with you before and I want to "catch up" and put as many of them as I can in this year end issue.

To mark the coming of a wonderful new year, I'm taking this column to tell you about the next project that I AM going to have completed by early spring 2008...and I need your help! It's the 3rd book in the *I'm Already Home* series you've been enjoying over the past 4+ years. This one is entirely about the most awaited part of deployment - Coming home! It is designed to meet your needs around reunion and reintegration back as a family, back to work, and back into the community. By now I know you're familiar with the format that my books take - they are a compilation of the very best of your ideas, stories and resources. This one is no different, but I expect it to be bigger because you've come to know the care I take with your ideas and that I do have the resources to share them with thousands of families.

I need your ideas, stories and resources NOW!

I've designed a special page on my website where I've put all the information about the book, what I'm looking for, and what you'll receive in return for contributing. There is even a 2 minute video of me talking about the book...just in case we've never met. I know it's pretty amateurish, but it was fun to do! By clicking this link:

www.ImAlreadyHome.com/ideas.htm you can go to that page and even find a form there to submit an idea right now! I need them all no later than January 31, 2008 for consideration in order to meet my deadlines.

Just in case you need a "push" to give me an idea right now, if I receive an "early bird" submission from you within the next 6 days (by midnight December 14th) I will send you a signed copy of *I'm Already Home...Again* at my expense for your library or to gift to a friend for Christmas. By the way, please forward this on to anyone who would like to help. I will be sending you this information in a one page letter in about a week so that it's easier for you to forward. Thank you from all the families you will be helping!



*I want to take a moment to **thank all** of you who have me on your email lists to share items that I can...and should...pass along to others. Many are listed below. You're helping me to be a great help to others.*

Exchanges to give away Disney Vacation. AAFES is offering military families an opportunity to win a Disney vacation with it's "Disney Sweepstakes." Now through December 24, 2007 exchange shoppers can enter to win the Disney Sweepstakes at BX/PX locations worldwide. No purchase is necessary to enter and entrants do not have to be present to win. The only requirement to enter is a military identification card authorizing contestants to shop at AAFES. The entry form has full details. The drawing will take place in February, 2008. Good Luck!

United Through Reading will benefit from a special Kellogg's® book offer which will take place from July through December 2007 in Target stores. In the promotion, which is generously sponsored by Kellogg's® and Target, consumers can receive a free Simon&Schuster children's book with two proofs of purchase from any combination of Kellogg's® cereals. Additional books can also be ordered with a \$5 donation. For details visit:

www.unitedthroughreading.org/kelloggs.htm

The 2008 NFI Lockheed Martin Military Fatherhood Award is seeking nominations. Eligibility: Any father who is currently serving in the U.S Armed Forces on Active Duty or in the Reserves/National Guard, whether or not he is currently deployed. You can get more details at www.fatherhood.org/mfa.asp. Email nominations by January 4, 2008 to:

militaryfa@fatherhood.org

Applications for the **Defense Commissary Agency's (DeCA) 2008 Scholarships for the Military Children Program** are available now in commissaries worldwide online at www.commissaries.com and www.militaryscholar.org. Applicants must submit an essay arguing for or against the following: "Every able-bodied citizen should be required to serve a two-year period of time in the military. Why or why not?" Turn in applications to any commissary worldwide before close of business on February 20, 2008.

Remember: Submit your ideas for my new book at:
www.ImAlreadyHome.com
and click on the "submit book ideas" tab.

Operation Life Transformed announces it's winter fundraising initiative. It's a lovely pendant called "Devotion". It was designed by a spouse and war wounded care giver to symbolize devotion to supporting our military and their families. Hand crafted in silver with an amethyst stone, ALL proceeds go to support the educational programs of Operation Life Transformed. Give one to someone you know who is dedicated to supporting your families. To view and order go to:



www.lifetransformed.org/devotion.aspx

The "**Help Our Troops Call Home**" effort makes it possible to send Global Prepaid phone cards to individual service members (designated by the sender) through various charitable partners. To date, more than 210,000 cards have been processed. Anyone can help military families stay in touch, and maybe even push total "Help Our Troops Call Home" contributions beyond \$5 million, by simply logging on to aafes.org or calling 1-800-527-2345. From there, dads, aunts, neighbors and even civic groups can send any one of three Military Exchange Global Prepaid Phone cards, including a 550-minute denomination card capable of providing more than two hours of call time from any of 77 phone centers in Iraq, Afghanistan, Kyrgyzstan and Kuwait to the US.

<http://www.aafes.com/pa/default.asp>

Our Military Program, an underway quality-of-life program for military families, helps keep parents and children connected while separated during long deployments, through the medium of reading aloud on videotape.

<http://www.read2kids.org/united.htm>

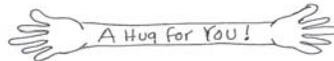
TurboTAP is an easy to use, interactive web portal that provides life-long support to separating military service members (Active Duty, Guard and Reserve) and their families. It is a single source starting point for accessing key resources available for service members transitioning out of the military at any point in their military career. To learn more go to:

www.TurboTAP.org

Some of the best submitted ideas...

(with apologies for my tacky artwork)

1. Loved this idea for arriving home. (Find a friend who knows how to use a die-cutting machine). The family put wooden "flowers" on dowels in the yard that were actually cut in the shapes of the children's hands (fingers formed the petals like in a tulip) and painted pretty colors. What a wonderful garden to be greeted with for homecoming!
2. It's getting close to Christmas so here's an idea for that: I know you've heard this one before, but I like it so much it's worth repeating - with a twist: Make wreaths out of the cut-out handprints of all members of the family. Use it at Christmas and then have everyone write a "Welcome Home" message on their handprint and give the wreath to the returning service person when he/she gets home.
3. Buy some sheets of that "shrinky-dink[®]" plastic material at your local craft store. Trace a handprint on it and decorate it. Poke a hole in it with a hole punch and shrink it in the oven according to the directions and make a keychain or necklace.
4. Here's another one I really like. The creator of this idea said I could use her name but didn't put it on the sheet so I can't tell you who the originator is, but I know you'll love it too. She said *"I made a blanket with a little pocket on the underside and I put my hankie in the pocket with a little perfume on it. When my son cuddles under his blanket at night, he can smell me - (the pocket is right at the top and center of the blanket) I also made a keychain with all of our birthstones and left a little oil vial of my perfume for refills on the hankie."* I see how easily this can be adapted to use a handkerchief with aftershave for the guys.
5. I hope you get the idea of this even with my drawing! A woman wrote: *"We sent Daddy hugs. I traced my kid's hands and connected them with strips of construction paper as long as their arms. We put 'A Hug For You' on it and the kids decorated it. Then we mailed our hugs to daddy!"*
6. Here's a cool idea from a friend in Alaska: They made and decorated a moose head drawing. Nothing unusual about that, except that the head is the footprint of their child and the antlers are handprints! How original is that. Here's my attempt at what I'm talking about for clarification purposes only :)



The American Legion

The American Legion family support network is standing by and ready to help. With what? How about grocery shopping, childcare, lawn care, fixing the car and any other challenge. Family members simply call toll-free: 1-800-504-4098, provide details of the need and let the volunteers take over! Legionnaires know what you're going through and that's why they're here to serve. Aside from calling, you can request a support form by emailing to familysupport@legion.org.

Bookmark These Websites



The goal of this site is to reduce the distance between deployed GI's and their families by providing a safe and secure place to post messages, videos, photos, etc. Visit:

www.homesickgi.com



This is a non profit organization that provides military spouses, war wounded caregivers and wounded soldiers with funding for training in careers that are portable and flexible; well suited to the military lifestyle. Visit:

www.lifetransformed.org



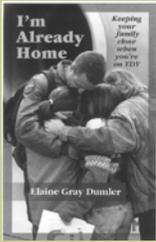
A veteran - whether active duty, retired, national guard or reserve - is someone who, at one point in his life, wrote a blank check made payable to "The United States of America", for an amount of "up to and including my life." That is Honor, and there are way too many people in this country who no longer understand this. The above is from a great website dedicated to the American Veteran. Thanks Kim. Please visit:

www.rememberingtheirsacrifices.com

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Final Thoughts...

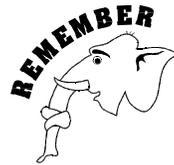
*Memories - We do not
remember days, we
remember moments.*

E. Pavese

This Christmas season, please remember to pause and cherish every moment you have, both together and in the privacy of your thoughts. I wish you all a safe and wonderful Christmas and I pray that 2008 brings you and your loved ones back together.



"The military recruits...the family retains."



...to reserve Elaine to present and train at your State Readiness Conference, training, or briefing.
Call 1-866-780-0460 toll free or visit
www.ImAlreadyHome.com

Review descriptions of trainings and programs at the website under the **Readiness Trainings** tab on the home page. You can also view media clips and request to review videos from past programs for all branches of the service.

Look who's volunteering...and what they're doing!

Becky and Randy Helzer started out with the idea of baking about 25 dozen cookies and sending them to the men and women of a Colorado unit serving in Iraq. Well...their friends and neighbors heard about it and started bringing over other items the troops would enjoy to make bigger "care bags." Boy did it bloom!



Last Sunday, their whole family stuffed 2½ gallon Ziploc bags with goodies and items for each of 170 service members and shipped off 87 Flat Rate boxes!



Many service members leave for deployment with very few or no personal items in their carryon bags. Ponderosa High School Dance Team member **Jenna Eyre** led a drive to collect items to pack and send with airmen and women as they boarded their airplane to deploy. The student body and athletic council at Ponderosa stepped up to the plate in a huge way donating over 6 carloads of snacks, chapstick, books and other things to keep the airmen entertained and from going hungry on their long flight. The word spread and several local churches and City Market in Summit County helped contribute to the cause. The PHS Dance team also wrote notes of gratitude to the airmen and women to put in every bag packed. All total over 175 bags were filled and the deploying members were very grateful to receive them as they recently deployed!!