

## Local News



PHOTO BY TED AMSDEN

Marlene Harnden, with Izzy dolls, has her Operation Maple Leaf up and running again from her Grafton area home.

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# Operation Maple Leaf returns to give soldiers a little TLC

By Cecilia Nasmith

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Grafton resident Marlene Harnden is bringing back Operation Maple Leaf this year — her drive to prepare care-and-comfort boxes for our men and women who will be serving with the Canadian Forces in Afghanistan on Canada Day.

Mrs. Harnden came up with the idea last year to celebrate our national holiday by providing these men and women with a little piece of home just to let them know they are remembered and supported. "I just wanted to do something for our troops overseas to boost their morale, and I wanted it to have a theme — like Canada Day," she said.

People from across the county jumped on board, and 553 shoeboxes were filled.

This year, she is co-ordinating the program with Joy Herrington of Trent Hills, issuing the appeal again — and there are many ways to help:

- Shoeboxes are needed to fill with items, to serve as individual care-and-comfort packages.
- Small utilitarian items that are nice to have include little note pads, tissue packets, sun block, moisturizer, lip balm, hand sanitizer, pens and pencils, pocket-size day-time calendars, locker-size unbreakable mirrors, decks of cards and small puzzle books.
- Flea collars come in handy, when worn around a wrist or ankle, to ward off sand fleas.
- Snack items like peanuts, cookies, jerky and sausage products, and dried foods like soups, hot chocolate, tea, lemonade and flavoured drink mixes

are always welcome.

• Items with the Canadian flag or maple leaf are a nice touch from home — pins, key chains, postcards, bandannas, stickers, flags, hats, badges, socks and ribbons.

• Entertainment items could include DVD movies and CDs.

• Personal touches, which even children could contribute, would include letters, paper banners, greeting cards and artwork.

It all has to be packed into shoeboxes, she said, so keep it small!

Mrs. Harnden is also hoping to collect a generous supply of Izzy dolls.

The name is in honour of Master Corporal Mark Isfeld, an engineer who died in 1994 while clearing land mines in Croatia. He'd asked his mother Carol to knit little 15-centimetre dolls for him to give to the children he met while serving overseas.

The tradition has continued, and soldiers today are delivering little Izzy dolls into the hands of children in Afghanistan as one step toward winning over the hearts and minds of the people.

The pattern is available online — at [www.vacc.gc.ca/youth/sub.cfm?source=activities/kidszone/colour/izzy](http://www.vacc.gc.ca/youth/sub.cfm?source=activities/kidszone/colour/izzy) — and Mrs. Harnden has plans to knit 12 of them herself. She will be putting a little tag on each one handed in to give the donor's name and address, attached with a little Canadian-flag pin.

Donations will be accepted until June 7 at your local Legion branch — or call Mrs. Harnden at 905-349-3063.

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