

SWEET ON SOLDIERS

Shop's Patriot Boxes are a smash hit

BY LAYLA FARMER
THE CHRONICLE

When Jackie Williams says she supports the troops, she means it. Williams, owner of Sweeties gift and candy boutique has a vested interest in the armed forces.

"I have two sons in the Marine Corps with a collective four tours of duty and three Purple Hearts between them," she said proudly.

The daughter of a World War II veteran, Williams says American troops are never far from her mind. But she wanted to find a way to keep them in the hearts and minds of others, just as they were hers.

As the July 4th holiday approached last year, Williams and her staff devised a plan to send care packages, which they dubbed Patriot Boxes, to soldiers.

The store held a small event to get others interested in sending Patriot Boxes, which are filled with sweets and other goodies and available at the shop year-round. Positive word of mouth helped the program explode. In just one year, Sweeties has created and shipped more than 600 Patriot Boxes to soldiers in Iraq and Afghanistan.

"It's not just a holiday event for us; it's an ongoing event," Williams said.

This year, a day before the Fourth of July, Williams held a celebration at her Reynolda Road shop to celebrate the program's success and to get even more local residents interested in taking part.

Military veterans were among those on hand for last week's event, including several WWII vets and members of the Winston-Salem chapter of the vets-friendly Rolling Thunder Motorcycle Club.

"We're mainly here to honor our troops who are in harm's way; we feel they deserve some



recognition," commented Rolling Thunder member Bart Mearn, a veteran of the Vietnam War.

U.S. Rep. Virginia Foxx spoke briefly at the ceremony, before turning the podium over to U.S. Sen. Elizabeth Dole, who served as keynote speaker.

"The reason we do the things we do on Independence Day and every other day of our lives is because we have a wonderful military that is willing to sacrifice for us," Foxx told the audience. "Every morning when I wake up ... I say, 'Thank you Lord for letting me live in this wonderful country and thank you for the people that are keeping it free.'"

Dole - whose husband, Bob Dole lost the use of his right arm while fighting in World War II - had high praise for the men and women of the armed forces, and for Williams. Despite criticism that Congress is not doing enough to support those fighting in Middle East, Dole applauded the recently updated GI Bill and other legislation that she says will benefit troops.

"There are many things that we need to do, to continue to (support) our men and women as they return because they deserve every benefit," said the senator, who like Foxx, is up for reelection this fall. "Let's just remember, as we celebrate tomorrow, that we keep the men and women of our armed forces in our prayers."

Patriot Boxes are available for sale at Sweeties, 1228 Reynolda Rd. The cost is \$25 per box, plus an additional \$10 S&H. Patriot Boxes may be sent to a specific person or to a random soldier. For more information, call (336) 723-4264 or visit www.sweetieswinstonsalem.com.



U.S. Rep. Virginia Foxx addresses the crowd as Sen. Elizabeth Dole and Jackie Williams stand nearby.

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News Clips

Industries for the Blind gets help to offer summer program

Visually impaired children of Forsyth and surrounding counties are again united by "A Brighter Path," a program offered by Winston-Salem Industries for the Blind, at the second annual summer camp. The Student Enrichment Experience (SEE) provides activities for blind and visually impaired children not only in summer, but during the entire year.

The Winston-Salem Foundation "invests in our community by making philanthropy and its benefits available to all". With \$30,000 granted by The Winston-Salem Foundation, Winston-Salem Industries for the Blind will make it possible for visually impaired children to enjoy educational, developmental, and social activities arranged by A Brighter Path and its leaders.

By hosting over 20 children from Forsyth and surrounding counties for two months of activities at the day camp, SEE will enhance children's success and independence. For example, with volunteer assistance, the children will tour museums, zoos, and parks and learn to accomplish basic tasks in specialized games and activities.

In addition, SEE offers possibilities for children to grow, learn, and reduce their reliance on their parents and sighted persons.

To supplement core needs of the families of visually impaired children, SEE also provides regular meetings and hands-on, comprehensive training for parents who learn techniques for easier and safer communication with their children.

Governor signs anti-gang bill

Gov. Mike Easley signed into law Tuesday Senate Bill 1358, which is described as "an act to adopt a strategic approach to prevent youth involvement in street gang activity and to be entitled the 'North Carolina Street Gang Prevention and Intervention Act.'"

This new law requires the state Advisory Council on Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention to review the level of gang activity in the state, develop community based intervention efforts, assess the progress and accomplishments of efforts to deal with juveniles who are involved with, or at risk of getting involved in, street gangs and make recommendations to reduce the level of gang activity in North Carolina.



Graham

The Governor's Crime Commission has reported that there are more than 550 gangs in the state and nearly 15,000 gang members. The new law, sponsored by state Sen. Malcolm Graham (D-Mecklenburg), also calls on the state departments of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention and Crime Control and Public Safety along with the Department of Public Instruction to report to the General Assembly on issues related to school violence and gang activity. It also calls on the Governor's Crime Commission to develop guidelines for eligibility for gang prevention grants that include a 25 percent local match.

Requests for bus stops must be made soon

The Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Schools Transportation Department's deadline for parents' requests for school bus stops for the coming school year is quickly approaching. The system says requests must be made before Thursday, July 24.

It is expected that the number of requests will increase as the deadline nears. Therefore, officials say, it is important for parents to inform the school system of their needs as soon as possible to ensure a bus stop for the first day of school, Aug. 25.

Parents should call the school that their child will attend in the 2008-2009 school year and complete a Transportation Stop Request.



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