

By ROBERT PIERCE

• Leader & Times

They fought for America's freedom in some of the wars of the 20th century and the early 21st century, and now, a group of local women is trying to make Christmas a little brighter for some area soldiers.

The auxiliary unit of Liberal's American Legion post will be collecting a list of items due by Wednesday for Fort Dodge Soldiers Gift Shop Days and The Amarillo Facility.

The Fort Dodge Gift Shop will take place Dec. 1 and 2.

"They set up for one group on Sunday afternoon," said auxiliary president Willie Mae Eagan. "On Monday morning, they set up at another spot. The veterans can come in to the room, and they have a reception room all set up for them. It's just kind of like a reception party for them. They have tables set up with all kinds of donated gifts, and they can choose two or three gifts for themselves or their significant other, be it family member or whoever they want to send one gift to."



The items being collected are ones predominantly that soldiers can use, and what is not picked up on Dec. 1 and 2 will be put in the Fort Dodge Gift Shop for veterans to come in and pick up as needed.

Eagan said local auxiliary members are also helping at Fort Dodge with wrapping gifts, and spouses help out as well.

"If they want to send them to somewhere, sometimes the husbands are there, and they help do the wrapping for mailing purposes," she said.

The auxiliary made a large donation to the Amarillo VA hospital last year for the holiday season, and Eagan said the unit is looking in a similar direction for this year.

"I think they're pretty much set for the most of the stuff for the people they have there," she said. "One lady brought me four black quilts that a quilt group made. She designated it to go there."

Eagan said officials in Amarillo have primarily asked for calendars for soldiers in that community, and one local business has already stepped up to the plate to help in that regard.

"Brenneman Funeral Home ended up donating 35 to 40 calendars to us," she said. "I have that many at this point."

Eagan said local vet Dick Stoops and his wife, along with auxiliary member Linda DeCamp and her husband, have doctors appointments in Amarillo and take donations there on a regular basis.

"They usually just take whatever we have for there whenever they go on appointments," she said.

Eagan said gifts will likely be delivered to Amarillo in early December. She said there are five soldiers homes in Kansas, each designated with a home district.

“Each district has a date that they do at their own soldiers home,” she said. “The auxiliary, they do have a state chairman, a district chairman that sends out letters to units in their district. We proceed to do whatever we can in each of our units to help them on the district level at those soldiers homes.”

Eagan said Liberal’s Legion unit naturally operates in Kansas, but due to the close proximity to Oklahoma and Texas, officials with the post help out in those states as well.

“Since we’re on the border line like we are and we do have people going there, that is just kind of an add in,” she said. “Some of them just like to go there. They felt like they wanted to help in whatever way they could.”

Eagan said the auxiliary will continue to collect items throughout the year, and she will keep mailing and delivering to Amarillo.

“It comes from different units,” she said. “They see items they don’t have much of. They go and purchase that.”

That includes \$100 auxiliary members voted to send to Amarillo.

Those wishing to donate items or cash can call 624-2964, 624-6325 or 624-8579 for particulars.

Suggested items for Fort Dodge Soldiers' Home Christmas Gift Shop

Large size socks

Diabetic socks

T-shirts

Sweat pants

Suspenders

Kleenex boxes

Clock radios

Postage stamps

Stationary items

Boxes of all occasion cards

Twin size blankets

Kitchen towel sets and hot pad sets

Colored pencil sets

Puzzle books and word search puzzle books

Stocking caps, scarf and glove sets

Brush and comb sets

Cans of nuts

Peanuts cans and jars

Cans of cashews

Boxes of chocolates – regular and sugar free

Snack packaged crackers

Boxed mixed flavored teas

Boxed individual packages of hot chocolate

Christmas socks

Tubes of tooth paste

Toothbrushes wrapped

Packages of hair combs