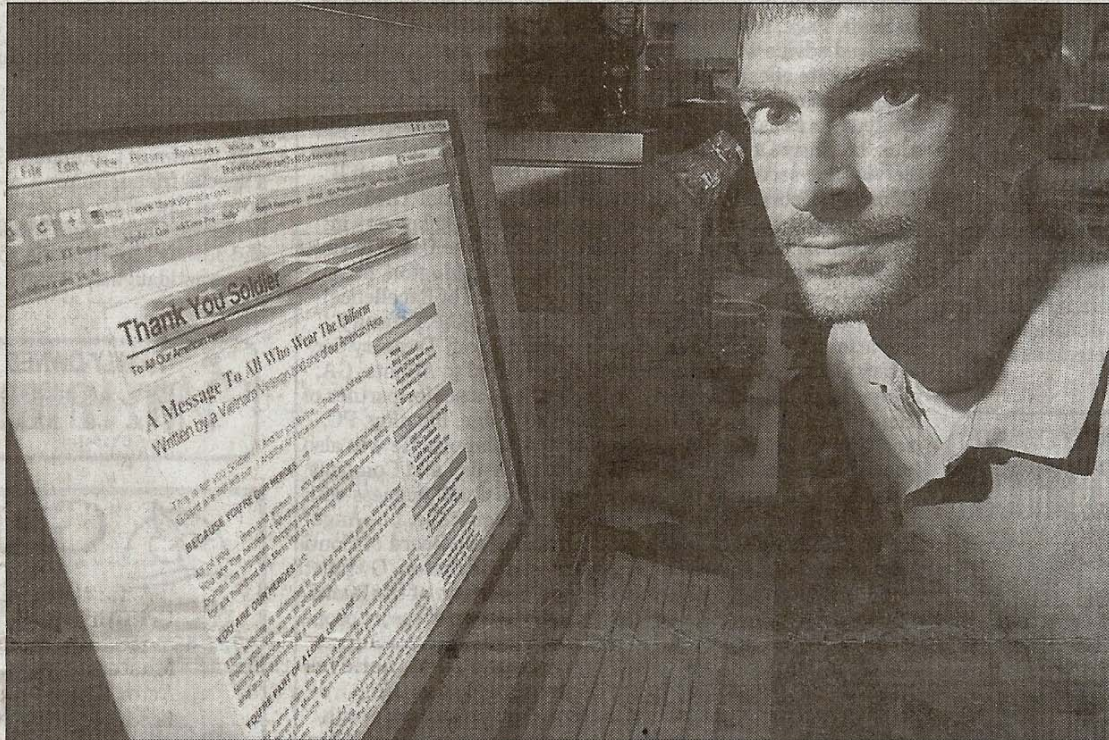


Giving thanks to our heroes



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Jonathan Gates has created a Web site honoring soldiers at www.ThankYouSoldier.com. Every week a different soldier is profiled as the "Hero of the Week." Visitors are encouraged to make comments and do some blogging. Gates hopes that soldiers overseas will access the site to get a lift, and maybe send messages home.

Not able to join the military, Jonathan Gates started a Web site to honor soldiers and serve the country in his own way

BY LARRY GIERER
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It doesn't take much to be listed as a hero on the new Web site created by Jonathan Gates.

You just have to be a soldier. "They're all heroes to me," said Gates of Columbus whose ThankYouSoldier.com came online May 9. "I'm a pretty patriotic guy and I certainly appreciate all they do for us. They are protecting my family in a way I can't."

The 36-year-old Gates does server support for IBM. His wife of 15

years, Brooke, works for TSYS. They have two children, Anna Catherine, 9, and Brandon, 6.

Because of a hearing problem, he was never in the military. However, his father Dan Gates, pastor at East Highland United Methodist Church, was in the Army, serving in Vietnam, and his twin brother Alan went into the Air Force.

"I'm just trying to serve in my own way,

GIVING THANKS

WHAT: A new Web site aimed at supporting soldiers.

WHERE: ThankYouSoldier.com.

trying to touch a soldier or his family and make a difference."

He said there are other national sites aimed at soldier support but his is a bit different.

"We're not trying to sell anyone anything, Gates said."

Each week a different soldier is profiled on the site as the "Hero of the

Week."

"It's really not much more than a photograph," he said. "The soldier didn't have to do anything

THANKS | Packages to be sent

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extraordinary.”

The site invites visitors to make comments and do some blogging.

“Just tell us something about a soldier or about Army life. We’re hoping that soldiers with access to the Internet in Iraq and elsewhere around the world will be able to come to the site and get a lift. Perhaps, those soldiers will want to send some messages home.”

There is a project that is connected to the site. It’s one he hopes will lift more

than just the soldiers’ spirits.

“We’re putting together ‘hero packs’ that we will send to military personnel serving overseas,” Gates said. “Each care package will cost about \$25 and all money donated will go to putting these packs together.”

Included in each pack will be beef jerky, sunflower seeds, granola bars, peanuts, crackers, Goldfish crackers, chicken ramen, Vienna sausages, sardines, tuna, instant oatmeal, coffee, cider, hot chocolate mix, Kool-Aid, salt, pepper, sugar, wet wipes, soap, shampoo,

tissues, Q-tips, Motrin, eye drops, toothpaste, ChapStick, a washcloth and Ziploc bags.

“We asked soldiers the kind of things that they would like to get in such a package and that’s what we’re getting,” Gates said.

A special treat, he said, will be a CD with gospel and bluegrass music performed by the Pilgrimage Band made exclusively for this project.

Each package will carry a message that states, “We’re proud of you and we support what you’re doing to keep us safe.”