

October 16, 2006

## **The Pilgrimage Band Thanks Our Soldiers With ThankYouSoldier.com**

Columbus, Georgia - The Pilgrimage Band was entertainment at the Rock Ranch Fall Family Fun Days on September 20, 2008. They sang a folksy/blue-grass type of music that they call "folk-grass". Not all of their songs are gospel, but their main focus is to spread the word of Jesus.

The Pilgrimage Band consists of twin brothers Jonathan and Alan Gates, Cliff Brewer, and Kenny Comeaux. They perform all over the state of Georgia as well as in Alabama and Tennessee.

The Pilgrimage Band has been together over two years and average three concerts per month. They have three cd's for sale and samples of their songs can be heard on their website [www.PilgrimageBand.com](http://www.PilgrimageBand.com).

"Thank You Soldier" is the latest release for the Pilgrimage Band out of Columbus and is not for sale to the public. "This CD was a special project and compilation of songs specifically for the "Hero Packs care packages my site sends to our soldiers," said Jonathan.

[www.ThankYouSoldier.com](http://www.ThankYouSoldier.com) has been online since May 9, 2008, and the blog site has been online since May 11, 2008. It has had over 3,000 hits.

"All of this is through word of mouth with no major advertising," Jonathan said. "We have had an article in the local Ledge Enquirer [Columbus, Georgia] as well as a phone interview and subsequent mention on a radio station in Texas who found our site surfing the web."

Thank You Soldier maintains a list of those who have been killed in action. There is also a blog site that is connected to the website. The blog site can be accessed by clicking [here](#).

A "Hero of the Week" is featured on the front page of the website. These heroes are soldiers who are still on active duty and those who have been killed in action. Each hero section is archived so visitors can see those heroes who were honored during previous weeks.

Jonathan emphasized that Thank You Soldier.com is not about politics. "Whether you believe in our current wars, vote Democrat or Republican, there is no reason not to support those soldiers of today and years past who protect our nation and freedoms," he said.

The main project for Thank You Soldier is the "Hero Pack" care packages which are sent to active duty soldiers who are stationed in Iraq and Afghanistan. Thank You Soldier has planned to ship 100 Hero Packs in this initial project.

91 packages have been shipped out to soldiers stationed in Iraq and Afghanistan since May. That's an average of 18 per month. "All of this is done out of my office and the average cost of each pack including shipping is \$25," Jonathan said.

A complete list of items included in each Hero Pack as well as a photo on the web site. Click the Hero Packs Project link under "Ways To Say Thank You" on the right side of the page. "We have had several soldiers respond via email and personal letters after receiving these packs," Jonathan said. Those letters are on the website as well on the "Letters From The Field" link also on the right side of the page.

Cards for the soldiers are provided by a Sunday School class of kids less than 12 years old and as young as six. "They have been doing this since the first pack was shipped and I believe this is as much a blessing to the soldiers as anything else in the pack," Jonathan said. "I also had a Men's Group from East Highland United Methodist Church provide a donation-only lunch for the church and all proceeds came directly to the site to help defray the cost of the care packages and shipping. So as you can see, support from any source as well as Sunday Schools is greatly appreciated."

Thank You Soldier.com is always on the lookout for names and addresses of soldiers who are serving in Iraq and Afghanistan so they can send out these care packages. These care packages are provided completely free of charge to the soldiers.

Jonathan told me today that they already have another 40 names and addresses of soldiers for Hero Packs distribution so this campaign is going past their original goal of 100 Hero Packs.

Thank You Soldier.com is always looking for names and pictures for the "Hero of the Week" section of the website. A picture along with name, rank, unit, and military branch are all that are needed for a soldier to be honored on the "Hero of the Week" section. Jonathan told me that "This is just a small way of recognizing a soldier for being a soldier."

The "Hero Of The Week Archive" link will show examples of those who have been honored in the past. "One such honoree is Sgt. Darren Dhanoolal who was recognized along with his wife and family at a Memorial Day service held here in Columbus, Georgia," Jonathan said. "Here is a soldier who threw himself on a grenade to save his fellow soldiers, his brothers. This is a man who deserves to never be forgotten."

Jonathan told me that he was not able to serve in the military because of a hearing loss, but said that he has the utmost respect and admiration for those who do. "Men and women put on our country's uniform and stand guard between my family and those who would seek to do them harm," he said. "There are no words to describe my appreciation for those who serve, those who make the ultimate sacrifice, as well as the families of those soldiers."

Donations can be made to Thank You Soldier.com by using the PayPal link on the website. No PayPal account is needed and PayPal accepts checks and all major credit cards. "This is not an official non-profit entity but every penny donated goes to support the soldiers. All fees charged by PayPal are covered out of my pocket," said Jonathan.

Donations of checks and money orders can also be made out to ThankYouSoldier and mailed to: ThankYouSoldier, c/o Jonathan Gates, 1028 Silver Lake Drive, Columbus, Georgia 31904.

10.16.08