



OFFICE OF THE COUNTY CLERK

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SARATOGA COUNTY CLERK CRAIG A. HAYNER ANNOUNCES 8th ANNUAL YELLOW RIBBON DAY DONATION DRIVE

Collection will help Blue Star Mothers send packages to local troops serving abroad

BALLSTON SPA – Getting a care package while serving in difficult conditions can be a bright spot for our deployed servicemembers. To help get “Freedom Boxes” with snacks and other personal care items in the hands of our troops, Saratoga County Clerk Craig A. Hayner today announced plans for the eighth annual Yellow Ribbon Day Donation Drive.

The drive to collect individual-sized personal care items and snack foods will run from March 15 through April 7 and will be donated to the Blue Star Mothers of America NY-2 to put together and send packages to local troops serving abroad. The donation drive is held in conjunction with the annual celebration of New York State’s Yellow Ribbon Day, which takes place April 9 and is designated as a day to honor active-duty troops and their families.

In addition to municipal locations across the county, Hannaford Stores in Saratoga County are again participating in the drive, serving as drop-off points for donations.

Saratoga County Clerk Hayner said contributing to the Yellow Ribbon Day Donation Drive is a simple yet powerful way to show appreciation for the sacrifices military members make on our behalf every day. “Providing some comforts from home is something we can all do for our troops as they protect our freedom from many miles away,” Hayner said. “Now in its eighth year, I am hopeful this will be the most successful event yet, ensuring the Blue Star Mothers can meet and even exceed the high demand for their special care packages.”

Donna Abare, president of Blue Star Mothers of America-NY 2, said their shelves are virtually bare right now, so the need is great for items that can be packed into the Freedom Boxes. “Following the large packing we did for the holidays, we haven’t had anything really coming in, so we are very much counting on the Yellow Ribbon drive to be able to meet our goal of sending out about 400 boxes in May,” she said.

Abare added that when our service members are deployed, many of them feel like they are forgotten. “There’s not a lot of fanfare about deployments, and it’s not on the news, so people don’t even know,” she said. “When they get our boxes, they love all the stuff, but what means the most is to know that they are not forgotten.”

When she encounters people who have received boxes in the past, Abare says they gush with gratitude. "We will never stop doing what we do because when you have somebody in front of you telling you how much it meant to them and how they felt getting it; it's everything."

Frank McClement, director of the Saratoga County Veterans Service Agency, said he knows from personal experience what receiving a package while deployed far from home can do to boost morale. "Getting a package from back home means so much more than just getting some good snacks. It lets our service men and women know that we care about them and value their service," McClement said. "We hope everyone will consider giving to this important effort to support our troops."

Donations can include non-perishable items like cookie and cracker snack packages, microwaveable soup cups, fruit snacks, granola bars and beef jerky, as well as personal care items such as insect repellent wipes, body wash (small), lip balm, puzzle books and more.

Donated goods can be dropped off at the following locations during regular business hours:

- DMV offices in Saratoga County (located in Ballston Spa, Clifton Park and Wilton)
- Saratoga County Clerk's Office, 40 McMaster St., Ballston Spa
- Veterans Service Agency, 2144 Doubleday Ave., Suite 15, Ballston Spa
- Saratoga County Hannaford stores
- Various town and village offices in Saratoga County (Call to see if your local municipality has a collection box.)

Monetary donations are also accepted. As a reference, it costs \$18 postage to send each "Freedom Box". The cost to fill one box is about \$45, so a \$63 donation covers the cost of filling and sending one box. Checks can be made payable to Blue Star Mothers of America-NY 2 and sent to PO Box 243, Delmar, NY 12054. Please write "In honor of Yellow Ribbon Day" in the memo section. To donate through PayPal, go to www.paypal.com/fundraiser/hub and search "Blue Star Mothers of America-NY2".

All items collected during the drive will be presented to the Blue Star Mothers during a Yellow Ribbon Day Ceremony at 11 a.m. Wednesday, April 9, at the Veterans Memorial, 162 Route 236, Halfmoon. The public is welcome to attend, and donations also can be brought to this event.

For more information, please visit the Saratoga County Clerk's Facebook page, @saratogacountyclerk, which will be updated throughout the donation drive.

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