



The Oakville Beaver



CLASSIFIEDS | News | Sports | Opinion | Real Estate | Builders | Movies | Weather

Dec 24, 2006



Email This



Print This

Featured Advertisers

Jim Shaver's wooden pens are mightier than a sword

Krissie Rutherford, Special to the Beaver
May 25, 2005

Afghanistan, Sierra Leone and Egypt - with a simple gesture, Oakville's Jim Shaver has touched the lives of Canadians all over the map.

A year ago, he decided to use his woodworking skills to thank Canadian soldiers on peacekeeping missions, one at a time.

"We never celebrate what our Canadian soldiers do," he said. "Canadians are a patriotic people, but they don't usually show it in an outward fashion. I want to change that."

So, after a craft sale, Shaver decided to use the money he made to send leftover handmade pens overseas, along with a letter of thanks to Canadian peacekeepers.

He got in touch with Shirley Penny, who manages donations for the forces, and she agreed to facilitate his project.

At first, Shaver sent 12 homemade pens and letters, written with the help of his wife and daughter, to Canadian peacekeepers in Afghanistan.

His project has since grown - he has now sent more than 100, all funded by the sale of other pens.

It's a project that Shaver - who ironically lives on Pen Street in Oakville - hopes to continue for as long as he can.

"Those Canadians are wearing the country's flag on their heart - why we don't do more to recognize that, I'll never know," he said.

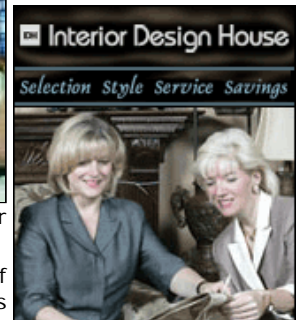
"I wanted to be able to make them feel that somebody here remembers, or thinks about them, or cares about them."

Each letter includes an e-mail address, so that soldiers can respond - and to Shaver's surprise, he has received a lot of mail.

"The letters I get back are remarkable, often very personal, filled with heartfelt thanks and a clear message that what we're doing makes a difference to each recipient," he said.



Tara Walton, Special to the Beaver



THOUGHTFUL GIFT Jim Shaver shows one of more than 100 hand-made wooden pens he has crafted and sent to Canadian peacekeepers serving on foreign soil. Shaver sends each pen with a letter thanking peacekeepers for their efforts.



And it's not so much the pen that makes the difference.

"At first I thought the pen was the gift, but it's the letter," he said.

"The responses you get back are about your words, the pen is just the symbol."

In January, he put up a Web site to post letters and pictures he had received, and to promote his project to get others involved.

"We publicly don't express enough pride in the commitment these people make," he said.

"One of the ways to say thank-you instead of waiting for somebody to die is to say something when you can be up-front with them."

His father served in WW II, and is a major reason Shaver took this project on.

"My dad instilled in me a deep sense of respect for men and women who serve this country," he said.

"That's what inspired me to do this, was to think about what my father told me and to find a way to thank them, one by one."

His goal is to send 25 pens every month.

Canadians and a handful of Americans have pitched in and sent their homemade pens and letters to Shaver to send off - something he'd like to see more of.

He refuses to accept money - only pens or pen kits, which he then sends to Shirley Penny, who gets them to Canadian peacekeepers.

Their appreciation for his gesture is enormous.

"Nothing touches the heart like a personal gift such as yours," wrote a Canadian peacekeeper in Sierra Leone.

"The pen will remain in my pocket each and every day as a reminder that not only am I proud to be a peacekeeper, but that there are Canadians out there who are proud of what we do as well."

A sergeant told Shaver about the reactions of his soldiers when they received the gift.

"The softening of their faces and for some, the tears that welled in their eyes when they read your letter, gave me a real sense of pride for the job these young soldiers were doing over here," he wrote.

"To know someone out there, besides our families, are so proud of the Canadian soldiers and appreciate what we do, makes us walk taller and prouder ourselves."

To find out more about Shaver's project and how to help out, visit www.pensforcanadianpeacekeepers.com.



CONTACT US :: ADVERTISE WITH US :: CLASSIFIED ADVERTISING :: CORRECTIONS :: PRIVACY



© Copyright 2006 Metroland Media Group. All rights reserved. The reproduction, modification, distribution, transmission or republication of any material from www.HaltonSearch.com is strictly prohibited without the prior written permission of Metroland Media Group.

