My Ozarks: Valentines for Veterans

By Doug Magditch

(Ava, Mo.) -- A service project, put together by Ava, Mo. high School senior Delaney Sweeney, has ballooned nearly overnight.

She wanted to give some veterans Valentines Day gifts, but an enormous community response has added hundreds to her list.

In an Ava community room, four members of the Douglas Co., Mo. 4-H club are already working, packing up boxes. They're putting in books, candy, and hearts to show a little love for our veterans.

"You don't have to agree with the war, but you can still understand and appreciate people are sacrificing their lives for you and people need to be thanked for that," says Sweeney.

Sweeney came up with the idea to give Valentines Day gifts to those living in veterans homes.

"It's like a nursing home, but only veterans are in there," explains Sweeney.

"Their families don't visit them or anything, and, they did so much for us. It's just sad to think they're sitting in their rooms without anyone thinking of them," she says.

She wanted to help veterans in one home, but...

"The response has surprised me. shocked me, actually," says Sweeney.

Donations started pouring in from local businesses.

"Just little things that companies donate or people that want to help," says Sweeney.

Now, her goal is to get valentines to every man or woman living in a Missouri veteran home.

"My goal is 1,000 boxes, because there's roughly 1,000 veterans in those homes the state of Missouri," says Sweeney.

"It helps immensely that there's so many people wanting to help and, so, it's not just our little group," says Liz Moffett, who's also in Douglas County's 4-H club.

They're doing it to show appreciation for those, Sweeney says, are under-appreciated.

Valentines for Veterans is even getting national attention. Disney's 'Hands-On' Network contacted the Sweeneys about adding it to their 'Give a Day, Get a Day' program.

Anyone interested in donating or volunteering contact the secretary of Douglas Co.'s 4-H Club, Marsha Miller.

Contact: dmagditch@kspr.com

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