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## Hometown News tells Army story to grassroots America

**By Sgt. Keith Thompson**

There's not much excitement in Allie McClintock's life and that's the way she likes it. She's a small-town girl who likes living with the rest of the "small-town folks" in Madera, Calif. But if you ask her about her grandson, Army Staff Sgt. Raymond A. Matticks, she gets excited. She'll tell you all about his service with the 1<sup>st</sup> Infantry Division in Germany and tell you about the letters he writes and the frequent phone calls she gets from him — and with a little extra sparkle in her voice, she'll tell you about how her grandson made the front page of the *Madera County Times*.

Matticks is just one of the thousands of soldiers and airmen whose stories are featured every year by the Army and Air Force Hometown News Service based at Kelly Air Force Base, Texas. The feature story and photos of Mattick's service as a part of KFOR strikes at the heart of the mission of Army Public Affairs — to tell the Army's story.

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Hometown news, which has been in existence for almost 50 years, is a field operating agency supporting the Secretaries of the Army and Air Force Offices of Public Affairs. The small staff of Army and Air Force military and civilian personnel produces a variety of print and electronic news highlighting the accomplishments and activities of individual soldiers and airmen all over the world.

### **Hometown News Release**

The Hometown News Release, DD Form 2266, is a quick and simple way to showcase the activities and accomplishments of soldiers and airmen. Service members simply fill out a form and forward it through their public affairs office to the Hometown News Service. The service uses the form to produce a news release and market it to newspapers in locations where the service member has family ties.

Last year, the program mailed out more than 600,000 releases to hometown newspapers.

In an effort to make the Hometown News Release program even easier and more convenient for Army and Air Force personnel, Hometown News has developed a new automated form that soldiers and airmen can fill out via the Internet.

"Soldiers can fill out their DD Form 2266 on-line, saving time, paperwork and expediting the news release process," said Gerry Proctor, Hometown News marketing branch chief. "It's easier to put the spotlight on your troops."

### **Holiday Greetings**

Holiday Greetings are short, 10- to 15-second video and radio messages from service members stationed overseas who won't be home with their families during the holiday season.

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The greetings are released to the service member's local commercial TV and radio broadcast stations. This year, more than 8,000 holiday greetings were produced and sent to more than 1,100 TV stations and more than 900 radio stations.

In addition to the Holiday Greetings teams that travel the globe to collect messages, Hometown News has introduced technology to the popular program. Soldiers and airmen can now go on-line to send a holiday message to their hometown newspaper utilizing the Hometown News Internet site "HometownLink."

"Greetings are a way for service members who are far away from home to be with their families and friends during the holidays," said Army Staff Sgt. Kat Flanagan, chief of the Hometown News Radio Branch, and two-year veteran of the Holiday Greetings program. "If they can't be with the person they love, a video is the next best thing."

### **Hometown Print Features**

Print feature teams travel worldwide, interviewing soldiers and airmen on their participation in Army and Air Force missions worldwide. These in-depth personality features, which normally result in a one-half to full page spread, are generated from interviews conducted at field locations around the world, and include a personal photo of each individual and several "stock" photos of the mission or storyline. Currently, more than 10,000 newspapers subscribe to the service.

A typical print features release, like one done recently on 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division soldiers serving as part of the Multinational Force and Observers in the Sinai, yielded a total estimated readership of more than 4.2 million readers.

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"Print feature teams are a way to provide local newspapers with their own foreign correspondents to cover one of their local son's or daughter's involvement in the Army's and Air Force's global missions," said Air Force Senior Airman André Sanders, a Print Features journalist. "Print features puts a local face on a global mission."

### **Hometown Broadcast News**

Video news releases are 90-second feature stories on soldiers and airmen around the world involved in newsworthy events. Stories are marketed to more than 900 television and cable broadcast outlets in service members' hometowns.

Radio news releases are crisp, concise, 60-second bites of information that give the hometown audience a glimpse of a national or international event through the voice of a local soldier. Radio matches a local voice to a story to give it public interest. Close to 3,000 radio stations nationwide subscribe to the hometown news service.

A typical broadcast feature, like one done recently on soldiers at the Defense Language Institute in Monterey, Calif., yielded a story broadcast into an estimated 3.6 million homes.

"We're the only organization in the military that caters exclusively to the outside media," said Army Sgt. 1<sup>st</sup> Class Darryl Leonard, Hometown News Television Branch. "Our job is to tell the story of the local military hero through TV."

Although Madera is just a small California town a little northwest of Fresno, Allie McClintock and the rest of the "small town folks" she calls friends, are in touch with the Army's global mission through a hometown hero who made it to the front page of the county newspaper with a little help from Hometown News.