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## Stocking stuffers play Santa for troops

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BY DAWN BAUMGARTNER VAUGHAN

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DURHAM -- Soldiers serving in Iraq and Afghanistan will spend their holidays at the front, not the fireplace. So for the sixth year in a row, a Durham law firm is giving some of them stockings stuffed with care.

Pulley, Watson, King & Lischer, P.A. at Brightleaf Square held a stocking stuffing party this week as volunteers formed an assembly line and filled 240 red and white stockings with practical items like hand warmers, Chapstick, socks, gum, toothpaste, eye drops, mouthwash, powder, hot sauce and granola bars.

On Friday, boxes were shipped out to the recipients -- the 108 Military Police Company of the 16th Military Police Brigade from Fort Bragg serving in Iraq, plus Bravo Company of the 2d Reconnaissance Battalion from Camp Lejeune serving in Afghanistan.

Partner Richard Watson sewed stockings shut with a needle and yarn as he talked about why he started the annual Christmas for the Troops program. Watson is a Vietnam veteran, and on Christmas they were given a choice of a book that was sent over.

"I would have liked to receive something like this, and my men would have, too," he said.

The firm has heard back from some of the soldiers who have received stockings over the years.

"We've had some great letters from kids over there, thanking us for remembering them and sending things they can use," Watson said.

Volunteers outside PulleyWatson have helped out with donations. Like Toni Holloman, a CPA with Hutchings and Hutchings CPA, PA. She came to stuff stockings at the law firm. She said it's important to remember the troops at the holidays.

"We've got people fighting for us all over the world," Holloman said. "I'm really proud of them and want to make sure they know we're thinking of them in this time and everyday, actually."

Volunteer Bobby Yowell, a retired obstetrician, is a Navy veteran and helps out every year "just because I appreciate what these guys are doing," he said.

Law partner Malvern King, also a Navy veteran, said the whole firm embraced Watson's idea. Extra funds raised beyond the cost of the stockings are donated to the Brain Injury Association of North Carolina.

Lawyer Guy Crabtree said that regardless of what people might feel about war, "you support the troops on the ground."

"When a soldier gets this and opens it, I hope for a brief moment it makes them feel better and know they're not forgotten and that people over here care and support them," Crabtree said.

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*to you and your friends.*

Shopping, decorations, in-laws, and a turkey? You've got enough on your plate. It's time to call on The Maids to bring some holiday cheer into your home. So go ahead and give yourself an early gift this holiday season. The one that keeps on giving your weekends back.

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