



# A Soldier's Hands Letter Writing Guide

## The Story of Our Beginning

In August 2007, an empty middle seat on a badly overbooked flight led Trish Shallenberger to strike up a conversation with the polite youngsoldier seated on the other side.

The empty seat (that really shouldn't have been empty with the overbooking) started a conversation that would change Trish's life.

Mark was from Ozark, Alabama and about to deploy to Iraq. Trish noticed his hands were in rough shape, tops sunburned, and palms blistered after training in the hot Texas sun, so she offered him a tube of hand cream.

After hearing Mark's concerns not for his safety, but about the harsh sun and heat in Iraq, Trish offered to send him some more hand cream while he was deployed there. That's when Mark said the words that planted a seed that would become A Soldier's Hands: "Thank you, but I can't accept your kind offer when I know that some members of my unit won't receive even a single mail call."

Trish immediately promised to take care of Mark's whole unit – all 177 of them. That Thanksgiving, Mark's unit received more than 180 packages, and the mission of A Soldier's Hands took flight with the help of countless volunteers.

## What We Do

Since that day in 2007, A Soldier's Hands (ASH) has distributed more than 26,900 individual care packages around the world, unit by unit, so no member of any unit that ASH has the honor of serving goes without a mail call.

Each care package includes a personalized thank-you note, sunscreen, hand lotion, lip balm, candy (or Girl Scout cookies), and a star from a retired U.S. flag.



## Let's Partner

Does your organization need an opportunity to give back?

Need a guest speaker?

A service project for your corporation, sports team, club, or school?

Trish will share a message of inspiration, faith, and commitment -- and then, if you want to, you can dive into a packing or letter writing project!



ASH is eager to build relationships and engage in community. Some of our current partnerships include:

*The Suter Company, Sycamore, IL  
Prospera Financial, Dallas, TX  
RedNucleus, Yardley, PA  
Hope Lutheran School, Levittown, PA  
Durham Academy, Durham, NC*

## Easy Ways to Help

- Write letters and cards.
- Support this work financially at: [www.asoldiershands.org](http://www.asoldiershands.org).
- Invite Trish to speak to your group!

Visit [www.asoldiershands.org](http://www.asoldiershands.org) for details

## A Soldier's Hands

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## Mission Statement

To touch the hands and hearts of all deployed service members serving our country in the military, unit by unit, through a personalized gift of skincare and a message of gratitude. No one goes without a mail call.

# Letter Writing Instructions

## Your Letter - the Basics

- Begin with a greeting such as: Dear Brave Patriot or Dear Friend.
- Your letters don't have to be long, just write from the heart.
- Share things about yourself such as hobbies or interests.
- Tell them what's going on at home.
- Keep it positive, encouraging, and respectful. Avoid talking about personal struggles or controversial topics.
- If you have connections in the military, that's great to include.
- Tell a joke. Laughter is a gift in itself!
- Share how you got started with ASH and why you volunteer.
- Encouraging quotes are a nice thing to include.
- Sign your letters with your first name, city & state.

## If you'd like some help getting started...

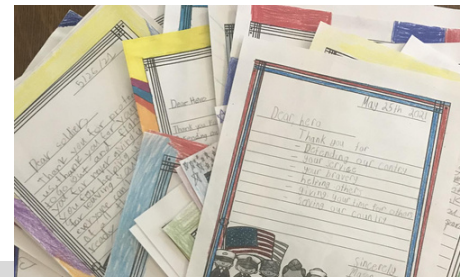
- Thank you for serving our country so selflessly.
- We pray you come home safely.
- Thank you for defending our freedom and being so brave.
- God bless you for serving our country.
- Your commitment to our country is heroic; thank you for your bravery and service.
- You are inspiring future generations of Americans.
- I greatly appreciate your service and the sacrifices you make to keep us safe.
- As we enjoy our freedoms, we thank you.

## Letter Format & Your Finished Letters

**VERY IMPORTANT:** Do not use glitter.

**MATERIALS:** Have fun with construction paper, card stock, or any blank sheet. Decorate with crayons, stickers, markers, and colored pencils, or keep it simple with a pen. **Please keep your theme holiday-free so that we can send your cards and letters year-round (no holiday cards, please).**

**FINISHED LETTERS:** When you are done with your letters, mail in bulk to the address below.



*A Soldier's Hands would like to acknowledge the Bellefonte PA Middle School Chain Reaction Club for their help creating this guide.*

## The Story of "The Star"

On April 6, 2008, Major Stuart Adam Wolfer was killed in the Green Zone, Baghdad, Iraq. To keep Adam's memory alive, his parents founded the Major Stuart Adam Wolfer Institute (MSAWI) and created the Star Program.

A Soldier's Hands became a "star maker" in 2015, including stars from retired flags in each care package with the enclosed message:

***"I am part of an American flag, but I can no longer fly. The sun and winds have caused me to become tattered and torn. Please carry me as a reminder that YOU are not forgotten."***

And Trish always has a star to give to veterans she meets in her travels. Here's a note from one of them:

***"As a Marine Vietnam Veteran, [the star is] something I will always treasure. When, I got home, I sat my grandchildren down and proudly showed them and explained the star and the memories of Major Wolfer. Again thank you, and God Bless you."***



*A retired American Flag Star packaged to send*

