

## **Navy League News Clips 02/15/07**

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Kaylee Marie Radzynski's Tunes 4 the Troops, launched as a high school project in 2005 with the assistance of a handful of friends, has become much much more than a Cleveland project. It has rapidly become a national and international project.

Radzynski, a Cleveland High School student, came up with the idea in late August/early September of 2005 to collect DVDs and CDs for military service members.

Training with her unit of U.S. Navy Sea Cadets, the Cleveland teenager discovered there was a tremendous desire among the military for entertainment.

With collaboration between Radzynski and close friends Chelsea Fronczak, Carly Louderback, Alex Stanbery and twins Rebecca and Rochelle Simmons the group began collection of DVDs and CDs.

Stories of the group's effort and Tunes 4 The Troops saturated area newspapers, radio and television during its start-up. The first event at the Armed Forces Recruiting Station on 25th Street resulted in the donation of hundreds of CDs and DVDs.

Kaylee and her mother, Stephanie Radzynski, then came up with a plan to distribute these first tapes to Walter Reed Hospital in Bethesda, Md. The trip to the military medical facility was paid for by the U.S. Navy, which provided a van and a gasoline card for the trip.

Kaylee and her mother stayed at the Bethesda bachelor's quarters for the price of \$20 per night. The trip to Maryland was during the Thanksgiving holidays of 2005.

In addition to 500 CDs and DVDs, Kaylee and her mom also delivered 200 pounds of candy from Cleveland's M&M Mars and boxes of Little Debbie snacks from McKee Bakery in Collegedale.

This first trip was only the start of a program which has since received acclaim nationwide and worldwide. Kaylee has been recognized by the media, community and civic organizations, military personnel and military units around the globe.

During a visit to her grandparents in Sierra Vista, Calif., Kaylee was the subject of a feature article on the front page of the local newspaper (the Sierra Vista Herald) on New Year's Day.

She has repeatedly been recognized by nationwide and worldwide news organizations, including Carolina News, CNN, NBC and the Department of Defense publication "When America Supports You."

Following the distribution of her first 500 CDs and DVDs, Kaylee applied for a \$4,000 grant from the Tennessee Titans, the National Football League team in Nashville.

She has used this grant to continue operation of her Tunes 4 The Troops program, which has expanded from distribution of tapes to troops to sending boxes packed with 200 tapes to military servicemen around the world. Most of these mailings have been to the Mideast to U.S. troops in combat areas.

A box company in Toledo, Ohio found out about her effort and has been providing her with boxes and packing tape.

Kaylee said the idea of mailing boxes of CD and DVDs came from Debbie Thompson, wife of Bradley County Commissioner Howard Thompson.

Mrs. Thompson found out about Kaylee's project and contacted her about sending DVDs and CDs to her nephew, Sgt. David Weir, in Iraq. The package to Sgt. Weir was the first of many boxes to be sent to military personnel.

Ironically, and tragically, Sgt. Weir later became Bradley County's first soldier to be killed in the war in Iraq. Others with Bradley County ties have been killed in the war, but Sgt. Weir is the first Bradley County native to be a victim.

With that first box mailed to Sgt. Weir, Kaylee's project has consistently expanded and responses from military recipients have been heart-felt (by the Cleveland teenager, her mother, friends and others involved with the project).

Kaylee has received a flag which was flown in her honor over Saddam Hussein's former headquarters in Iraq. A certificate sent with the flag says "This flag was flown over the Headquarters of the Multi-National Corps in Iraq in your honor during Operation Iraqi Freedom."

A second U.S. flag was sent to her which was flown in her honor over the Central Command U.S. Army Area Support Group in Kuwait.

One young soldier sent a magnet with his unit's logo and some Iraqi currency to his father with instruction it be sent to Kaylee.

She has also been honored with a Tennessee House and Senate Joint Resolution, received the Tennessee Achievement Award from Gov. Phil Bredesen (who asked to spend 10 minutes with her on a visit to Cleveland), and was named the national winner of a

Daughters of the American Revolution Service Award. She is the youngest of more than 140 people to receive this DAR award.

Recently-elected U.S. Sen. Bob Corker came to her home when he was campaigning in the area and presented her with a donation for Tunes 4 The Troops.

There have been other honors and accomplishments over the past year, all recognizing Kaylee and her Tunes 4 The Troops. She traveled to Kings Bay, Ga., in February of 2006 to visit the nuclear submarine USS Tennessee and delivered CDs and DVDs. The submarine's crew later visited Kaylee in Cleveland and continues to correspond.

There have also been personal responses. U.S. soldier Jonathon Marroquin wrote the Cleveland teenager: "A few weeks ago you sent a large box with CDs, DVDs and stuff like that. I just want to thank you on behalf of the 'Wolfhounds' for your generous donation. We are a small outpost with basically just the essentials, we have to order things online and hope it gets to us. Mostly we rely on family at home to send us cool stuff. It's been really busy here with Christmas and the death of our soldiers. On the 6th of December we had five of our soldiers die instantly by a car bomb buried in the middle of the road. Our unit has been here for 5 ½ months now and we've lost a total of 11 soldiers and countless wounded, so anything to cheer us up is appreciated. We thank you once again for sending us that huge package and God bless you. You have touched our lives over here on this tiny base of McHenry."

You might think this is enough accomplishments for a Cleveland teenager and a project which began on a whim to make a difference in the lives of a few of our nation's military personnel. It appears this is only the beginning.

Kaylee has distributed 12,500 CDs and DVDs to military servicemen and service units around the world. She has approximately 3,500 additional tapes to be packed for delivery.

These numbers pale when compared to her goal. "I want to distribute 500,000 CDs and DVDs by December 2008," she said with emphasis.

You might think this is an unreachable goal, compared to numbers presently on hand. But, you don't have the rest of the story.

Kaylee, with information and interest spreading across the nation, now has 24 satellite locations for collection and distribution of the entertainment tapes. She and her friends provide these satellite locations with kits containing information on how to collect and mail the DVDs and CDs. She also distributes addresses where boxes can be mailed.

With this expansion of the project, financing is also becoming an issue. Most of the Titans' grant has been expended and additional funding will be needed for the future.

With this in mind, the Cleveland teenager has scheduled her first fund drive for Saturday, Feb. 24, at the Outback Restaurant on Paul Huff Parkway in Cleveland.

The restaurant is donating 100 percent of proceeds from the \$20 meals to Tunes 4 The Troops and 150 reservations have already been made. Kaylee and her mother are hoping 300 or more people will attend.

There will also be a “unique” auction along with the luncheon fund-raiser. “We wanted to get unusual gifts,” said her mother.

One of the auction items is a U.S. Flag from the office of Congressman Zach Wamp. The flag will later be flown over the U.S. capitol in honor of anyone you decide.

Cleveland Mayor Tom Rowland is providing a “Special Day in Cleveland” as another auction prize with a special proclamation from the city.

“These are things you can’t buy,” said Stephanie Radzyminski.

This February 24th fundraiser is only one of several projects being contemplated by Tunes 4 The Troops.

Kaylee has activities planned with the Nashville Kats of the Arena Football League during a May 25th game at Nashville’s Gaylord Center. She is also coordinating events with the National Cheer Stars, a competitive cheerleading organization based in Cleveland.

A big possibility is talks with Hendricks Motorsports about the possibility of Tunes 4 The Troops being featured at a NASCAR event this season.

“It’s amazing where this is going,” said Kaylee’s mother. “The value of the CDs and DVDs (already distributed) is about \$200,000.”

Her daughter has a little better idea about the future of Tunes 4 The Troops: “500,000 CDs and DVDs by December 2008,” she said. With her proven success she may be right on target.