

Upload a virtual toast to the men and women in uniform



BARB GUY

On the Internet there's a place where everyone's proposing a toast to U.S. troops overseas. You can join in, if you want. It doesn't matter what your politics are. All you need is a desire to show your support for the troops in a refreshing, ice-cold way.

The Web site, www.sixpacksforsoldiers.com, claims to be bipartisan ("beerpartisan" is actually what it says) and I believe it's true because one founder of the site is a former executive with MoveOn.org and the other used to be the spokesperson for the National Rifle Association. This proves enough beer can make any two guys friends. Unless it makes them kill each other.

The site invites people to upload pictures of themselves toasting the troops. Then for every "virtual toast," sixpacksforsoldiers will send a beer to an actual soldier. So far

the beer apparently is going to returning soldiers, but they're even talking about doing "beerlifts" into Iraq and Afghanistan. Dropping mass quantities of alcoholic beverages into Muslim countries - there's an idea. That seems like the same kind of incomplete thinking that got us into trouble in the first place. Still, I'm sure the soldiers would be thrilled.

Some returned soldiers have posted pictures of themselves in uniform and toasting with captions like, "Cheers from a soldier that just got back - hope you can have one real soon," and, "First beer in a year."

The photos show a broad range of people who have taken time to support the troops in this unusual way. A woman in a sweater and pearls holds a glass of red wine aloft as she stands in front of her bookshelves, a freckle-faced little girl smiles while her dad raises a beer, others toast in big groups while tailgating, at parties, at conventions, during Mardi Gras. Some people pose with pictures of their soldiers away at war.

The messages that accompany the photos tell more of the stories. Valerie from Lucama, N.C., posted a photo of people clustered around a table in an outdoor square. Here is her caption: "This is an actual toast to our soldiers while in Germany

visiting my son who was stationed there. He is now serving in Iraq for the third time. May they all come home safe!"

While most photos feature people, there's a subgenre of pictures of drinks, either in the bottle or in the glass, perfectly positioned as if the soldier viewing the picture would only have to reach in to pick up his or her Patron Silver Label Tequila, champagne, Jack Daniel's, Samuel Adams, or Foster's Lager.

One such picture's caption reads, "Here is a nice glass of scotch for all of you. Hope you all come home safe and sound."

A lot of former soldiers have ideas about what current soldiers want to see in their toast photos. One fellow who describes himself as a Vietnam vet is toasting next to a belly dancer. Another, a former combat medic who's probably a Vietnam veteran, too, sits astride a black motorcycle with gleaming chrome, holding a beer while two women in bikinis snuggle close.

Most people have abstained from strongly political messages. Those folks who are anti-war and pro-soldier (and there are many millions of us) have generally gone with messages like, "We love beer and our soldiers. Mostly we would love our

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soldiers to have some beer.
'Thanks and come home soon!'

I was happy to take part in a
toast to soldiers at a party
recently and maybe that picture
will find its way to this Web site.

In case it doesn't, here's what we
said: "Here's to soldiers.
Cheers."

*BARB GUY is a regular contributor to
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