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WASHINGTON: Some American soldiers are away from their families for the holiday season, and not because they are deployed out of the country. They are hospitalized, keeping them away from much of the holiday cheer this year.

But the American Red Cross has found a simple way to cheer these troops up. The organization will collect and distribute holiday cards to members of the Armed Forces, veterans, and their families.

Cards can be sent to the Red Cross between October 1 and December 7.

"It just takes a moment to sign a card to share your appreciation for the sacrifices members of the military community make," says Sherri Brown, senior vice president of Red Cross Services to the Armed Forces. "You say thanks, we'll do the rest."

Cards will be received by Pitney Bowes Inc. a mailing service, equipment, and software company. Cards will be received in a special Holiday Mail post office box and will be screened for hazardous materials. Pitney Bowes will then package and ship the cards, free of charge, to volunteer sites around the country.

Together, The Red Cross and Pitney Bowes have distributed more than 4.7 million cards to military members and their families since 2006.

Throughout the holiday season, cards will then be delivered by Red Cross volunteers throughout the United States and overseas.

All cards must be postmarked by December 7 to ensure they are delivered in time for the holidays. In addition, senders are asked not to send "care packages," monetary donations, or other types of inserts in the cards. For more information on card requirements, visit redcross.org/holidaymail.

Another way to reach out is through connecting with others through Facebook (facebook.com/redcross) and Twitter, with the hashtag #holidaymail. There is also a YouTube channel where card senders can view Red Cross volunteers distributing the cards called "Holiday Mail for Heroes."

About the American Red Cross:

The Red Cross is a non-profit organization whose mission is to prevent and alleviate suffering during emergencies. Through donations, volunteers, and partners, The Red Cross is able to assist those who are affected by disaster around the world, prepare communities for disaster, provide

Americans with access to blood donations, and provide support and comfort to members of the Armed Forces and their families.

Cards will be mailed to:
Holiday Mail for Heroes
P.O. Box 5456
Capitol Heights, MD 20791-5456

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SOURCES:

The American Red Cross Mission Statement

<http://www.redcross.org/about-us/mission>

The American Red Cross YouTube Channel

<http://www.youtube.com/user/AmRedCross#p/c/564CADB267C75421>

Pitney Bowes Inc. Business Page

<http://www.pb.com/Our-Company/Our-Business/index.shtml>