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## Hoverman Brothers Make Community Service A Family Affair

Brothers create program to help soldiers without support system back home

By [Deborah Bostock-Kelley](#) 10:00am

Like all high school students, Matt and Ryan Hoverman need community service hours for graduation.

But these brothers have gone further than most to find a community service program that everyone could participate in.

Matt, a senior at Carrollwood Day School, explained that he was "looking for a community service project - something I could bring to the school to get people involved in. Not just your *typical* volunteer project."

Ryan, a junior, adds, "Because it's an IB school, you have to have a lot of community service, so you try to look for more creative projects that you can do."

In the past few years, the siblings had brought their campuses "Cell Phone for Soldiers," a recycling program that exchanges used cell phones for calling cards for soldiers overseas. They also had created a collection drive to provide necessities for deployed soldiers, called "Christmas for the Troops."

"We put collection bins all around all three campuses, and we asked the families to fill them with non-perishable items (like) pencils, pens, toothbrushes and deodorant," says Ryan. "It was really successful, especially in our middle and elementary school campus. That was the building blocks for our Adopt a Soldier program."

The brothers credit Early Childhood Campus Secretary Tami Pataro-Keen with the inspiration for Adopt a Soldier. While Matt and Ryan were working on Christmas for the Troops, Tami discovered that there were many soldiers who had never received correspondence or care packages from the United States.

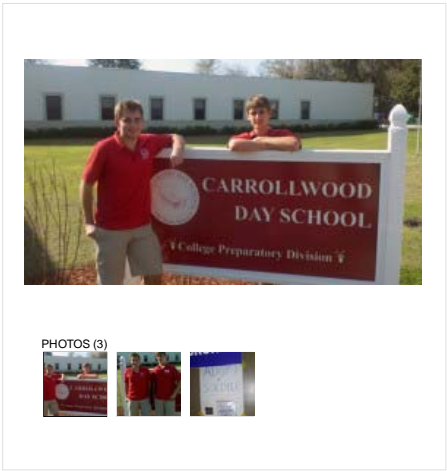
"My daughter knows someone in the military through her husband," Pataro-Keen said. "He knows boys in Afghanistan that get moved to very remote places for three weeks at a time and she found out these boys and men were not getting anything. There were a lot of basic items that they needed."

When Pataro-Keen found out what the needs were, she went to Matt and Ryan's mom to ask if the boys would be interested in helping out. They named their program Adopt A Soldier.

Launched in January, Adopt a Soldier is a school-wide program that matches Carrollwood Day School families with soldiers in remote areas - oftentimes on the front line - who may not have a support system in place back home. Families correspond and send regular care packages to their adopted soldier.

The brothers hope to keep the program going even after both of their graduations. "Hopefully what we can do is turn this into a year to year program and continue pass it down to someone else to keep it going throughout the school," says Ryan who will be taking the lead during his senior year.

"So far it's been pretty popular. We have posters around the schools and we are always getting emails saying we are interested in this," says Matt. "Right now, it's a school program with all the volunteers coming from our school, but we could expand it - depending on the success."



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