



Be a Star in Someone's Life – Christine Willesen, The Shining Star of Unit 626

It is an honor and a privilege for Unit 626 of Fort Worth, TX to nominate Christine Willesen for the award of "Be a Star in Someone's Life".

Christine is an eligible member of the American Legion Auxiliary through the service of her husband, Clint Willesen. Mr. Willesen retired from the U.S. Air Force after 26 years of service that began in Viet Nam and ended during the Desert Storm conflict. Christine also comes from a family of military service. Her father retired from the U.S. Army where he served during World War II and the Korean conflict; her brother served during Desert Storm and retired from the U.S. Air Force; and her oldest son is currently serving in the U.S. Army in Iraq.

In addition to all of her benevolent work, Christine has a full time job working as an independent merchandiser at the Naval Air Station Joint Reserve Base (NAS JRB) in Fort Worth. She is the mother of three children, Little Clint who is 17 years of age and a junior in high school; Rebekkah, who is 20 years of age and attends Tarrant County College; and her eldest son Brandon, who is 26 years of age and serves in the U.S. Army.

Over the past year, Christine has experienced several difficult life changing events. She lost her father-in-law in January, 2010, her mother in February, 2010, and her father on Christmas Eve, 2010. In addition, her son Brandon was deployed to Iraq in September 2010. As you will see, her fortitude is amazing.

Christine came to ALA Unit 626 just one year ago this past January and what a difference she has made in a short period of time. Her desire to serve and accomplish all she does is to be admired and worthy of recognition. In spite of the hardships she has endured this past year, Christine's strength and ability to continue with her work, her family, her church, and her service to the Auxiliary is a true inspiration.

Christine is a petite lady who packs a lot of punch. Her presence does not go without notice. After the death of her mother Christine became the sole caregiver for her father who suffered from Alzheimer's, but this did not stand in the way of her commitment to serve. Her father became her shadow. Everywhere Christine went, her father went with her.

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This past summer Christine contacted the principals and guidance counselors of two community elementary schools to learn if any of the students would be in need of school supplies to begin their school year. The schools eagerly responded with lists of needed items. Christine distributed the lists to our Auxiliary and Post members and set up a collection sight for the supplies. The response was overwhelming. Boxes and boxes of supplies were delivered to the schools to be distributed to the children in most need.

She also coordinated the collection of needed items for troops in Iraq. Eighteen boxes were filled with donated items that included Christmas gifts and cards for the troops to send back to their families. The boxes were mailed to her son's unit in Iraq. Unfortunately, her son was in the field at the time the boxes arrived, but he was insistent that everything be distributed among the troops still on the home front in Iraq. Christine's son has obviously acquired his mother's caring and giving nature.

Another successful project led by Christine is the collection of manufacturer coupons for overseas Military Bases. Since this past July to the present, \$156,000 in coupon value has been mailed out to 20 overseas Military Bases. Christine has a goal of \$200,000 in coupon value by the end of this reporting cycle. She has enlisted the help of over 30 Auxiliary and Post members to clip coupons, and she is confident she will meet her goal. Our Unit shares her confidence.

In addition to her own charitable work, Christine finds ways to enable others to serve. One of our Auxiliary members is currently rehabilitating from a broken leg. Christine visits with her and takes her coupons to clip. A Post and Unit member, who also assist with clipping coupons, have limited use of their hands due to arthritis. Christine has provided them with paper cutters so they could continue to clip coupons. She also enlisted the help of five college students, who had a community service course requirement, to pack the boxes of needed items that were mailed to the troops.

Christine also has a love for children. She organized Halloween and Christmas parties at our Post for the children of service members and the local community. To get the word out, she placed advertisements in the local community newspapers. Our hall was overflowing with children. They were entertained with arts and crafts, music, photos with the Great Pumpkin and Santa, costume contests, games, party favors, and lunch. A good time was had by all. Her next party is planned for this Easter.

Christine has coordinated the collection of donated items for the Patriot House, a transitional housing program for homeless veterans. She also collected donated items for a local shelter for abused women. One day each month for the past ten years, Christine works with her fellow church members to make sandwiches to feed the

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homeless at the Presbyterian Night Shelter. This past Thanksgiving and Christmas, she and her husband purchased and delivered four complete holiday meals to needy families. Keep in mind, throughout all of these activities, Christine's father was by her side until he entered the hospital this past December.

Christine is always thinking of creative ways to bring a smile to someone's face. With the help of our Unit members, she arranged the delivery of 60 Valentine bags containing cards and candies along with donated puzzles and puzzle-books to the new VA Outpatient Clinic in Fort Worth. She also passed out 60 Valentine bags of candy and goodies to our favorite Valentines, the members of our Post.

Christine has brought to our Unit a bottomless well of energy, enthusiasm and zest for volunteering and serving our Post, veterans, service members, children and community. To see her in action is an inspiration. She is a true asset to our Unit, and we are excited to see what magic Christine will work this coming year. Christine Willesen's star shines bright, and it serves as a guiding light for others to follow.

Respectfully submitted,
Tina Hill
President, ALA Unit 626
Fort Worth, Texas