



Serving Stockbridge, Hampton, McDonough, Locust Grove

Henry Daily Herald-Online

HENRY COUNTY'S NEWS SOURCE SINCE 1874 38 Sloan Street, McDonough, GA 30253

Thursday, September 03, 2009

Soldiers to bring donations to Noah's Ark

Thursday, September 03, 2009



By Valerie Baldowski

vbaldowski@henryherald.com

Noah's Ark will be the destination, again this year, for a special visit by soldiers recovering from injuries.

According to Noah's Ark Spokesperson Diane Smith, on Thursday, Sept. 10, the Locust Grove facility will host another visit from the Warrior Transition Battalion, based at Fort Benning. The soldiers' estimated arrival time, said Smith, is 10 a.m.

Special photo - The soldiers from the Wounded Troops Battalion, based at Fort Benning, received a warm welcome when they visited Noah's Ark last year. The visit was a way for the soldiers, recuperating from injuries, to get out of their barracks and take a break.

Located at 712 LG-Griffin Road, Noah's Ark is an animal rehabilitation center and children's home.

The battalion, formerly called the Wounded Troops Battalion, helps wounded soldiers transition back into civilian life or into the military work force, said Sgt. Bridgette Vickers.

Last year was the first such visit, and the event was a success, said Smith. "They came to bring donations to Noah's Ark. It was a phenomenal event, and very touching."

For last year's visit, she said, the troops brought truckloads of donations they collected, including gently used clothing, toiletries -- and even food for the animals.

"Everybody was ecstatic about giving back," said Vickers. "One soldier bought about \$600 worth of animal feed."

Smith said she was heartened by how much the troops enjoyed the visit. "It was amazing. They've been through so much, and yet, they contacted us, saying, 'What can we do?'"

Vickers said soldiers in the Warriors Transition Battalion undergo "morale trips" each week, which involves the platoon leaders organizing visits to local attractions, in an effort to get soldiers, who are recovering from their injuries, out of the barracks and away from the doctor's office.

Vickers was surfing the Internet, and came across the web page for Noah's Ark. After researching the facility and talking to Smith by phone, Vickers decided to schedule a visit. "This sounded like a good thing to do," she said.

Last year, upon learning of the troops' visit, Smith said she contacted then-County Commission Chairman Jason Harper to alert him, and "it grew from there."

When word spread to local residents, the community response was overwhelming, Smith continued. Representatives from the Locust Grove city government and local businesses, as well as students and teachers from area schools, came to line the streets and welcome the troops upon their arrival. "The community really pulled together," she said.

When the troops saw the hundreds of supporters cheering and waving, Smith said the sight gave them some much-needed encouragement. "They were so touched, they cried," she said. "When they saw the children out there waiting to greet them, they broke down."