

PS4FS Monthly Newsletter - January 2011:

Dear PS4FS friends,

For the majority of January, the PS4FS email account has been down, so if I've been slow to respond, please understand. The good news is, there were few casualties in December! This news comes from Army Chaplain Chuck Wallace (read his notes in the newsletter). However, we have yet to receive the updated casualty report from the Army – thus, I'm sending out the January newsletter without the casualties. At least we know it's a low number! That's something to be extremely grateful for! Pray it stays this way!

This newsletter shares more good news about the Fisher House and Memorial Garden, and the shared stories are particularly long but very moving! I urge you to read them and share them with your knitting/crocheting groups! Many blessings to you all for what you do in this ministry. Truly together we have all made a positive difference! Thank you for being here and making that kind of difference!

<http://webpages.charter.net/ps4fs/Shawls/>

Fondly,

Cozette

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I.) INFO:

1.) CURRENT STATISTICS:

# Prayer Shawls made since October 2007:	4,173	This number totals all names handed out, but could decrease as some of those names become 'abandoned' when they are returned due to moving or no response. It also includes Dover prayer shawls.
# remaining names on Army's list to fulfill:	TBD	Army's December Casualty Report not filed as of this writing
# Prayer Shawl Groups/Individuals:	260	

***A Warm Welcome to New Groups/Individuals who Joined PS4FS in December 2010**

Contact Name	Town	State	Group Name	Date Joined
Shannon Thomas	West Monroe	LA	Blue Star Mothers, NE Louisiana, Chapter 4	1/5/2011
Ashley Goldsmith	Weaver	AZ		1/8/11

2.) DOVER PROGRAM

Update on the Memorial Garden:

As the Fisher House is now up and running, housing visiting families to Dover, the adjoining Memorial Garden is soon to follow. Donna Curtis, Chairman of the DFGC Memorial Garden tells us they currently have \$123,483 raised. Add to this pledged donations totaling \$110,000 from three foundations, they are in very good shape for this beautiful garden, which we hope will be completed this spring. What a stupendous job! Thank you, all, who have contributed to this worthy cause!

Army Chaplain Chuck Wallace tells us:

The flight line is brutally cold due to the wind here and the shawls are being put to good use I can promise you that! Thankfully, very thankfully the holidays were very quiet for the Army in Dover. I did not distribute a lot of shawls in December. I did receive many, which has our stock back up to a good level. Please send my thanks out to everyone who was able to send shawls in December as it was cold on the flight line. We also have the Fisher House open now and I am able to offer the prayer shawls to families there as well. Thanks for all you do!

Chaplain Wallace also tells us he now has an office that has a window overlooking the area of the planned garden. He says:
It is already a very nice place. It is a good space for the families to have available to them.

I'm sure you all agree this is very exciting! Many good things are happening this month!

3.) ARMY'S RECENT CAUSALITY LIST: (REPORT NOT FILED THIS MONTH – WILL BE UPDATED WHEN IT COMES IN)

Below is a list of the recent casualties. They have **not** received prayer shawls from Dover, and have **not** been contacted so you would need to make the initial contact. If you would like any of these names, please let me know. As you are all aware, it's on a 'first come' basis, so let me know as soon as possible.

INFO, IDEAS, AND COMMUNICATIONS FROM YOU:

PS4FS knitters and crocheters Roma Anderson and Nancy Mauer, who work with the Needle Nippers of Westminster Presbyterian Church in Vero Beach, Florida, share with us a photo of their active group. They have done many wonderful things for this ministry, we're happy to have them here! Thank you, all for your inspiration and what you do for so many!

Seated-Front Row (left to right): Judy Brown, Jean Nowicki, Mary Gustave, and Georgia Brown

Standing-Back Row (left to right): Marguerite Langley, Joan Elwell, Doris Napier, Pat Daniels, Roma Anderson, Nancy Maurer (Co-coordinator), and Suzie Antinoro



THANK YOU NOTES, NPC RESPONSES, AND MESSAGES:

Below is a riveting letter from a family, making a request from a post card sent by PS4FS knitters/crocheters Sharon Schuesler and Melanie Staubitz, both belong to Messiah Lutheran Church in Cincinnati, Ohio. The letter is lengthy, but it's well worth reading from start to finish. It is written by Robert and Marla Derga, father and step-mother to CPL Dustin Derga, KIA 5/8/05 (notice early DOD). Bob and Marla live in Uniontown, Ohio. Thank you, Melanie and Sharon, for all you do with this ministry. You both work tirelessly to find Marines from your home state of Ohio! (2 photos right on this page, 1 additional photo on next page)

The worst news any parent can hear is that their son or daughter has been killed. When we heard the news on Sunday evening it was unbearable, surreal, agonizing. After our initial shock at this tragic news we were blessed to have our Pastor, Jim Nolte, to call and to turn to in our despair. Our pain was intensified because we had been working so hard to introduce Dustin to the love and grace of our Lord Jesus Christ before he left for Iraq. Both Bob and I wondered if our message got through. Dustin seemed open to the message; asking some really penetrating questions about some of the deeper theological ideas. Both Bob and I did our best to answer all of Dustin's questions. Yet, we felt inadequate at best.

Still we tried in every way possible to present the love and peace of Christ to Dustin in ways that would be appealing. We tried to do this not only in our words to him but in the way we lived our lives as a Christian couple. I think more than anything it was that loving example that helped intrigue and attracted Dustin. Once Dustin was deployed, his father and I wrote almost everyday to Dustin and in each letter we included something about our faith. We told Dustin that all he need do if he wanted some help, if he was afraid or tired or down hearted was to just talk to God and ask him to come into his heart and life. We assured Dustin that he didn't have to be perfect, or know all the answers to his questions to have God become his help and friend. All he had to do was ask and God would be right there.



But because Dustin could only talk or write briefly in between missions, we were never sure once Dustin left for Iraq if these messages came through and made a real difference. When we got a chance to talk, we just wanted to listen to his voice. And when he emailed, it was usually in between missions and he conveyed only the bare minimum in information. Things like, "I'm back safe...going back out soon. Love Dustin"

*Once we got the news of Dustin's death we were heart-sick at not knowing for sure if our message of hope and faith in the love of Christ was ever really received by Dustin. Yet, I for one, and many others were **certain** God had seen His word written on Dustin's heart in his last hour. It is said that there is no greater love than for a man to lay down his life for another. Dustin was such a person. He died in the pursuit of protecting his brothers-in- arms and the people of Iraq. He had also asked penetrating questions and seemed to be intrigued with this message. Any time Dustin was very interested in something he had to have ALL the details. All these things convinced me that he was indeed in Heaven and at rest. But Bob was, as he calls himself "the doubting Thomas". He wanted to believe but had a hard time being certain.*



Bob received some reaffirming news from both Dustin's girlfriend and our daughter's boyfriend who both said they believed Dustin was in Heaven too. They told Bob that Dustin had been listening to an electronic version of the New Testament that Bob had sent with him. That was a big assurance to Bob and a reaffirmation to me that Dustin had accepted the friendship and love of Christ and was seeking more information and answers to his questions in the Bible. Yet, Bob was not completely sure until I made a call to my oldest sister.

At the time of Dustin's death, my sister, Susan, had been in Texas visiting her Mother-in-law's sister Darlene. Aunt Darlene, as everyone called her, was already comatose and in the last stages of CJV (a rare, lethal disease, often described as a type of "mad cow disease" that occurs in humans). I wanted to inform Susan of Dustin's death, so called her while she was visiting Aunt Darlene on Tuesday, May 10th. Susan had heard through another family member that Dustin had been killed but had no details about the manner of his death. I described to her what had happened on Sunday May 8th: that Dustin had been shot at 8:00 p.m. Iraqi time (12:00 noon our time). Dustin was pronounced dead later at a field hospital at 8:34 p.m. Iraqi time. Susan became extremely agitated and asked in disbelief for me to repeat the date and time of Dustin's death. When I told her the day and time of Dustin's death again she said, "I can't believe it! I have to tell you this story!" She told me of Aunt Darlene's last days and death. Susan said in the end Darlene had fallen into a comatose state, an agonizing decision had to be made to take her off of life support on Sunday, May 8th.

Three weeks earlier, Aunt Darlene had been functioning but started to suffer mysterious seizures. At that time, she had conveyed to one of her family members she had had a strange dream, so strange, that she felt weird talking about it. Darlene said in the dream she had died - she could see herself standing in a place filled with white light and she was wearing a white gown. She stood all alone for a few moments until a Marine in fatigues walked up behind her and took her hand and they walked into heaven together. When she looked at the Marine's face, she thought she recognized him - she felt he was family but she didn't know who. My sister, Susan, said that Darlene was adamant this was a Marine, even though she personally did not know a Marine.

The mere image of the Marine was miraculous to me but as she went on with the details of Darlene's death, I soon realized that this was not just a coincidence or a comforting image. It was a clear message of assurance from God that Dustin was indeed in heaven, because Darlene did not know she was going to die at the time of the dream, she did not know a Marine, and she miraculously died at 12:35 pm Texas time, which is 1:35 our time in Ohio. (Precisely 1 hour 35 minutes after Dustin was shot.) So I believe that Dustin was already in heaven when Darlene died, and he helped show her the way into Heaven. Now, both Bob and I know Dustin is in heaven, on duty, taking other's hands to show them the way into heaven too.

We feel this story is a gift from God to us in our time of need. The calm and assurance we now feel after hearing this story is not merely a human attempt to shut out our pain. The feeling of calm assurance and even a quiet joy at knowing Dustin is indeed home and safe in heaven can only come from God. We know we will always grieve the loss of having Dustin here with us on earth. We prayed daily that God would bring Dustin home safe and whole. Little did we know how those prayers would be answered in the fullness of God's time and in His perfect way. Darlene's vision has helped answer our questions and confirms our faith in the love of God and His power to answer earnest prayer from all His children. We will always grieve deeply the loss of Dustin, but we don't grieve in despair because we are assured he is indeed home, safe, and whole, with God. I hope this message of faith gives you comfort and assurance that our grief is being met and eased by God day-by-day in every way.

*Always the Proud Marine Parents of Cpl. Dustin A. Derga USMC
Robert and Marla Derga, Uniontown, Ohio*



Many of you will remember the name of **PS4Fs knitter Kay Shandler, from Emporia, Kansas**. Kay is one of the most prolific knitters around! She joined us in April 2008, and in that time has hand made and delivered over 135 prayer shawls in our ministry! And get this: Kay is a ONE PERSON SHOW! I had the pleasure of meeting Kay at the 2008 Prayer Shawl Gathering in Hartford. Even founders Vicky Gallo and Janet Bristo remember Kay from that convention! Kay leaves no stone unturned in this ministry. She just received a follow-up request from Kathleen Chappell, whose son, SPC Jason Kristoffer Chappell, was KIA 1/24/04 (notice early DOD). Thank you Kay, for your tireless efforts here! It's so rewarding when we hear from these families because we don't want them to be forgotten! Below is Kay's message: *(1 photo left)*

I had a phone call from a mother that I had sent a letter to a couple years ago requesting a shawl. Her son was Jason Chappell and they are from CA. I think his date of death was 1-24-2004. I am making her shawl this week and will get it to her soon. Her name is Kathleen Chappell. It still surprises me when they contact me after so much time has past. I think this is my 135th shawl for PS4FS.

PS4FS knitter/crocheter Pat Van Horn, who works with Holy Apostles Catholic Church in Colorado Springs, Colorado, gave a prayer shawl to Christy Goetz, wife of CPT Dale Alan Goetz, KIA 8/30/10. Kristy also lives in Colorado Springs, and sends the following email message to all of you! Thank you, Christy! CPT Goetz was an Army Chaplain who died in combat in Afghanistan. Christy has three sons and shares the photos below of her and the family, and an inspirational message: *(1 photo right, 3 below)*

Dear Shawl Ministry Members wanted to send you a belated Thank You for the beautiful Prayer Shawl you made in memory of my husband CH CPT Dale A Goetz. We are doing fine though I will have to say it is difficult raising three boys without daddy. God is all wise though and nothing comes as a surprise. I praise Him for His goodness, strength and grace each day. He is doing great things in the big picture. Thank you for the love and care you put in to creating such a gift. Sincerely, Christy Goetz, Colorado Springs, CO

