

Hometown Hero

CLIPPING COUPONS FOR SOLDIERS

Kay MacVey, 83, sits down at her kitchen table in Ames, Iowa (pop. 50,731), scissors in hand and a waste basket at her knee. With a stack of coupon inserts from the *The Tribune* newspaper's weekend edition, she starts clipping.

"I'm happy," she says, "and my clippers will be too."

Since 2006, MacVey and her devoted group of 30 volunteer "clippers" have participated in Coupons for the Military, an American Legion Auxiliary service project. To date, MacVey, the project's coupon chairman, has mailed more than \$1 million worth of coupons to commissaries in Germany, Japan, Italy, Turkey, the Netherlands and South Korea, where U.S. military families are able to redeem them to save money on groceries.

"We call her the queen of the coupon clippers," says Norma Hopkins, chairman of the national security department in Iowa's American Legion Auxiliary.

MacVey's interest began in 2006 after her daughter, Sandy Deacon, found the program among other auxiliary service projects and brought it up at an auxiliary meeting. "I thought, 'I don't know what the rest of the world is doing, but I can do that,'" says MacVey, whose husband served during World War II, brother served in Korea, and son served in Vietnam.

She started by collecting and clipping, sending shoe boxes full of coupons to one of 12 commissaries abroad. Deacon, 63, soon joined her mother's efforts. As MacVey talked to friends at bingo or while playing cards, they volunteered too. Today, auxiliary members and friends participate by clipping coupons or collecting them from their relatives, neighbors and church congregations. Others distribute coupons to nursing home residents or school groups to clip.

"People want to do something for the troops but don't know what individually they can do," Deacon says. "When they cut coupons, they feel like they're doing something. There's satisfaction in it."

Doug and Kathy MacCrea help MacVey's efforts by clipping more than 1,200 coupons a week. They cut coupons from the Ames and Des Moines newspapers, print online



Kay MacVey, of Ames, Iowa, clips coupons for U.S. military families stationed overseas.

coupons, and pick up coupon inserts from the donation box that MacVey keeps at the American Legion hall.

"As a military member, I know families appreciate the opportunity to save money," says Doug MacCrea, 54, who retired from the Navy in 2007. "They only get the *Stars and Stripes* or American printings of international newspapers. Coupon availability is virtually nonexistent on the bases. It takes a special kind of person to dedicate themselves to serving military families they don't know."

In 2007, MacVey's clipping increased after an AARP magazine article featured her efforts and 144 people from 38 states also began sending her coupons. She now receives up to eight packages in the mail each day. "I'm grateful for every one I get," she says.

And she hopes to put each one to good use by helping her meet a 12-month coupon clipping goal that she started in May 2008.

"At first I thought about \$750,000," MacVey says. "But then I thought, 'No, let's go for a million.'"

Story by Vicki Cox of Lebanon, Mo.

Coupons can be mailed to Kay MacVey at 3419 Polaris Drive, Ames, Iowa 50010.