

Make Flat Bears For Children Overseas



What you need:

- Fabric (Any color or style)
- Fat Quilt Batting or stuffing (unless using fleece)
- Scissors or pinking shears, or pinking rotary cutter
- Sewing Machine or Needle and Thread
- Something to use as a template (cardboard, clear plastic, wood)
- Fabric markers, or buttons

Instructions:

- Trace outline on your template
- Using template, trace bears on the right side of the fabric. (leave a little space between bears
- Make a bear sandwich - top fabric, fat quilt batting or stuffing, OR top and a thick fuzzy back that won't need much batting. Please make them fat enough that they are fun to play with but not so fat as to impede our troops' movement when carried in a cargo pant leg pocket.
- Sew on traced line. You may include a tag in your stitching. You can find one in Arabic on www.TheHugsProject.net that says "To the Children of Iraq (or Afghanistan) from the children of America".
- Cut bears using pinking shears or pinking rotary cutter, or scissors
- Draw a face, and hear with fabric markers

What To Do Next:

- Contact the Community Engagement Office via phone (231) 760 - 9993 or email dominique@unitedwaylakeshore.org
- Drop off the flat bears to the United Way of the Lakeshore Office so we can ship them to the correct locations with no cost to you!
- **The office is located at 31 E Clay Ave, Muskegon MI, 49442**



The Hugs Project



Letter from a Marine Gunnery Sergeant in Iraq. It was sent on Dec. 27, 2004:

I just wanted to write to you and tell you a story about an experience we had over here.

As you know, I asked for toys for the Iraqi children and several people (Americans that support us) sent them over by the box-full. On each patrol we take through the city, we take as many toys as will fit in our pockets and hand them out as we can. The kids take the toys and run to show them off as if they were worth a million bucks. We are as friendly as we can be to everyone we see, but especially so with the kids. Most of them don't have any idea what is going on and are completely innocent in all of this.

On one such patrol, our lead security vehicle stopped in the middle of the street. This is not normal and is very unsafe, so the following vehicles began to inquire over the radio. The lead vehicle reported a little girl sitting in the road and said she just would not budge. The command vehicle told the lead to simply go around her and to be kind as they did. The street was wide enough to allow this maneuver and so they waved to her as they drove around.

As the vehicles went around her, I soon saw her sitting there and in her arms she was clutching a little bear that we had handed her a few patrols back. Feeling an immediate connection to the girl, I radioed that we were going to stop. The rest of the convoy paused and I got out the make sure she was OK. The little girl looked scared and concerned, but there was a warmth in her eyes toward me. As I knelt down to talk to her, she moved over and pointed to a mine hidden in a pile of garbage down the road. Immediately a cordon was set as the Marine convoy assumed a defensive posture around the site. The IED was destroyed in place with no loss of life.

It was the heart of an American that sent that toy. It was the heart of an American that gave that toy to the little girl. It was the heart of an American that protected that convoy. Sure, she was a little Iraqi girl and she had no knowledge of purple mountain's majesty or fruited plains. It was a heart of acceptance, of tolerance, of peace and grace, even through the inconveniences of conflict that saved our team. Those attributes are what keep Americans hearts beating. She may have no affiliation at anyone with the United States, but she knows what it is to be brave and if we can continue to support her and her new government, she will know what it is to be free. Isn't that what Americans are, the free and the brave?

So, if you sent over a toy to a Marine (or any US Service member) you took part in this. You are a reason that Iraq has to believe in a better future. Thank you so much for supporting us and for supporting our cause over here.

Semper Fi,
Mark
GySgt/USMC