

Big Flats girl closes in on military card drive goal

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(Photo: JEFF MURRAY / STAFF PHOTO)

Sophie Kartzman may only be 12, but she's already learned how to dream big.

In fact, that's the name of [her website \(http://dreambigsophie.org/\)](http://dreambigsophie.org/), Dream Big Sophie, and Sophie is closing in on a dream of collecting 15,000 holiday greeting cards for members of the military.

Sophie, the daughter of David and Denise Kartzman of Big Flats, got her start two years ago when she and a friend made 50 cards each for the American Red Cross Holiday Mail for Heroes program. Things just sort of exploded after that.

Last year, Sophie led efforts locally to collect 13,000 holiday cards for active military and veterans. Rather than rest on her laurels, she upped the ante this year.

(UPDATED) As of Thursday evening, Sophie had more than 14,010 cards in hand, thanks to support from area schools, community organizations and individuals.

"People have been saying to me that they really want to make some cards. So far, my school donated over 1,000 cards," said Sophie, a seventh grader at Horseheads Middle School. "I didn't really think it would expand this much. It just started when my friend and I were face timing and making cards. It's great. I can't really explain, but it's just really amazing that people will really do this. There's still a lot of good in the world."

Can 7th-grader gather 15,000 cards this holiday season?

[\(http://www.stargazette.com/story/news/2015/10/12/seventh-grader-runs-military-card-drive/73643874/\)](http://www.stargazette.com/story/news/2015/10/12/seventh-grader-runs-military-card-drive/73643874/)

The public response, and especially Sophie's determination to make this dream come true, come as no surprise to her grandmother, Marion Nicastro.

"People respond. People who hear her think they can do anything. She can make a difference so I can make a difference," Nicastro said. "(Sophie) started volunteering at 3 years old. I took her to the food bank truck. This is so nonpolitical and nondenominational. There are no borders. Everybody feels that they can participate. There are no barriers."

The holiday card effort has been boosted by several public events. One of those efforts will happen Saturday, when Orange Leaf Southern Tier frozen yogurt, 3317 Chambers Road in Big Flats, hosts a promotion. Patrons who visit the shop Saturday and make a card for the troops will earn free frozen yogurt, one ounce per card made, up to six ounces.

Sophie hopes to wrap up the card drive Monday, but that isn't a hard and fast date.

"We've been saying on Nov. 23 we'll stop but a lot of cards are coming in at the end of November," she said. "I don't know if we can really stop Nov. 23. Last year a lot of cards came in at the end, after the deadline."

Follow Jeff Murray on Twitter [@SGJeffMurray](https://twitter.com/SGJeffMurray).

How to help

Here are collection sites where cards can be dropped off:

- Corning Chiropractic Associates, 75 W. Pulteney St. in Corning.
- Star Gazette, 201 Baldwin St. in Elmira.
- Big Flats Community Center, 476 Maple St. in Big Flats.
- Horseheads School District offices, south wing of high school.
- **Information:** Go to [dreambigsophie.org \(http://dreambigsophie.org/\)](http://dreambigsophie.org).

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