

Sharing Cookies and Making Friends

Ginger Betty's Earns the Prestigious Seven Seals Award



By Dolores Sauca - Lorusso

Ginger Betty's Bakery of Quincy is a business dedicated to the people of the community and our nation. Beth Veneto, owner of Ginger Betty's affectionately known as Betty, uses the "magic of gingerbread" to sprinkle a little sweetness into the lives of soldiers and their families who are awaiting their safe return.

Five years ago Betty started the Sharing Cookies and Making Friends Campaign to "create smiles and raise awareness of the war." She established the program after a flight to Savannah, Georgia during which she sat alongside a soldier returning home from Iraq. Before meeting this soldier the war was just something Betty saw on the news. She said it wasn't personal for her because she didn't know anyone that was fighting. "Speaking to him put a face on who was fighting the war...I decided it was time to make a personal contribution to help soldiers and their families." And so the "G.I. Ginger Betty's Sharing Cookies, Making Friends" campaign was born.

Betty strongly believes if these volunteer forces are to serve our nation, increased public understanding is required of the essential role of the Guard and Reserve in preserving our national security. She expressed her support of the military personnel that train to respond to the community and their country in time of need. "They deserve the support of every segment of our society," said Betty.

Recently the "prestigious" Seven Seals Award was presented to Betty and the "G.I. Ginger Betty Foundation" "Ginger Betty" was recognized for her generosity, meritorious leadership, and initiative in support of the men and women who serve America in the National Guard and

Reserve. She is working in with the Yellow Ribbon program to ship even more cookies in the coming months.

The award's name refers to the seven military guard and reserve branches. Working in conjunction with National Guard personnel at the Quincy Army, Betty and her staff and many Quincy residents sent thousands of ginger snaps to the troops overseas and provided their children with gingerbread houses.

The Seven Seals Award is sponsored by Employers Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR): the Pentagon's chief agency to promote cooperation and understanding between civilian employers and National Guard members and reservists who work for them and may be called to active duty.

Ginger Betty' is very thankful to all the "willing recruits that joined the G.I. Ginger Betty team over the years to share cookies and make friends." Many organizations donate money to the G.I. Ginger Betty Foundation. "It is a great way to raise awareness about the war, especially for children" said Betty. "Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts and schools raise money to buy cookies and package them to send overseas to the troops. Kids love to feel like they are making a difference."

Next time you are at Ginger Betty's remember to look for the cookies with the G.I. Ginger Betty label. A portion of the money from the sale of these cookies goes toward sending ginger snaps to the troops and gingerbread houses to their families. Consider participating in a great group activity that creates smiles for everyone involved. Work with a local organization to collect money for the G.I. Ginger Betty Fund and make a difference in the lives of soldiers and their families.

Betty says that "on all levels Ginger Betty's is about sharing cookies and making friends." Betty told a story about a time "very close to her heart" when she was able to share the joy of gingerbread with Sydney, a little girl with cancer. "While she was sick all she wanted was a gingerbread house. When she was feeling a little better her aunt came in to get her one," said Betty "When the Make-A-Wish Foundation asked her what she wanted to do, she said 'I want to go to Ginger Betty's Bakery'. It was an honor that she chose to come here. I was touched that I was able to make a difference in her life through the wonder of gingerbread." Sydney, a brave cancer survivor, did go to Ginger Betty's with all of her cousins and they enjoyed an extraordinary gingerbread decorating party.

Betty says that her corporate clients are also falling in line with the philosophy of sharing cookies and making friends. Corporate clients want to make a lasting impression on their customers and they believe Ginger Betty's has the tool. "Houses and cookies are a sweet tool for marketing and advertising. Instead of pens, mugs and shirts, it is nice to promote your business on something as sweet as a cookie...People sit down, relax, eat it with coffee and it reinforces the message."

Without a doubt 'Ginger Betty' has used her "sweet tool" to reinforce a very important message; we need to support our troops and make a difference in our community in whatever way we can.—big or small.

Betty believes "gingerbread is all about tradition" and she feels "fortunate to help people to keep up with those traditions." Let her dedication to the community and our nation serve as an example to start your own tradition of sharing and making friends.

