

“IZZY DOLLS” Update

April 2008

After the untimely deaths of both parents of The Late MCpl “Izzy” Isfeld, the IZZY DOLL project continues under new leadership. At the request of the Isfeld family, Shirley O’Connell of the Order of the Eastern Star continues Mark Isfeld’s legacy. The Order of the Eastern Star and the Canadian Military Engineers Association provide a network of Military Engineers who assist in the collection of these dolls and in their delivery to the deployed troops.



The “Izzy Dolls” are named in honour of Master Corporal Mark (Izzy) Isfeld, a Canadian Army Combat Engineer, a member of 1 Combat Engineer Regiment who was killed in a mine detonation on 21 June 1994 while on a peacekeeping tour in Croatia.

The idea behind the "Izzy Doll" had started in the Fall of 1993. On a previous peacekeeping tour Mark’s mother, Carol, conceived the idea of knitting little dolls that could be easily carried and that her son Mark could give to the kids he met on his travels. After Mark’s death, his comrades advised Carol that they had named the dolls “Izzy Dolls” and that name stuck. Carol responded to their request to keep making the dolls so they could hand them out in Izzy’s honour.

For more than a decade Carol kept making the dolls and having Mark’s peers distribute them on their missions. Several friends and other mothers across the country heard of the initiative and they joined in the project. Word got out and Carol put the doll pattern on the web so that anyone could make them and send to Canada’s troops deployed around the world [See: <http://www.isfeldbc.com/>]. The network of participants grows.



In 2005, through the initiative of Shirley O'Connell the Order of the Eastern Star joined this project [see: <http://www.easternstar.org/>]. This order is the largest fraternal organization in the world to which women and men belong. Many national and local charities are among the projects supported by its members as they strive to build a better and more fulfilling way of life for all through their fraternal service. With their members' participation and their large network to encourage the participation of other 'willing hands,' they were soon providing thousands of dolls for distribution by deployed Canadian Forces soldiers.

With the death of both Carol and Brian Isfeld in 2006 and 2007, respectively, the Isfeld family has asked Shirley O'Connell to provide the leadership in the continuation of Mark Isfeld's legacy.

With the volunteer work of individuals and groups like the Order of the Eastern Star, the Izzy Dolls are made in many forms and are distributed in many ways. The Canadian Military Engineers Association assists with the organization and Canadian Military Engineers, in particular, distribute Izzy Dolls in Mark Isfeld's memory. These dolls continue to bring joy and smiles to little faces in war-torn areas of the world.

