General Information

Source: NBC Nightly News
Creator: Lester Holt/Joe Fryer
Resource Type: Video News Report
Copyright: NBCUniversal Media, LLC.
Event Date: 10/19/2014
Air/Publish Date: 10/19/2014
Clip Length: 00:02:14

Description

Eighty-two-year-old Elizabeth Laird receives the Yellow Rose of Texas for her comforting hugs to Fort Hood soldiers.

Keywords


Citation

MLA
LESTER HOLT, anchor:
Finally tonight, if you ever take for granted the simple act of giving-- getting a hug, consider one woman who has been-- for years been giving them out in Texas, a comforting act of kindness and thanks for military men and women. We get her story from NBC's Joe Fryer.

JOE FRYER, reporting:
At 82 years-old, Elizabeth Laird is still working full time. To her customers, she's the tax lady. But to soldiers at Fort Hood, Texas--

MAN #1: Oh, thank you so much for being here. Appreciate it.
LAIRD: Thank you.

FRYER: --she's the Hug Lady.

LAIRD: Welcome back.

MAN #2: Thank you.

FRYER: Every time troops here deploy or return, Laird's open arm assembly line is in full operation.

LAIRD: They appreciate it. When I give them a hug they smile.

MAN #3: We appreciate it. Thank you so much. It's good to see you.

My family is not here per se, but it's like she fills in-- in for them.

FRYER: Born into a military family, Laird enlisted in the Air Force in 1950, on the day she turned 18.

LAIRD: I wanted to do my part for my country.

FRYER: Long after her service, she continued to volunteer, but didn't become the Hug Lady until 2003. Before that, she merely shook their hands.

LAIRD: And then one day a soldier hugged me. Well, there was another soldier, there was this-- and hugged me. That one needed a hug too, so I turned around and gave him a hug. Well, then another one needed a hug, and so it went.

FRYER: Eleven years later, Laird has issued hundreds of thousands of hugs, even if it's two in the morning.

LAIRD: I'm there.
FRYER: A weekend.
LAIRD: I'm there.
FRYER: A holiday.
LAIRD: I'm there.
FRYER: Her dedication is unwavering.
LAIRD: A few young men say that, oh, my wife wouldn't like this. I said, if I was young, you know, it'd be different. But I'm a great-grandmother, and therefore it makes it all right for me to give you a hug.
FRYER: In return, soldiers have given her mementos and patches from around the world.
LAIRD: This is South Dakota.
FRYER: Perhaps her greatest honor came Friday when Laird received the Yellow Rose of Texas, awarded to women who make significant contributions to their community.
LAIRD: Amazing.
FRYER: It was signed by the governor.
LAIRD: I've hugged him a number of times. So he-- he knows the Hug Lady.
FRYER: Recognition for a selfless gesture--
MAN #4: Have a good day.
LAIRD: Y'all are wonderful. Bless you.
FRYER: --you can't help but embrace. Joe Fryer, NBC News.