

The Story of the Izzy Dolls

A new video: "The Story of the Izzy Doll" has recently been released that does an excellent job of explaining the "Izzy Doll" project.

See:  [Video Izzy Doll Credits.mp4 \(13:30 min\)](#)

The story starts with the personal initiative of the late Master Corporal Mark Isfeld and his mother and follows the growth of a grass-roots movement that helps bring a bit of love and comfort to children in some desperate parts of the world. The video was produced and narrated by Ron L. Johnson assisted by Shirley O'Connell, 'The Izzy Doll Mama.' Permission was granted by Phyllis Wheaton to use excerpts from her book: "In the Mood for Peace: The Story of the Izzy Doll" as well as the "Izzy Doll Song" from her CD: "In Harm's Way."



A legacy of comfort, caring and love continues as strong today as it was 20 years ago when the "Izzy Dolls" began to be distributed to children who had been caught up in areas of conflict in different parts of the world. The dolls are also a legacy to the late MCpl Mark "Izzy" Isfeld and his idea to provide simple dolls to children who were innocently caught up in war-torn areas of the world.

During his first peace-keeping mission to Croatia, Mark had noticed a child's doll lying on a pile of rubble from a bombed house and thought of the need to re-connect a child with the joy that can come from a doll. His mother Carol crocheted some small dolls and Mark distributed them. Later, on a subsequent tour, Mark was with 1 Combat Engineer Regiment when he was killed in a mine detonation on 21 June 1994. After his death, his unit gave the name "Izzy" to this little Canadian icon and continued to distribute them. Izzy Dolls have since brought comfort to over 1.3 million children worldwide who were suffering because of war or natural disasters.



For more than a decade Carol kept making the dolls and having Mark's colleagues distribute them on their missions. Several friends and other mothers across the country learned of the initiative and joined in the project. Word got out and Carol put the doll pattern on the web so that anyone could make them and send them to Canada's troops deployed around the world [See: www.izzydoll.ca]. The network of participants grows.

In 2005 Shirley O'Connell joined the project. Two news broadcasts - one showing the devastation on the faces of children during the Boxing Day 2004 tsunami in Indonesia and the other of the dedication of the bronze statue of MCpl Mark Isfeld located in Peacekeeper Park, Calgary, Alberta - merged into one idea. The Izzy Dolls in memory of one of our own soldiers could not only bring smiles to the children



caught up in war but could also bring comfort to children suffering because of natural disasters.

A collection network was established throughout Canada with the assistance of members of the Order of the Eastern Star of which Shirley has been a life member of over 40 years.



Over 75,000 Izzy Dolls have passed through Shirley's hands, alone, on their global journey to bring comfort to the little children. The Canadian Military Engineers Association assisted with the organization and helped distribute Izzy Dolls in Mark Isfeld's memory.

The distributing agencies have broadened and children around the world have also received Izzy Dolls for comfort from the Toronto International Police Officers in Afghanistan, ICROSS Canada, Canadian doctors on short-term medical missions, and various Canadian charities.

With the death of both Carol and Brian Isfeld in 2006 and 2007, respectively, the Isfeld family asked Shirley O'Connell to provide the leadership for the continuation of Mark Isfeld's legacy and they now call her the "Izzy Doll Mama".



Many happenings have taken place since Mark's death in 1994 including the publication of the book: *"In the Mood for Peace: The Story of the Izzy Doll"*, written by author/singer/songwriter Phyllis Wheaton. The town of Perth, Ontario declared 27 June 2012 as "In the Mood for Peace Day" honouring our peacekeepers and the story of the Izzy Doll.



The Izzy Doll project has also captured the interest of the youth. Through a program called "Encounters with Canada" that is sponsored by Veterans Affairs Canada, selected students from across Canada arrive in Ottawa to participate in a week where they discover their country through each other, learn about Canadian institutions, meet famous and accomplished Canadians, explore exciting career options, develop their civic leadership skills and live an extraordinary bilingual experience. For the past five years students have attended an Izzy Doll workshop during Remembrance Week where they learn the history of the Izzy Doll and finish making a doll that will find its way to some trouble-spot.

The Izzy Dolls continue to bring comfort and smiles to the faces of the little children around the world in Mark's memory.