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Sending Care Overseas

1/31/2005

Tracey La Monica Signal Staff Writer

The packages are filled with goodies and necessities then sent to men and women serving the United States in foreign lands.

"I feel I can make a difference," said Karolle Blackson, member of the Santa Clarita Valley Chapter of Thrivent Financial for Lutherans.

The "care packages" are stuffed to the brim with things requested by a member of one of five armed services.

Blackson was about to seal one package that was filled to the brim with letters from children, body wash, shampoo and conditioner, a baggy of sweets, toothpaste, beef jerky, trail mix, deodorant and a stuffed animal for a female soldier.

"There's so many people. These people need stuff," she said as she sealed the package.

For Blackson, it all began when a friend e-mailed her the site to Any Soldier Inc., a nonprofit charitable organization based in Maryland. The site had started when a mother wanted to send her son a care package. She then wanted to help the men stationed with him and began the site.

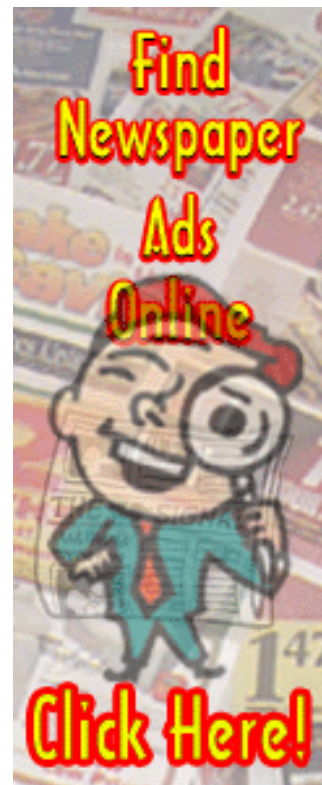
The site has soldiers listed by Army, Marines, Air Force, Navy and Coast Guard and each soldier lists what they would like.

Blackson decided to adopt about 50 soldiers at random and send care packages to them via mail.

All items have been donated by different organizations including the Sunshine Rotary Club, T. O.P.S. CA 1367, members of the Church of Hope and Christ Lutheran Church.

Pastor George McLeary is with the Church of Hope and funnels all the small beanie babies and stuffed animals from the Church of Hope's thrift store to Blackson's care packages.

The small stuffed animals are especially important, she said. Once the soldiers receive the small animals, they will take them on patrols. The small stuffed animals will be given to children in Kuwait, Afghanistan, Iraq and other areas where soldiers are trying to form bonds with the children.



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1078/3502 Clean air
31%



1013/3502 Clean water
29%



575/3502 Endangered
16% species



297/3502 Oak trees
8%



539/3502 Environmentalists
15%



"It's so important," said Pastor McLeary. "These men and women are far away from home. It's important to know that someone cares and loves (them)."

The care packages will be sent out today with the postage completely funded by the Thrivent Financial for Lutherans, a Fortune 300 company.

For those wishing to donate, please call Karolle Blackson at 254-2444.



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