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Thursday, December 22, 2005

'Support junkie' has soft spot for soldiers, Marines

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Editor's note: Today we continue our 10-part series profiling some of the people who made a difference in 2005. Those profiled were nominated by Daily Press readers, with the finalists selected by Daily Press staffers.

By LEROY STANDISH/Staff Writer

APPLE VALLEY — Kathy Glendenning's house is a warehouse.



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Boxes full of baby wipes, pens and paper, beef jerky, power bars, CD cases, batteries and numerous other items crowd out the "normal" furnishings of a house.

In just the past several months Glendenning has wrapped, packed and shipped more than 5,000 pounds of goodies to soldiers and Marines fighting in Iraq and Afghanistan.

"There's something called a support junkie," Glendenning said. "People like me."

The oldest child of a Marine Corps couple, Glendenning, 57, said she has a compulsive passion to thank as many of the local men and women serving overseas in uniform as she can.



James Quigg / Staff Photographer

Kathy Glendenning talks about her experiences sending care packages to soldiers and Marines

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Since March she has been tapping in to www.anymarine.com and www.anysoldier.com — Web sites established to link civilians with active soldiers — to send care packages to Marines based out of the Marine Corps Air Ground Combats Center in Twentynine Palms and soldiers from the local area.

- **Exploring Barstow**

"They want to know they got the support of the people back home and that's what this is all about — not stuff but support," she said. "Some of them are really blown away that somebody would do something like that for them, somebody they don't even know."

- **The Mother Road**

Letters and phone calls she has received back from some of the Marines and soldiers lucky enough to get one of her packages have touched her heart.

"Thank you so much for the great package," wrote Capt. Matt McKinney. "The batteries were a Godsend!"

"Thank you so much for sending your packages and for sending your love," wrote Lance Cpl. Erich Rankin.

And it's not just the men who are recipients of Glendenning's thoughtfulness.

"It's like Christmas morning for a bunch of little girls whenever the females get anything," wrote an appreciative Staff Sgt. Denise Segobiano.

"They say it is really empowering to paint your toenails red," Glendenning said. "You can't paint your fingernails, but to have red under your boots is really a big deal."

She says she has sent more than 300 parcels since starting her care package mailing campaign. Each regulation-sized box costs \$7.70 to mail and is allowed to weigh up to 70 pounds.

"I've tried real hard I just can't seem to get past 17 pounds," Glendenning said. "I've learned that if there is a nook or a cranny left you can fit a toe nail clipper in there or a file or Jolly Ranchers, anything they might need — I just keep cramming."

She is not alone in her effort. Judy Campbell, a close friend helps. Together and separately the two frequent the 99 Cent store, the Dollar Store, Walgreens, Ralphs Grocery Co. and anywhere else they can find a bargain.

"Whatever she comes across she'll dump it off and I'm geared for shipping," Glendenning said.

"She knows that if there is something that appears over her gate usually it's from me," Campbell said.

Like Glendenning, Campbell has a soft spot in her heart for those in uniform, but

her friend's compassion and commitment to the troops is inspiring.

"You'll notice that all around her house are yellow ribbons and patriotic decorations," Campbell said. "She wears something red, white and blue almost daily unless its Christmas or something and then she'll wear something Christmasy. But that is the way she is — she does not want our guys forgotten."

Glendenning's 13-year-old son, two grandchildren and husband Jim often pitch in to help pack and wrap — when they are not tip-toeing around all the boxes.

"Sometimes I can't see where my feet are," said Jim Glendenning, who works security at the Twentynine Palms Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center. "We shipped out over 1,700 pounds of stuff in the last three weeks. Now I don't have to watch my feet so carefully."

Having his home transformed into a warehouse has been trying at times, Jim Glendenning admits.

"Does it get upsetting sometimes? Probably, mainly because I need to get around and we're raising grandkids, too," he said. "But I wouldn't trade her for nothing and whether she is No. 1 (out of the top 10 persons of the year) or not it doesn't matter to me because she is No. 1 in my book."

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