

# In Touch with the Troops

By Ellie Kay

Focus on the Family – July 2006

*I want to thank all the people and organizations that support us. The response has been encouraging and welcome. Sometimes all it takes is a simple “thank you” or “we care” to make it through the next day.*

-Staff Sgt. Nova  
Army, Copperas Cove, Texas

Jeanette Cram is known around the world as the Cookie Lady. The Cookie Lady has been baking homemade goodies for soldiers on the front lines since the Gulf War in 1990, when a letter from a soldier read by President George H. W. Bush gave her the idea.

Jeanette likes to tell people about her work, and she likes to bake. Some 145,000 cookies later, she laughs and says, “The reason it has gone on for so long is because I have a big mouth and two ovens.” Everyday people like Jeanette Cram are making a difference in the lives of military men and women serving in the Middle East – and so can you.

## **CLOSE TO HOME**

Gladys Walker is the founder of Have a Heart/Adopt A Soldier. She had a son stationed in Afghanistan in 2002 and regularly sent him care packages. He asked her to send more so he could share with the guys who never received mail.

“The idea that these boys thought no one cared if they lived or died broke my heart. I had to do something,” Gladys says. The first month she sent 12 parcels. Now, the organization has mailed more than 3,600 care packages and continues to grow.

Want to do something yourself? Begin in your own backyard. Ask church members for the names and addresses of family and friends stationed overseas. There may be someone who has little contact from those in the United States. Church families can adopt a military member and send him notes, pray and provide regular care packages. Your mail can be a lifeline to a lonely soldier, sailor or airman.

## **ENCOURAGE CHARACTER**

When my husband, Bob, flew an F-117A fighter jet and was on long military deployments, he spent many days away from family and church fellowship. He said, “There were constant temptations and opportunities to compromise Christian character.”

It was, and is, an ongoing struggle for soldiers to stay faithful to their values. You can encourage character by creating a Wish Book. Be creative and put together the following “wishes” (and add some of your own) and mail the suggested items to your adopted service member:

I Wish for You . . . the Courage to Laugh With Friends (a funny card, humor book or share family anecdote.)

I Wish for You . . . the Courage to Redeem Beauty From Ashes (something lovely created out of something unusual).

I Wish for You . . . the Courage to Choose Peace and Tranquility (an instrumental CD with a note as to why your family likes the music).

I Wish for You . . . the Courage to Cherish Memories (a personalized family photo).

I Wish for You . . . the Courage to Find Time to Keep in Touch (a phone card).

I Wish for You . . . the Courage to Be Wise (a favorite inspirational book).

I Wish for You . . . the Courage to Keep Your Mind Fresh (mints).

## **COMPASSIONATE KIDS**

Approach your child's classroom teacher, Sunday school teacher or after-school club about sponsoring a different military member each month. In English class, the children can write letters. In art class, they can draw pictures. In Sunday school, they can put together care packages.

When your child experiences the blessing of caring in community with others, she will learn lessons in selflessness and develop a compassionate mind-set. Be sure to get instructions for shipment before sending care packages and follow all regulations. Some of the care packages might include:

**Toiletry Pack** – wet wipes, sample-size shaving cream, disposable razors, deodorant, toothpaste, toothbrush, dental floss, Q-tips, shampoo, lotion, bug repellent, foot powder and socks.

**Food Pack** – presweetened drink mix, Slim Jims or jerky, granola bars, Power Bars, bag of candy (nonchocolate/no melt), gum, canned soup, canned fruit, fruit snacks, nuts and trail mix.

**Smart Pack** – books, a modern translation of the Bible, crossword puzzles, stationery, stamps, phone cards and online gift certificates.