

Operation Tango Mike sets new record

Contributed by Ginny Craven
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LAKEPORT ‐ A group of nearly 40 volunteers gathered for the most recent and record setting Operation Tango Mike packing party.

The June shipment consisted of 148 care packages for troops in Iraq and Afghanistan. The previous record of 108 care packages was shipped in May.

Volunteers happily assembled food and hygiene care packages, sending needed supplies and wanted goodies to local troops.

Youngsters and chaperones from the Anderson Marsh 4-H arrived with donations in hand and a willingness to help.

Besides adding homemade cards to care packages, they decorated boxes with stickers and personal notes of support.

Most Operation Tango Mike care package recipients are from Lake County or are related to a Lake County resident.

However, there are those who are referred by fellow soldiers.

Sadly, some troops have no one sending them moral support, let alone care packages. Concern for each other is paramount among deployed military personnel.

Thus, it is not uncommon for a care package recipient to request support for a fellow soldier. Often, they volunteer to be removed from the list so a buddy in need may be placed in their stead.

To date, that has never been necessary. The referring soldier remains on the recipient list and the requested name is added.

At the end of the record setting June packing party, the bins that had once overflowed with supplies were empty.

The amount of goods needed to fill 148 care packages is considerable. Never before has this Lake County volunteer effort packed and shipped so many pounds of supplies and goods at one time.

Though gratifying, it is at the same time frightening. Empty bins are a source of concern for the July packing party.

Given the number of names on the recipient list, Operation Tango Mike is in need of donations. Items such as foot powder, body powder, lip balm and wet wipes are very much needed for the intense heat endured by troops. Items such as nuts, tuna in pouches and jerky to supply protein to troops on the move are also needed.

Other food products, such as dried fruits, granolas bars, cookies, individual drink mix packets and candy are always appreciated. As the summer heat is upon us, items that melt cannot be shipped.

Operation Tango Mike donation barrels can be found at many local retailers, including the Dollar Tree Store in Lakeport. Manager Josh Bernstein is proud to host a barrel in the store, which is the most recently added “drop zone” location.

Temperatures are soaring well into the triple digits and troops must endure very difficult conditions. Along with the intense heat come blowing sand storms.

Recently, some troops told of blowing sand that had managed to put a halt to all mail delivery for a few weeks. Once deliveries resumed, they were very happy to receive their much anticipated care packages.

Monthly shipping costs are now exceeding \$1,500. In an effort to maintain the needed monies, Operation Tango Mike will continue to host fundraising events.

Currently, the gorgeous “Liberty Stars” quilt is on display at the Saw Shop Gallery Bistro in Kelseyville. Raffle tickets are \$1 each or 6 for \$5, and are available at the restaurant. The winner will be drawn July 4, so don’t delay in getting your tickets and chance to own a one of a kind treasure.

Packing parties take place the third Thursday of each month at 6 p.m., Umpqua Bank, 805 1th St., Lakeport. Everyone is welcome.

Donations of goods may be placed in any red Operation Tango Mike barrel throughout the county or in the lobby at Umpqua Bank.

Donations may be sent to 5216 Piner Court, Kelseyville, CA 95451.

For further information you may call 707-349-2838 or e-mail to operationtangomike@mchsi.com .