

Troop Packing Party

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Volunteer Claire Vopatek helps CM1 U.S. Navy Mathew Ramirez pack boxes last week.



Pepperdine California College Republicans Sydney Campau, Ivy Allen and Faith Bui write letters to the troops on Tuesday last week during the packing party at the Point Dume Clubhouse.



Operation Interdependence volunteer Mari Stanley and YNI U.S. Navy Rosa Medina help pack coffee and snacks in Ziploc bags last week for the 10th and possibly final packing party.

Fearing that troops would feel “neglected” when out on active duty abroad, Linke went to her friends and church community at Malibu’s Christian Science Church to organize a drive to send them care packages. But what began as a small effort between friends turned into a Malibu tradition involving a lot of coordination.

On Tuesday last week, the Point Dume Clubhouse hived with noise and activity. Tables of volunteers wrote personal letters to service members, while others filled bags with goodies, then weighed them and sorted them into boxes. None of this happens by itself, particularly the letters.

“Just about all of Malibu helps us,” said Linke, describing the letters she’s gotten from the local elementary schools, Boys and Girls Clubs, scout troops and others.

Unlike other nonprofit organizations, that send packages to troops but may copy the same letter over and over, Linke insists on a unique note for each bag. This means the letter writing demands preparation far ahead of time. She begins collecting letters months before the event is scheduled, from all sorts of groups in the Malibu community.

That care, however, does not go unremarked.

Matthew Ramirez, a volunteer last week, is a Naval Facilities Engineer who has received several packages while stationed abroad.

“When I’m overseas, we sometimes receive packages like this—it boosts morale when you miss home,” he said.

Although troops enjoy swapping the contents of their packages to get their favorite snacks and toiletries, “it’s nice when people share

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CINDY LINKE
MALIBU COORDINATOR FOR OPERATION INTERDEPENDENCE

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MATTHEW RAMIREZ
VOLUNTEER

their personal stories,” Ramirez said, which is why the notes are his favorite part.

Sometimes, the notes are reciprocated.

A few years ago, Cindy Linke recalls, she received a moving thank-you note from the recipient of a care package.

“He was covering [the on-duty shift] for a friend of his who was on Skype because his wife was having a baby,” she said.

Tired and dirty after serving two consecutive duty shifts, the soldier explained that he returned to find the care package from Malibu sitting in his car. Inside were a note, a snack, and best of all, a fresh pair of socks.

“He had been 72 hours in the same pair of socks!” Linke recalled.

The event has received support from many organizations

over the years. It is co-hosted with the Malibu-Bel Air Republican Women Federated, and receives assistance from the Daughters of the American Revolution, the Malibu Navy League and the Adamson family. For years, the party has received grant money from the Malibu City Council. In 2013 and 2014, the Malibu Senior Center sent supplies and volunteers to the event.

While Linke says she does not plan to organize packing events of this size and scope, smaller letter-writing parties are already being planned for this spring in honor of Memorial Day.

“I want to thank the City of Malibu for their generous support of the troops,” she wrote in an email. “Malibu has proven it is truly a city with a heart.”

For video from the event, visit malibutimes.com



World War II veteran Marjorie Dukatz, sporting her Rosie the Riveter shirt, helps pack bags for troops and tells stories of her incredible experience in the war effort last week at the Point Dume Clubhouse.



Pretty poodle

Standard poodle Reagan will have the honor of being presented at the Westminster Kennel Club 128th annual dog show in New York Feb. 10 and 11, 2014. This year’s competition will feature 3,200 dogs.

Reagan and owner Pamela Francis, of Calabasas, are regular breakfast customers at Coogies on Sunday mornings. He is a black standard poodle who achieved his AKC championship when he was still a puppy.

Standard poodle Reagan, seen right with owner Pamela Francis, will fly to New York in order to be presented at the Westminster Kennel Club annual dog show.



Photos courtesy Pamela Francis