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Local 

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From America, with love

By Larissa Van Beurden-Doust
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To the soldiers based in Iraq, the snacks, Chapstick and baby wipes were "appreciated beyond belief."

The troops in Afghanistan were grateful for the books, which can take their "mind away from the fight and far (away) friends for a short period of time."

Others stationed in the Middle East were thankful for toothpaste, shaving cream and shampoo.

All the items were sent by San Luis Obispo resident Si Tenenberg.

The former Marine has mailed 80 care packages to troops in the Middle East in the past couple of months and wants to send 500 more by the end of the year.



Tribune photo by Jayson Mellom

Si Tenenberg with boxes of care packages for the U.S. Troops in Iraq.

- [E-mails from soldiers serving in Iraq and Afghanistan \(pdf files\)](#)

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Already, Tenenberg has spent nearly \$1,300 of his own money sending the packages, he said. Each priority-mail box costs \$8.10.

"I'm a strong supporter of the troops," said Tenenberg, adding that he doesn't want anyone to think America has forgotten about them.

Wanda Bonds, an Army sergeant first class based in Iraq, feared just that — until she received Tenenberg's package.

"We received your care package on Christmas Day," Bonds wrote him. "We had not received any mail for the past three days. We were beginning to think we were not going to get anything for Christmas. Sometimes when you are so far away from home, it seems like America tends to forget about us."

Tenenberg got the idea to send care packages to the troops when he was trying to get rid of books last fall. His wife met a woman through her volunteer work at French Hospital Medical Center who volunteered with an organization called Soldier's Angels.

The woman recommended Tenenberg send the books to military members in the Middle East.

Interested in continuing to send items to the troops, Tenenberg found www.anysoldier.com. The site, started by a soldier stationed in Iraq, connects members of the armed forces with people who want to send them items. The troops list items they want, and those who want to donate are allowed to get three individual addresses a day. The limit prevents mass marketers from sending junk mail to the troops.

There are more than 1,000 people on the Web site, and Tenenberg said he'd like to give to as many of them as possible.

"I want to keep it going," Tenenberg said. "The e-mails aren't stopping; the troops aren't coming home."

To make that goal, Tenenberg said he needs help.

He's tried standing outside local stores but has been told to leave. He's tacked up letters wherever he's permitted. He's canvassed the San Luis Obispo Country Club, where he lives, asking for donations.

He hasn't received much response.

Some people ask why the government isn't providing the items, he said. Others simply don't reply.

Marilyn Tenenberg said no matter how people feel about the war, the troops still need

support.

Postings on the www.anysoldier.com Web site show how rough it can be in a war zone far from home.

Army Sgt. Tom Rubin wrote last week that the weather in Iraq is very cold.

"Soldiers are doing their best to stay warm outside," he said. "Warmers are a life saver out here."

So Tenenberg has been sure to buy beanies and hand and toe warmers to send over.

Some wrote that exchange stores on the base aren't open very often, or troops are in remote locations and can't get to them. They may get the basics to survive but don't have anything beyond that.

Most of the e-mails Tenenberg receives say the care packages mean much more than the items inside.

As Army Spc. Tony Lin wrote, "My 'brothers' and I are grateful for your thoughts and support. That alone is worth more than any value placed."

Visit sanluisobispo.com to read e-mails from soldiers serving in Iraq and Afghanistan and to find out you can contribute; also, post a comment.

