

TO: Our Community
FROM: Mike Williams, Executive Director
American Red Cross - Henderson County Chapter
RE: SUPPORT OUR U.S. TROOPS
DATE: April 4, 2008

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As the parent of a U.S. Marine, currently deployed in Iraq, I know that good intentions are sometimes offset by not knowing *how* to support our troops. Through our Marine, I've also realized just how much the cards, packages, contact and prayers actually do make a difference. Although each military service member has different likes and needs, I hope the following information will be helpful.

Some of the most requested "Care Package" items are:

- Food*, especially beef jerky, microwavable meals, soups (no pork please)
- Hygiene items*, including Mach III Razor and cartridges, dental supplies.
- Entertainment items*, such as DVDs, CDs
- Miscellaneous items*, including AA and AAA Batteries, AT&T Phone Cards

News from home like newspaper clippings, newsletters and pictures are still popular (even in these days of worldwide internet access).

Regarding phone cards, perhaps the best way to send them is through the "Help Our Troops Call Home" program available through AAFES (Army and Air Force Exchange Service). They offer AT&T Prepaid Phone Cards for deployed military members that do not expire and do not add any additional charges or connection fees. Cards can be purchased and sent to any deployed individual service member, or donated to an undesignated deployed service member, by visiting www.aafes.com or calling 800-527-2345. American Red Cross deployed staff distribute those cards to service members in Iraq, Kuwait and Afghanistan. You will have to be able to provide an accurate delivery address for your designated service member.

"Gifts from the Homefront" is a program enables you to send gift certificates that service members can use to purchase items at PX and BX facilities around the world. Purchase gift certificates at www.aafes.com or call 877-770-4438. "Gifts from the Homefront" is a safe alternative to traditional care packages that place unnecessary strain on the military mail system or jeopardize security. American Red Cross staff distribute these cards to service members as well.

Keep in mind the military families left at home. Support for them, including gift cards, movie passes and other items can help ease the strain of long separation for them as well.

The Henderson County Chapter also provides emergency communications services for military members and their families. More information is available by visiting our website: www.hcredcross.org or call us at 828-693-5605.