Teaching the Lessons of FREEDOM

How your family can support the troops

Nearly every family knows someone serving in the U.S. military either at home or abroad. Remind your children of the great sacrifice these men and women make each day, and encourage your children to think up ways to say "Thank you" to our troops. Your thanks can be as simple as sending an email to a soldier or donating a phone card so a sailor can call home. Remember the families of these servicemembers as well and involve your kids in making a meal for them or providing child care. Use the websites below to kick off your patriotic show of support!

LETTERS AND CARE PACKAGES

A little bit of home brings a lot of encouragement to men and women serving overseas. Check out the following organizations to help you send a letter or care package safely and effectively.

Keep in mind: Avoid charity sites that release or collect the contact information of servicemembers. Although such sites are often well-intentioned, the U.S. Department of Defense discourages their use for safety reasons. Additionally, because of safety regulations, you should not mail letters or packages unless you personally know the soldier receiving them. Mail addressed to undesignated servicemembers will not be delivered.

America Supports You
www.americasupportsyou.com
On this official Department of Defense site, select "Thank the Troops" to send an email message to servicemembers. Or click on "Make a Difference" for links to a variety of support ideas. (Be aware that the Department of Defense does not endorse all websites listed on the "Make a Difference" page.)

Operation USO Care Package
www.usocares.org
With your $25 donation to the United Service Organizations (USO), a soldier will receive a care package including a personal message from you.

Follow the United States Postal Service regulations for mailing your own packages and letters to the military.
www.usps.com/supportingourtroops/welcome.htm

More questions? Check out the following tips for sending messages and gifts to servicemembers.
www.army.mil/operations/iraq/faq.html

PHONE CARDS

Calling home can strain a soldier's wallet—help him or her connect with family and friends by donating a prepaid phone card.

Army and Air Force Exchange Service
https://thor.aafes.com/scs/default.aspx
Purchase a prepaid phone card through the military's official exchange service—you can even have the card sent directly to a servicemember you know.

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Operation Uplink
www.operationuplink.org
Sponsored by Veterans of Foreign Wars, this program uses your donation to provide prepaid phone cards to deployed troops and hospitalized veterans.

BOOSTING MORALE BACK HOME

Families of military servicemembers also need your support as well—they are the ones carrying on life at home, work, and school, missing Dad at the dinner table, or Mom when it's time for a bedtime story. Maybe your teenager can offer to take care of the family's small children for an afternoon, or perhaps your family can prepare a meal. Take a look at the suggestions below for other ideas.

Army and Air Force Exchange Service
www.aafes.com/docs/homefront.htm
Donate a gift certificate to families of military personnel and help them purchase goods on army bases around the world.

Officers' Christian Fellowship
http://ocf.gospelcom.net
OCF provides books and articles, retreats, and other resources to servicemembers and their families, encouraging and supporting them in the integration of faith and military life.

***Stars and Stripes* newspaper**
www.estripes.com
Tell a military family about this hometown-style daily newspaper authorized by the Department of Defense. Covering military news around the world, *Stars and Stripes* is provided at low cost to members of the military stationed in Europe, the Mideast, and the Pacific. Several times a year, the paper also publishes messages from families of servicemembers to their loved ones far away.

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