



BLUE STAR MOMS OF MARIN

Proudly Supporting Our Troops, Their Families And Our Veterans

WINTER/SPRING 2014



GENERAL MEETINGS

are held on the first Wednesday of each month.

Journey Community Hub
6979 Redwood Blvd.
Novato, CA 94945
Meetings at 6:30 p.m.

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President's Letter

Since our last newsletter, a busy fall and early winter saw our members and our many community supporters working hard to serve our military the Blue Star Mom way.

We packed more than 250 holiday boxes and sent them to our deployed troops in November. In this effort we were joined by some new groups, and you can read about them inside. We also provided support to veterans through both our Adopt a Veteran Family program and our assistance to VetConnect. For our efforts on behalf of troops and vets we have received some heart-warming expressions of thanks.

We welcomed home some troops coming through Marin Country for the holidays.

Then in late January we packed boxes again in order to send care packages to troops overseas in time for Valentine's Day.

Currently we are planning a spring panel discussion, open to the public, about the needs of our local veterans. We are very excited about this initiative that will bring together several community leaders and organizations. Watch for details on our website: www.bluestarmomsofmarin.org.

Once again, I am inspired by our board and our members' efforts, as well as those of our wonderful community volun-



BSM President Barbara Bochner receives a donation for our holiday boxes from the Dollar Tree Store. See story inside.

teers who join us in our work. Thank you all so much! We look forward to more wonderful activities as 2014 unfolds.

President Barbara Bochner

Upcoming Events

Please see our website for updates and further details—www.bluestarmomsofmarin.org

February 15

Elks Dinner and Packing
Elks Lodge, San Rafael

March 5

General Meeting CANCELLED

March 29

Board Meeting

April 2

General Meeting; Prep for Spring Adopt-a-Veteran-Family
Journey Community Hub, Novato

April 19

Board Meeting

April 29 or 30

Supporting Our Veterans
A Public Panel Discussion
College of Marin

May 3

Collection for Packing
Hamilton Market Safeway, Novato

May 10

Mother's Day Tea

May 17

Travis AFB Fisher House II
Fundraiser, Larkspur

May 26

Memorial Day Event
Marin Civic Center

June 8

Packing for the Troops
Journey Community Hub, Novato

July 4

Novato Independence Day Parade

July 29 to August 2

BSM National Convention
Marines Memorial, San Francisco
Sign up through national BSM website:
<http://www.bluestarmothers.org>



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NEEDED ITEMS

Each year we send about 500 care packages to deployed troops. To fill these boxes, we gratefully accept tax-deductible gifts of the following items.

FOOD:

ONLY INDIVIDUAL PACKETS OR SMALL SERVINGS

- Jerky (No Pork)
- Canned Fish or Chicken
- Protein Bars (No Chocolate)
- Granola or Breakfast Bars (No Chocolate)
- Instant Oatmeal
- Instant Soup
- Squeezable Fruit
- Dried Fruit/Raisins
- Trail Mix (No Chocolate)
- Nuts or Seeds
- Crackers, Chips, Cookies

DRINKS:

INDIVIDUAL PACKETS/SMALL SIZES ONLY

- 5-Hour Energy Shots
- Instant Coffee or Cocoa
- Tea Bags - Individually Wrapped

MISCELLANEOUS ITEMS:

- Comics
- Magazines
- Paperback Books
- Crosswords/Puzzles
- Playing Cards
- Chewing Gum
- Toothbrushes
- Socks
- Sanitary Wipes (Small Packs Only)
- First Aid Items

HOLIDAY COLLECTIONS

Where on earth did we Blue Star Moms get all the items we packed in the 250 holiday boxes we mailed to our troops overseas? And how did we cover the Priority Mail fees for such a sizable shipment? All of this was made possible by the generous support of people like you! From October through December, we collected needed items and cash at the following locations.

Safeway

In October a number of our Blue Star Moms had a wonderful experience collecting donations at the Hamilton Market Safeway in Novato. Shoppers were so generous that we collected approximately \$1500 in food items and over \$470 in cash! The highlight was when firefighters from the nearby fire station came by and asked what items we needed the most. With a fistful of cash collected from their station, they eagerly said, "We're on it". They came out of Safeway with bags and bags of supplies for our troops!



The Blue Star Moms table at the Hamilton Marketplace Safeway in Novato. Pictured are Barb Bochner and Susie Morlock, surrounded by firefighters from the nearby Hamilton District fire station.

T.J.'s Rodeo

T.J. and Allison Belger, owners of five CrossFit gyms in Marin, held their annual competition known as T.J.'s Rodeo at the Civic Center on Sunday, October 13. As in last year's games, they graciously allowed the Blue Star Moms of Marin to participate, asking all spectators to bring a donation in lieu of an entrance fee. Once again, the members of the CrossFit community were caring and generous in supporting our troops. We were able to collect about \$300 in food items and \$1,035 in cash!

Bed Bath & Beyond and the Dollar Tree Store

Sheena Kawakami, the regional merchandise manager for Bed Bath & Beyond, arranged for several BB&B stores to help the troops. They invited customers to purchase items and to donate them to us for our holiday boxes. Landon Kouba, a Novato-based Dollar Tree manager, encouraged North Bay DT customers to do the same thing. The result of both of these initiatives was boxes and bags full of personal items for our military men and women overseas.

Peet's

Blue Star Moms of Marin was chosen by the employees of the Bon Air Center Peet's in Greenbrae to be their 2013 holiday charity. Twice in December Peet's invited us to have an outreach table in the store in order to explain our mission to their customers. Then, during the week before Christmas, the employees collected donations for us at the register and matched up to \$1000. Thanks to the efforts of the employees and the generosity of their customers, we received over \$3700 from this effort!



Bed Bath & Beyond's Paul Delmore, Larkspur store manager, and employee Cristian Sotelo help with donations collected from several Nor Cal BB&Bs.

Bay Area Groups Pitch In

Three Bay Area groups held collection and packing events for our fall and winter mailings.

On November 1, the Singles Group at the Church of the Highlands in San Bruno bought items on our list, wrote letters, and packed 50 boxes. Their pastor led the group in prayer before they got started, remembering all of our men and women serving overseas.

Several members of the Blue Star Mothers were on hand to help, and that very night the son of one of these moms was leaving for a tour of duty in Afghanistan. It was a wonderful evening of camaraderie and generous support.

The San Rafael Elks Lodge #1108 held a delicious Veteran's Day dinner at their beautiful lodge and not only donated all the proceeds to Blue Star Moms of Marin for postage costs but also packed 35 wonderful boxes for the troops. The evening was such a success that the Elks plan to host other such events in the future.

Both of these collections were added to our holiday shipment in January. For our St. Valentine boxes, Cub Scout Pack 33 of Mill Val-



Cub Scouts from Pack 33 of Mill Valley.

ley created 125 snack bags. They filled quart-size Ziploc bags with healthful snacks and placed a personal, hand-written note in each one.

November and January Packing

On November 17 and again on January 26 we met at Journey Ford Community Hub in Novato to pack boxes to send to our troops.

We filled the November boxes not only with our usual goodies of snacks, jerky, toiletries, etc., but also with holiday decorations and cards, hoping to send some cheer to those far away from their families.

One base in Afghanistan received the boxes on Thanksgiving Day, which was a big morale booster. In gratitude, a Marine helicopter squadron flew an American flag, dedicated to the Blue Star Moms of Marin, on one of their missions. Then they sent us the flag and an accompanying certificate.

In January, we included in our boxes extra hearts and love for Valentine's Day, along with our usual snack bars and other items.

As always, we had amazing community support to help us write cards and letters, sort and bag items, and pack, tape, and label the boxes. A special thanks to the Novato Elks, Novato Rotarians, Miller Creek Middle School students, parents and students from St. Ignatius and Novato High Schools, Girl Scout Troop 10192, Boy Scout Crew 73, the Bobby Stornetta Crew, and the Colonial Dames of San Francisco.

It's hard to imagine, but sometimes a box or two are delivered to troops who never receive anything from home. That's why the Blue Star Moms of Marin are grateful for the outstanding commitment we receive from all of our community volunteers.

Get ready, everyone, because we will be packing again in June!



Students from Miller Creek Middle School



Crew 73 from Novato



The Rotarians who always tape our mailing boxes with BSM Maria Sneed



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THANKS FOR YOUR SUPPORT

Care Package Items

Hands-On Help

Gift Cards for Vets

And Much More

Support for Our Vets

In December, we donated warm things, toiletries, and food items to Sonoma VetConnect, which offers support to homeless veterans. We also distributed more than \$2800 in gift cards (for Safeway, Target, and gas), as well as toys and other gifts, through our Adopt a Veteran Family program. Through this program we were able to help 21 local veterans provide a happy

Christmas for their families, and most of these were recent returnees with young children.

All of these activities were made possible by donations from our BSMs and other members of our community. We especially want to thank the Novato Rotary Club for their generous support.



BSM members Barbara Bochner, Barbara Travis, and Marilyn Spoja delivering holiday gifts and gift cards to Lynn Carolin of the Santa Rosa Veteran's Administration on behalf of our Adopt a Veteran Family program.

Prayer

Father, may the families of our soldiers cast all their cares and burdens upon You. Guard their hearts and minds, we pray, so that instead of being worried for their loved ones, they may be filled with Your peace, which surpasses all understanding. Grant this same peace to all our military troops, and let them feel the love we have for them even though we are far apart. Amen.

**Cathie Becker,
Blue Star Mom Chaplain**