


MAIN NEWS
[Home Page](#)
[Local](#)
[Space](#)
[National/World](#)
[Sports](#)
[Outdoors](#)
[Business](#)
[Life](#)
[Editorial Page](#)
[Columnists](#)
[Obituaries](#)
[Storm Season](#)
[Weather](#)
[Community News](#)
[About Me](#)
[Health](#)
[Inside Racing](#)
[The Verge](#)
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[Photo Galleries](#)
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Troops in Iraq value gifts from Brevard

BY PATRICK PETERSON
FLORIDA TODAY

KENNEDY SPACE CENTER - A resupply pipeline runs from Brevard County to troops in the field, who battle desert heat, terrible dust, and the constant possibility of attack from mortars and roadside bombs.

Troops in Iraq and Afghanistan have received nearly 350 packages, stuffed with goodies from the employees of Space Gateway Support. The shipments began about a year ago, after Elaine Brabaw heard a radio program about the war.

"I just heard this mother pouring out her heart about all the things her son didn't have," said Brabaw, an information technology security officer. "We realized we had a lot of the items around. It just got me thinking."

She visited a Web site, www.anysoldier.com, which gave addresses for deployed soldiers, and realized that she and her fellow employees could help.

"It started off small, with people bringing things in from home," Brabaw said.

SGS employees donated soap, foot powder, snacks, razors and DVDs, which were packed up and shipped overseas. It began to get expensive.

"The biggest thing was how would we pay for shipping," Brabaw said.

At that point, SGS president William Sample agreed the company would pay the postage to the support employee effort.

The mailings began to service members who were friends and family of the 3,000 employees at SGS. At the peak, some 65 service members were on the mailing list to receive packages. Now, the list has shrunk to 35, so more packages go to "any soldier."

"Everyone we know has gotten a least two boxes," said Joy Antonucci, secretary for the director of information services.

Antonucci and Brabaw each work about three hours a week packing boxes.



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Soldiers and Marines have written that they enjoyed the packages.

Marine Lance Cpl. Christopher Melancon, assigned to a North Carolina unit, wrote from somewhere in Iraq: "It's been a while since I've received something, seeing we're in the middle of the deployment, but I'm so thankful that you, the volunteers, have given so much. Oh, and someone even sent pingpong balls and pads for our table. A BIG THANK YOU goes out to them. "

SGS employees continue to support the program with contributions.

Contact Peterson at 242-3549 or ppeterson@flatoday.net

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