



## VETERANS & FAMILY SUPPORT APRIL

Operation Gratitude is a company based in Chatsworth CA. They provide and deliver Care Packages to deployed troops, first responders, military families, recruit graduates, veterans, wounded heroes, and caregivers.

Who they are: After 911 founder Carolyn Blashek began volunteering at the Los Angeles airport military lounge. In March 2003, a soldier came into the office and broke down at her desk. He was on leave from a war zone for his mother's funeral, his wife had left him, and his only child had died as an infant- he had no one else in his life. "I'm going back over there; I know I won't make it back this time, but it really doesn't matter because no one would even care." he told her. Right then, Blashek realized that when bullets are flying, troops must believe that someone at home cares about them as an individual. That's when Operation Gratitude was born, with four care packages shipped to deployed service members in Iraq. Since its inception, the organization has encouraged Americans across the country to express their gratitude and lift the spirits of millions of deployed troops, recruit graduates, veterans, military families, and first responders.

Besides care packages, this company also provides their traditional "Battalion Buddy" bears for children of deployed service members. Each bear wears tags that say, I'm your Battalion Buddy and I'm here to keep you company while your Mom or Dad is away. I'm excited to join your family.

You are able to request care packages and Battalion Buddy bears to be sent through their website: [www.operationgratitude.com](http://www.operationgratitude.com). You can also do a monetary donation here as well. Check them out!

The month of April is Volunteer Month. Volunteer to sit with a veteran to give their care giver a needed break. Volunteer to work at your local homeless shelter or help with meals for shut in veterans. Pick up medication, run errands, or pick up and take a Veteran to doctor appointment. These are just a few of ways to Volunteer that will benefit our Veterans.

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