

Show Your Gratitude

More than 350,000 active duty personnel, reservists, veterans, and their families make up San Diego's military population. Here's a cheat sheet of local places you can donate some holiday cheer this season. *By Christine Pasalo*



IF YOU'D LIKE TO HELP...	HERE'S WHAT YOU CAN DO...	AND HOW IT WILL MAKE A DIFFERENCE
<p>Military kids between ages 6 and 12</p> <p>⌘</p> 	<p>Donate \$100 to the San Diego Armed Services YMCA and three military children will be able to attend Operation Hero, an after-school mentoring and tutoring program, for one week. militaryymca.com</p>	<p>Many military kids exhibit low self-esteem and difficulty adjusting to new schools. Operation Hero provides them with tools to kick butt in the classroom and breeze through challenges.</p> 
<p>Female troops</p> <p>★</p> 	<p>Send lotions and lip balms via Operation Courage is Beautiful. For the full wish list, visit operationcourage.org. Mail items to Casey Chan-Ruthenbeck, 9871 Carmel Mountain Rd., San Diego, 92129.</p>	<p>As one soldier said in a thank-you, "Sometimes it's hard being a female here because a lot of the general packages are designed for a man." Acknowledge these women and send some love!</p>
<p>Families of wounded or fallen soldiers</p> <p>⌘</p>	<p>Buy a Freedom Is Not Free t-shirt and baseball cap combo (\$25) and wear your gratitude for their service to the country. freedomisnotfree.com</p>	<p>Proceeds fund grants that help families pay medical, travel, and household bills.</p> 
<p>Young military families headed by a junior enlisted service member</p> <p>★ ⌘</p>	<p>Donate anything from a dining room table to baby formula to the San Diego Military Outreach Ministries. 619-461-4164. sandiegomom.org</p>	<p>The annual salary of a junior enlisted soldier falls between \$18,000 and \$29,000. Your donations lift their families' economic burdens.</p>
<p>Soldiers living in harm's way</p> <p>★</p> 	<p>Knit beanies or send letters of encouragement with a donation made by check to Operation Caregiver, PO Box 722289, San Diego, 92172. operationcaregiver.org</p>	<p>The money buys hygiene products—packaged with a beanie and letter—for soldiers who serve for months in fox-holes, tents, and Humvees, far from fixed base camps.</p> 
<p>Veterans in search of civilian jobs</p> <p>★</p>	<p>Help vets access a range of jobs, from nursing to auto tech, by giving \$100 to Veterans Village of San Diego. vvsd.net</p>	<p>VVSD's job training programs include workshops on resume writing and interviewing.</p>
<p>Families of active-duty military</p> <p>★ ⌘</p> 	<p>Buy a \$50 gift card on your next visit to a chain store like Target or Walmart; mail it to Homefront San Diego, Attention: Phyllis Barber, 2115 Park Blvd., San Diego, 92101. homefrontsandiego.org</p>	<p>Emergency food requests are nonstop! Homefront distributes gift cards to Target and Walmart because they have more locations and are open later than commissaries.</p>
<p>Servicemen and servicewomen</p> <p>★ ⌘</p> 	<p>Are you a Chargers season ticket holder who can't make it to one of their games? Donate the tickets to USO San Diego, 303 A St. Ste. 100, San Diego, 92101. USOSD also accepts tix to plays, concerts, and other sporting events. usosandiego.org</p>	<p>The tickets go to active-duty service members and their families to provide much-needed recreation and fun! (Go, Chargers.)</p> 

⌘ Accepts monetary donations ★ Accepts non-monetary/in-kind donations ⌘ Volunteer opportunities