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Temecula Valley Young Marines help send 10,000 books to troops overseas

By Laurie Rathbun

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The Temecula Valley Young Marines recently helped send 10,000 books to troops overseas in Iraq, Afghanistan and Germany.

The effort, dubbed Operation Pages, was a moral booster for the troops and great for the Young Marines, according to their commanding officer Michael Guiles. "The Young Marines get to help the troops and the troops get the satisfaction of knowing that no matter what they say on the news about the war, their fellow Americans care about them," he said.

The books, which were mostly paperbacks, came from the Book Den bookstore in Barstow that went out of business late last year. The bookstore owners, Mr. and Mrs. Craig, wanted to donate their books to the troops because they have a son in the United States Army. The Craigs contacted their friend Steve Hallaway with AMVETS in Palm Springs and asked if he knew how they could get the books to the troops, Guiles said.

Hallaway told the Craigs about the Young Marines. He said they might be able to help with the mission and contacted Guiles. "We said sure. There's no mission too small for us," Guiles said.

On December 23, four Young Marines, two adult leaders and two parent volunteers drove to Barstow and collected the books and brought them back to their headquarters at Vail Lake. Guiles promised the Craigs that they would get the books to the troops though it might take some time.



Photo: Ron Jonason photos

(Left) Katie Aguilar, participates in "Operation Pages" as it was dubbed by her unit. These books will go to Marines in Iraq, Afghanistan, and recovery hospitals in Germany.



Photo: Ron Jonason photos

(Above) Jacob Aguilar, with the Temecula Valley Young Marines, is doing his part in loading over 10,000 books donated by Mr. and Mrs. Craig, owners of the Bookend Store in Barstow that went out of business on December 23rd last year.

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The Young Marines also collected some hardback books to send. "We gathered more from other sources," Guiles said. "We asked people to donate their books."

Retired Sgt. Maj. Bryan Vaughn, a parent volunteer, made contact with his former unit at Marine Corps Air Station Miramar and arranged to have the books sent overseas on a Marine Corps cargo plane.

On February 1, 25 Young Marines and their adult leaders met at Vail Lake and loaded the books into Vaughn's RV. Then they transported the books to the air station and packaged them on a pallet. "The staff sergeant said that the Young Marines did such a good job that his Marines did not have to repack the pallet," Guiles said. The plane will travel overseas and deliver the books in about two weeks. In Germany, the books will be distributed at recovery hospitals.

The Young Marines have also been collecting DVDs for the past six months to send to the troops. "Once we get 100, we'll send them over," Guiles said. They already sent 100 DVDs over last June through AMVETS' Operation DVD.

"Our next big operation that we're doing is Operation National Anthem," Guiles said. They plan to work with the city of Temecula to have its residents sing "The Star-Spangled Banner" on Flag Day this June at the same time it is being sung on the National Mall in Washington, D.C. It will be a world-record achieving performance of the national anthem and the finale to First Lady Laura Bush's National Anthem Project, which was started in 2005.

For more information on the Young Marines and their operations, visit their Web site at www.tvym.us.

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