

# Care Packages from Home



Raquel Cunningham and a student prepare a shipment for a local soldier



Cypress Cares has about 100 volunteers including school children

## Delivering Parcels of Love to Cy-Fair Soldiers

*Written by Stephanie Donovan & Select photos by Marisa Hugonnett*

Cypress mom Raquel Cunningham does a lot of crying these days. The mother of three says it doesn't take much to bring her to tears. Fortunately, her tears are of the happy variety—just knowing that she's brought a smile to a soldier's face really makes her day. Cunningham has been making a lot of soldiers smile this past year through her organization, Cypress Cares that she co-directs with Paul Marshall, a retired U.S. Navy captain and an admissions representative for U.S. Naval Academy at Annapolis. Cypress Cares is a grass-roots organization dedicated to providing support for area troops protecting our freedom around the world through sending care packages and letters of encouragement.

### **Dedicated Volunteers of All Ages**

A prior U.S. Army Reserves officer who also donates her time as a West Point admissions representative, Cunningham has

been touched by the outpouring of Cy-Fair area support for the organization. "We have about 100 volunteers from all over—Houston, The Woodlands, Katy, and Cypress. A lot of people find out about us by word of mouth. Some volunteers have emailed me off the website. One might contact me and say, 'My husband was in the military years ago and I want to help.'" Those enthusiastic volunteers donate their time and money to help Cypress Cares box up care packages containing everything from toiletries, to snacks, to books or magazines, all with the goal of brightening a service person's day while they are far from home. Cypress mom Susan Laigaie says she got involved with her four elementary-aged children as a way to show appreciation for their two cousins serving in the military currently and for others who sacrifice so much. Volunteering with Cypress Cares has become a fun family activity for the Laigaie family. "My children love it," says Laigaie.

“Raquel has made it so family friendly that every age can truly participate and feel worthwhile.” “We do it every time our schedule allows,” she adds.

### Expanding the Program

Last year alone, Cypress Cares sent between 600 to 700 boxes to area men and women serving overseas for our country. “I have a whole scrapbook full of all the thank you letters I’ve received,” says Cunningham. “That makes everything so worthwhile, when you get even one letter.” And, sometimes the mailman brings Cunningham something special in return. “Cypress Cares did get a flag flown in Kuwait by a unit in honor of what we’re doing, and they mailed it to me.” She adds, “When I opened it up at the post office, I just started crying right then and there because it meant so much to me.”

“We’re the third largest school district in the state,” says Cunningham. “Imagine if every Cypress area student wrote one letter and donated one dollar! It wouldn’t take much out of anyone’s time or money, but that would be about 100,000 letters that we could send to troops!” The dedicated mom adds, “If we could do that every year, do you know what that would do? That would do amazing stuff for our troops’ morale!” **CFM**

*STEPHANIE DONOVAN enjoyed learning about Cypress Cares and now hopes to recruit her son, Ryan, and his friends to send packages and letters to his basketball coach—a father of seven who was just deployed to Afghanistan.*



Last year, Cypress Cares sent 600-700 boxes to local soldiers serving overseas

## How to Help

If you would like to send a donation or volunteer, contact Cypress Cares.

### Cypress Cares Wish List

- Monetary donations  
(Via the website by PayPal or by mail)
- Snack bags (single sized) • Cereals (single sized)
- Baby wipes • Books & magazines

### Cypress Cares

13903 Hartcrest Dr. • Cypress, TX 77433  
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