



## Abbott employees send care packages to troops in Iraq

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Sun block, aloe vera, insect repellent, Sunday comics, games, beef jerky, joke books, prepaid phone cards and lots of letters giving thanks.

More than 20 boxes of such items and many more from a wish list of supplies collected by Abbott Laboratories employees in Lake County were loaded onto a Humvee Tuesday headed for troops serving in Iraq and Afghanistan, and soldiers wounded in battle.

Last spring, Abbott employees conducted a similar drive for the troops using area Marines for the first time to deliver the goods.

"We want to develop a relationship with Abbott," said Marty Smith, commandant of the Marine Corps League Lake County Detachment 801. "I see this as just exploding over time. We will let you know what they need today."

What started out as a goodwill effort by a few Abbott employees has grown to involve roughly 800 company staff.

"We're supportive of our employees doing this," said Elizabeth Hoff, Abbott spokeswoman. "We're a health-care company and our focus is to improve lives and our employees have really taken that forward. We have 35 of Abbott's U.S. employees who are currently deployed in service in various arms of the armed forces."

The Marine Air Control Group 48, stationed at the Great Lakes Naval Station, will mail these gift packages to soldiers in all military branches to arrive in time for Thanksgiving.

"It's my turn to take care of the younger Marines, just as the elder Marines took care of me before," said Abbott employee and former Marine Chris Stachera, who served with that unit. "It goes beyond helping Marines. It goes to any service member."