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Jan Gill, Reporter

### Support Our Troops: 'Operation Holiday Cheer'



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(Dec. 11) -- Hundreds of families in Nevada have a loved one overseas this holiday season. It's not just an emotional struggle, but a financial one as well. That's why organizers put together Operation Holiday Cheer.

**Operation Holiday Cheer** drew around 700 people, who gathered at the YMCA. Besides rallying support, the event was also held to help families who are struggling while their loved one is overseas.



Erica Bozarth's husband is in Iraq. Erica spends a lot of time in her parents backyard. It is where she and her husband Jeb said their wedding vows. That was back in August, four days before his Naval unit was deployed to Iraq. "He's in a really, really rural camp where showers sometimes don't work, the toilets are horrible, they have good food -- is what he says -- but other than that, I've needed to send him band-aids and Neosporin and cold medicine and socks."

Looking at pictures brings her comfort and letters sometimes brings her tears. "I hope you had a peaceful sleep, did you dream of us, maybe we were holding hands on a moonlit night, or waiting to get on BART, or maybe we were on our way to Hawaii," Bozarth reads a letter from her husband.

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Bozarth says sometimes her husband writes that he is depressed and at time morale is low among the troops. That's why a rally to support them means so much. "There are tons of men and women over there who've left their families behind and they need to know that there is support. That's their biggest fear, that they're over there and America is going to forget why they're there."

To say Jackie Collins has her hands full is an understatement. She has 9 children; "Jeanene, Stephanie, Carl, Aubrey, Kimberly, Gina, Brandon..."

And she also helps take care of 3 grandchildren; "Romero, Isiah, and Bella." Children and grandchildren are all under one roof. Jackie's husband Harry, who is in the Army Reserves, left in August to serve in Iraq. "You just never expect it, one day your life changes, everything changes. I never thought about raising all these kids on my own and now I'm put in this situation," Collins said.

It's been difficult to stay upbeat around the children. But her husband urged her to still put up a tree for Christmas, which is decorated in red, white, and blue, and adorned with his picture. "He was my best friend, he's my right hand everything we did was together."

Financially, it's a struggle because her husband's salary is gone. That's the case for the 967 reservist families in Nevada, which the reason a rally is being held to support them.

Rally organizer, Phil Randazzo says, "We want to help those families out. We want an outlet for people to come and connect with them. We want people to adopt a family if they need help."

Collins is grateful for any help and plans on being there. "It was wonderful just what these people are doing that there are people out there who acknowledge that are lives change."

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