

Preparing Care Packages

**Pam Seelye, 2025-26 Western Division National Security
Chair**

When sending care packages to military bases, consider including appreciated and safe items. Common choices are:

- **Non-perishable food:** Snacks like protein bars, trail mix, and canned goods.
- **Personal care items:** Travel-sized toiletries, sunscreen, and baby wipes.
- **Entertainment:** Books, magazines, and small games.
- **Letters and photos:** Personal notes and pictures from home for morale.

Avoid sending perishable goods, alcohol, aerosols, or hazardous items. Always check the latest restrictions before packing.

How to Send a Care Package

- **Know the timeline:** Priority mail packages typically take 10 to 14 days for delivery, but this may vary due to delays and weather.
- **Check size and weight restrictions:** Keep packages within shoebox size and under 108 inches in total circumference. Free Priority Mail shipping boxes are available at the post office.
- **Package details:** List the quantity, weight, and value of items. Include a contents list and a card with your name and the recipient's name for repackaging if necessary.
- **Prevent spills:** Use heavy plastic zipper-lock bags for items that might leak. Cushion fragile items with reusable materials like tissue or popped popcorn bags.
- **Address properly:** Include the service member's full name, unit name, and the complete APO/FPO address with a nine-digit ZIP code if available. Avoid sending perishables to warm climates in spring or summer.
- **Check deadlines:** Review USPS deadlines and holiday cut-off dates to ensure timely delivery.

What Food or Drinks Can You Send

Powdered drink mixes are great for water. In colder months, send hot drinks like cocoa, instant coffee, and tea; in warmer months, consider sweetened mixes like lemonade and iced tea.

For flavor, include seasoned salt, hot sauce, mustard, relish, and ketchup.

Care Packages Cont.....

Quick protein options are energy bars, tuna, sardines, and non-perishable beef jerky. For snacks, use hard containers for chips, pretzels, and nuts. If using large bags, include zip-locks for portioning. Snack cakes, cheese crackers, and cookies are also welcome.

Candy and gum should avoid chocolate in warm climates, as it melts. Send gum and candy in zip-lock bags to prevent them from becoming gooey.

What do they Actually Need?

When sending essential items, opt for small, travel-size containers of personal care products and avoid using aerosol cans. To prevent liquids from spilling, cover the container's opening with plastic wrap, then reclose it before shipping.

Fun Things to Send

In every care package, be sure to include a personal note or other special reminders of home. Photographs, drawings, the Sunday comics from your local newspaper, paperback books, current magazines, and comic books are some ideas.

What can't you send in a care package?

When preparing your care packages, keep in mind that there may be restrictions on certain items based on your service member's location. Additionally, be aware that there could be limitations on including religious materials, depending on the region to which you are sending the packages.

Reference

<https://shipthrifty.com/resource/care-packing-event-checklist/>

Watch Ship Thrifty's webinar on YouTube at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JwUTbM3J1Zo>

ALA has a Blog

<https://www.legion-aux.org/Blog/Shipping-to-military-installations-requires-additi>

National Security Resources

Facebook – Follow us on Facebook! Don't forget to answer the questions...

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/915563745139663/>

National Security email address

nationalsecurity@ALAforVeterans.org

Supporting Wreaths Across America

Remember - Honor - Teach

Wreaths Across America (WAA) will take place on Saturday, December 13, 2025. Over 2 million volunteers and supporters are expected to participate in more than 5,200 cemeteries across all 50 states. This year, wreaths cost \$17 each and can be purchased through their website: <http://www.wreathsassacrossamerica.org>. The deadline for orders is December 2, 2025.

I have been a volunteer and supporter of WAA for over 15 years, actively involved in fundraising and securing donations for two local cemeteries. As a retired funeral professional, my primary source for donations comes from local funeral homes. Our unit has been successful in raising over \$500 in donations for wreath purchases, which is more than enough for us to place wreaths on veterans' graves. Don't hesitate or feel intimidated when asking local businesses for donations; a great incentive for donors is the free advertisement they receive! I emphasize to businesses that they will be recognized for their contributions during the ceremony.

Quilts of Valor Foundation

At the end of the National Convention in 2024, it was announced that the American Legion Auxiliary would partner with the Quilts of Valor Foundation (QOVF). Across the United States, the Legion Family has been awarding Quilts of Valor to recognize the service of those currently in the Military as well as Veterans. "A Quilt of Valor is an award, not a gift."

Walter Reed Medical Center was the site for the awarding of the first Quilt of Valor in November 2003. On that day, many Quilts of Valor were awarded to young soldiers suffering from wounds and mental trauma. It was the dream of Founder Catherine Roberts to wrap soldiers "touched by war" in comforting quilts. The idea came to her in a dream when she noticed that her son, after returning from Iraq, was comforted by a quilt.

Today, it has grown into the Quilts of Valor Foundation (QOV), and it has been extended to serve Veterans as well as those actively serving in the Military, National Guard, or Reserve. When a Quilt of Valor is awarded to someone currently serving, we benefit National Security; when we award Veterans, it becomes a program of Veterans Affairs.

You or your unit can assist in many ways. Make a quilt; be sure to follow the rules set by QOV. The quilt can be given to someone in your community, or many have been nominated and are waiting for a quilt. Monetary donations and fabric are accepted. Check out the website for other opportunities to make a difference.

To date, over 420,000 quilts have been awarded. Some standards must be met to create a quality quilt, as far as size, with a specific label attached. The quilt must be hand-quilted or machine-quilted, not tied. When awarded, the following words are repeated: "Thank you for your service, sacrifice, and valor in serving our nation." More information can be found on QOVF.com.

*Respectfully submitted by
Deb Albers*

ALA 2025-26 National Security Northwestern Division Chair

WAA Continued.....

Historically, the American Legion Auxiliary (ALA) has excelled in fundraising efforts. We are an organization filled with creative and innovative members who get the job done! I highly recommend starting your fundraising initiatives early and ordering your wreaths well before the December 2nd deadline.

Some of our units may have the funds to purchase wreaths but lack a local cemetery to volunteer at. No problem! You can contact Wreaths Across America (WAA) Headquarters at 877-385-9504 to find out which cemeteries in your state are participating, and how you can donate to the cemetery of your choice.

If you've experienced a shortage of volunteers from your unit or TAL Family but still have funds available to purchase wreaths, there's no dilemma there either. At WAA ceremonies, you'll find plenty of people ready to lay the wreaths, including WAA regents, other veteran service organizations, scouting troops, and dedicated patriots from our communities. They are there to support you, ensuring that a beautiful aromatic spruce wreath with a crimson bow is solemnly placed on a veteran's grave. Remember to **SAY THEIR NAMES!**

Jane McKnight
ALA 2025-26 National Security
Southern Division Chair



DEADLINE: JUNE 1, 2026

