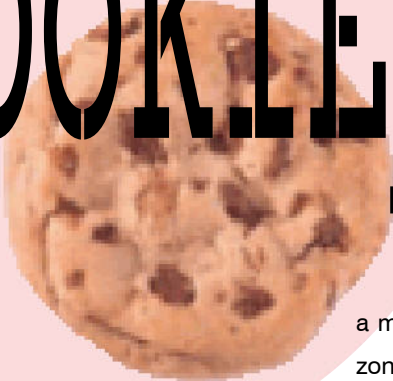


COOKIE CONVOY



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Bentwater Woman Starts Million Cookie Giveaway

By Brad Meyer

Contributing Writer

Marlene Summers' objective is simple enough: send a million chocolate chip cookies to American soldiers serving in Iraq and Afghanistan. The problem is logistics.

Packaging sweets is nothing new to Summers. The founder of "Chocolate Chips By George" has been creating specialty gifts on behalf of corporate clients for years. The company's product line includes chocolate roses and custom gift baskets as well as their signature line of upscale chocolate chip cookies.

Last year, she happened to meet SPC Adam Michael Johnson, who was working at the Bentwater Country Club prior to his deployment in Iraq. Wanting to demonstrate her appreciation for his service, Summers sent a package of chocolate chip cookies to Johnson to share with fellow soldiers.

"I really liked the idea of doing something so show our support for American troops overseas," Summers says. It was the beginning of her ambitious plans to send

a million cookies to troops in the war zone.

"I used to get packages of cookies from my grandmother when I was in college," Summers explains. "It was a thoughtful gesture and a special touch from home." "Hugs from Grammy" is now the division of Summers' company involved in charitable fundraising programs as well as her special project for soldiers.

With her commercial contacts, Summers developed a special chocolate chip cookie based on her grandmother's original recipe. The individually wrapped cookies also contain a patriotic themed card thanking soldiers for their service.

Summers points out that her project is not a political statement of support for the war. "I'm not in a position to know if this war is right or wrong," she says. "I just want the troops to know that people back home appreciate the sacrifices they are making."

In addition to accepting individual and corporate donations, Summers donates one cookie for every cookie sold. She has created "Grammy's Wall of Heros" on her website to acknowledge the contributions her project continues to receive.

Public response has allowed her to produce over 20,000 cookies for the project. "I'm thrilled with the support we

have received from the local community."

The challenge, however, is getting the "Hugs From Grammy" chocolate cookies to the soldiers in Iraq and Afghanistan. Transporting cookies internationally—especially to a war zone—is more difficult than she anticipated.

"Our original focus was on generating support for the program," she says.

"Now we are working on a reliable means to getting the cookies to the troops."

"Operation Independence", an organization dedicated to sending care packages to soldiers is helping, but on a much smaller scale than she would like.

"Providing individual cookies is nice," Summers explains, "but we want to be sending thousands."

Government and military officials have been of little help to Summers so far. She is hoping the Red Cross or other charitable organization will be able to help resolve the distribution program.

"I know there is a way to cut through the red tape and get this done," Summers says.

"We're hoping to find someone who can help make it happen."

To make a donation or find out more about the "Hugs From Grammy" Soldier Project, logon to www.chocolatechipsbygeorge.com.

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