



# HEARTLIGHTS



## SCMFO "Showers" Military Moms-to-Be

by Judy Franz, Vice President, SCMFO Board of Directors & Shower Chair

What a fun afternoon was had by all—military moms-to-be, military dads, other guests and volunteers—at the 2018 SCMFO Baby Shower on January 27, at St. Andrew's by the Sea United Methodist Church. As I told the assembled guests, "It is our honor to give you a shower like you would have had at home. We want you to leave here with your hearts and arms full and better prepared for your expected little ones."

Every mom-to-be received a layette, lovingly wrapped in quilts made by the Surfside Quilters Guild in San Clemente ("Wow," said one of the guests, amazed at the personal attention given to the gifts at the shower) and afghans crocheted by friends of SCMFO, a big gift (car seats, high chairs, strollers, you name it!), books, stuffed animals, gift bags for new moms from the [Orange County Women's Medical Group](#), baby outfits in addition to those in their layettes (babies grow, you know!), and prizes for the shower games played (Baby BINGO, "Draw a Baby"—hilarious, and "Don't Say Baby"—very tough at a baby shower!). Each mom also received a flash drive with lullaby music, provided by [Daneen Pysz](#) of Gloria Dei Lutheran who also led our Lullaby Sing (great singing by many dads!).

Among comments from the military family guests: "This was my first ever baby shower," said Stacy who has a one-year-old son who attended, along with her husband, Amos. "Thank you so much for doing this and inviting me," said Justina. "Do you have other events my wife can attend," asked Joshua, husband of Ashleigh, "because I'll be deploying a month after our baby is born and I want to know she has people who care about her." He was assured that SCMFO would be there for his wife while he's away. "My family is super grateful for everything you have done for us and helping us in this time of need," wrote Michelle in a thank you card.

The event was catered by Stephanie Harrelson, of [No Small Potatoes Catering](#), who attends Palisades Methodist and has a real heart for supporting military families. She and her crew provided the best comfort food ever! We had a crowd of 78 and no one left hungry!

Thank you to all the amazing volunteers who made the day possible! SCMFO is an all-volunteer organization, so we couldn't do any events or accomplish anything without your help. And a special thank you to the many others who contributed, from Christ Lutheran Church and other local faith communities, starting with those who attended and/or supported Mary's Feast in early December when almost everything in the layettes was donated, continuing with those who helped assemble layettes, provided gifts, donations and other items for the shower.



[Check out our Facebook page to see more pictures of the fun!](#)

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## 2017 Year in Review

Thanks to the exceedingly generous community of San Clemente, and especially the support of local churches, SCMFO was able to do more for military families in 2017 than any year before. Thanks to you, we impacted more families than we can count, but we'd like to give it a try! Here are a few examples of how your donations were shared with military families in need.

- We received 197 calls for assistance.
- Sixty-eight families came into our office and left with bags from our food pantry. These families receive other necessities, such as diapers, baby clothes, toiletries and donated household items. Often we also give them commissary and gas cards to ensure that no one goes hungry or cannot drive to work.
- San Onofre Elementary School received: speakers for the PA system; lots and lots of paper – some 20,000 sheets; room dividers to aid concentration in a special needs class; 37 classrooms received \$100 each for whatever their class needed most; a pizza party for kindergarteners broke out into chants of “Pizza! Pizza! Pizza!”; balls for the playground; a taco truck for the 8<sup>th</sup> grade dance; class requirements of every kind from our annual school supply drive; another pizza party for 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> graders, who were slated to attend a different school in the fall; 200 families received back-to-school supplies and a gift card for school clothes; a \$2500 donation directly from Laguna Presbyterian Church; air filters to lessen children’s allergies; and classroom learning aids as requested by the dedicated teachers.
- We helped an E5 father and expecting mother with travel expenses for medical tests. Their three year old, who had already undergone three brain surgeries following an aneurism, was given a clean bill of health!
- We helped several families each month cover out-of-pocket costs for medical or dental procedures, glasses, braces, desperately needed repairs for the family’s only car, and other unexpected expenses that threaten the welfare of the family.

In addition to helping families in crisis, we hold frequent morale events. These let military families know that the community of San Clemente thanks them and cherishes them. And it’s an opportunity to tell them about SCMFO’s services, in case they ever need us in the future.

- In January 2017, 37 moms-to-be were showered, at one of our favorite annual traditions.
- In February, 30 couples received a Valentine’s gift of flower and dinner at Selma’s on Del Mar.
- In April, 100 families received an Easter ham and commissary card.
- In May, 19 families gathered for a very special mother-child luau tea!
- In our July morale event for youths, 25 high school aged children received movie gift certificates, with enough for tickets and a snack.
- We partnered with SportsClips of San Clemente for our September morale event. Forty-four military wives and kids received complimentary haircuts.
- Our biggest event of the year, the Turkey Giveaway, saw 981 Thanksgiving meals distributed to families and service members. Another 188 Navy Sailors, who were situated farther from Camp Pendleton, received grocery store cards to make sure their families had a happy Thanksgiving.
- Our Christmas Thank-A-Family program paired 33 military families – 135 people in total – with sponsors in San Clemente. Families were selected on the basis of need and these sponsors changed their Christmas.
- Commissary or gas cards were distributed on base 10 times. These are given out, usually in \$25 increments, to enlisted ranks not long before payday, when we know things get tight for these young families. The reactions range from pleasant surprise to tears of relief. One mother of four told us, between hugs, “Thank you so much! I only had five dollars to last me and the kids until the end of the month.”

On behalf of the families we serve, please accept our heartfelt gratitude for your generosity!

On behalf of the volunteer team, thank you for making it possible to say “yes”!

A special thank you to Gunnery Sergeant Joel Simsquango, School of Infantry West, for his assistance all year.