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Ooh, Baby!

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Moms-To-Be with
Memorable Events
and Special
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Operation Shower Provides Military Moms-To-Be with Memorable Events and Special Baby Gifts

Deployment can be hard on all military families but is especially heart-wrenching when one partner is expecting a baby. A 17-year-old non-profit organization, Operation Shower, is easing the stress of deployment by hosting joyful baby showers and providing expectant military mothers with high-quality baby products.

The organization started in 2007 when LeAnn Morrissey reached out to her uncle, who was deployed to Afghanistan, asking him if she could do anything for him and his unit. He suggested sending a card to the pregnant wives of four men deployed with him who would not be present for their children's births. Morrissey, along with help from her friends and family, collected not just cards, but everything a new mom would need or want from a regular baby shower and assembled these gifts into a "shower in a box."

According to Morrissey, the support she received for these first "showers in a box" from individuals and companies, the gratitude of the mothers, and the morale boost for the fathers made her realize that this was a worthwhile endeavor. Soon after, Operation Shower hosted its first group baby shower at Fort Bragg, NC, adding the element of a group party.

"Since 2007, Operation Shower has showered over 8,600 moms and hosted 200 group baby showers across the country," Mor-



rissey relates. "Approximately 700 families are recognized each year and we expect to reach over 10,000 families by the end of 2024!"

"Operation Shower's mission is to provide joyous – awesome – baby showers for military families to ease the stresses of deployment," she adds. "We strive to not only bring joy to these moms-to-be through gifts, but also by creating an opportunity for them to connect with other similarly situated military moms-to-be whose spouses or partners are deployed."

Morrissey's own mother had been separated from her family and friends when she gave birth to the future founder and "Chief Shower Officer" on a military base in Germany, giving her a unique perspective on the challenges confronting military families.

"Many of the families we serve are facing pregnancy for the first time, and often, they've uprooted their lives to move to a new community far from family and friends," Morrissey points out. "Military moms are often looking for resources or community. Our showers provide a platform for military families who are facing similar

life events to come together. We also want to remind these families that they are not alone and that there is an entire network of people who see and appreciate their many sacrifices as service families. The high-quality gifts that we give our honorees help



**Above: Expectant families pose for a shot during a group baby shower
Left: Expectant active-duty moms showing their baby bumps**

and show appreciation for military moms and moms-to-be," she continues. "We continuously strive to reach that goal by engaging with these constituents as a team to create fun and memorable baby showers."

Operation Shower has several different programs, depending on where military families are located. For those families who are geographically unable to attend a group baby shower, the organization created a "B is for Baby Box" program, where they send a shipment of baby items to a military base, in some cases, right to the family's doorstep.

"Families receive everything from newborn diapers to handmade baby blankets to an infant travel system," Morrissey points out. "We take into consideration all the needs of a family just starting their family and give them items to help them on their journey."

The organization is funded through donations, sponsorships, and fundraising events. "We rely on the support of individuals, businesses, and organizations to provide baby showers for military families; sponsorship funding underwrites the program expenses needed for showers and fundraising events," she explains. "Our Annual Giving Donors, 'Team Joy,' as well as unrestricted gifts collected throughout the year help fund the 'B is for Baby Box' program."

Morrissey notes that the impact of the program goes far beyond just great baby gifts and fun events. "What appears to be a baby shower full of gifts and fun and connection so often has a deeper meaning and impact on the moms we serve," she

to ease the financial burden that often comes with the birth of a baby.

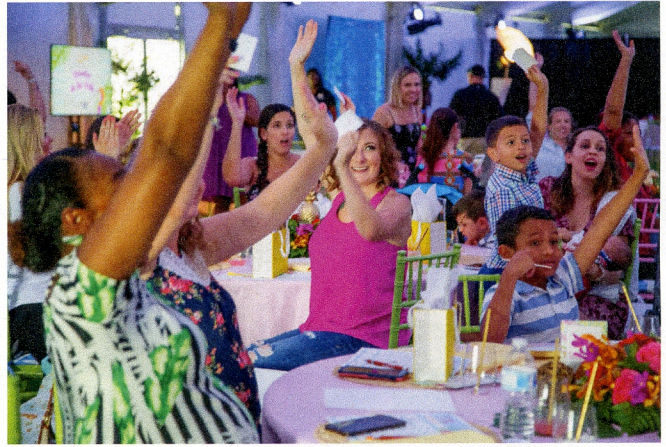
"One of our goals is to bring sponsors, corporate and individual donors and volunteers together to give them a way to celebrate,

Cover Story

By DONNA BOYLE SCHWARTZ

comments, relating a story about donated handmade items. "At our December 'Our Favorite Things' Fundraiser in St. Louis, one of our 2023 showered moms attended and shared a touching story that shows how the support of our community of crafters impacts our recipients. Her grandfather had lost his legs in an accident years ago and decided to take up quilting baby blankets for all of his grandchildren. Sadly, he passed away before getting to make one for her new baby. In her Shower in a Box was a handmade quilt. She was so thrilled to receive this heart-felt gift as now her little one wouldn't be left out.

"We are so grateful for every one of our crafters that donates their handmade hats and blankets to us," Morrissey adds. "You just never know how much your time and talent will mean to an expectant mom." 🇺🇸



In Their Own Words

Previous recipients from Operation Shower are effusive in their praise for the organization



This was the best day of my life! I had so much fun! I cried the whole time from all the love and support I received! From someone who has no friends or family close by, I thought I would not be able to have a baby shower then I was beyond blessed by you all and everyone who helped! Thank you to all the sponsors and volunteers!!! You guys absolutely rock!

We are so appreciative and grateful for every single person who took the time to put this event together. As first-time parents, preparing for a baby can be overwhelming mentally and financially. Operation Shower gave us a day to have fun that was all about us and baby, and took care of some big-ticket items that are essential for our baby.

Thank you so much for honoring me with this amazing shower. My mother and I truly felt your love and respect. I think I cried the whole time – tears of sadness missing my sailor and tears of joy receiving so many wonderful gifts. This was a once and a lifetime experience and definitely helped this Navy mom get through her first deployment!

The most meaningful part of the shower was feeling just extreme joy and happiness for the first time during the pregnancy by having others to celebrate with.

**For more information
or to donate, visit
www.operationshower.org**

