

Written by Operation Gratitude
Saturday, 28 May 2011 11:48

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May 24, 2011 -- Operation Gratitude today announced that in commemoration of the anniversary of President Ronald Reagan's passing, Michael Reagan, members of his family and representatives of the Reagan Legacy Foundation will join hundreds of volunteers at the California Army National Guard armory on Sunday, June 5, to assemble care packages for the 5,000 crew members deployed aboard aircraft carrier USS Ronald Reagan, named in honor of the 40th President of the United States. Care packages will also be assembled and shipped to the crew of guided-missile destroyer USS Preble and guided-missile cruiser USS Chancellorsville, both currently serving in the Ronald Reagan Carrier Strike Group.

"During this patriotic time of year -- between Memorial Day and the 4th of July -- we are honored to support the brave men and women of the U.S. Military serving on the namesake ship of a legendary leader, President Ronald Reagan," said Carolyn Blashek, founder of Operation Gratitude. "All of us at Operation Gratitude are inspired by the service of these great Americans and hope our care packages will in some small way express to the Sailors and Marines our feelings of enormous respect and appreciation."

The USS Ronald Reagan. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Kevin B. Gray.)

Christened on March 4, 2001, by former First Lady Nancy Reagan, USS Ronald Reagan deployed from its homeport of San Diego in February. In March, USS Ronald Reagan and others in its Strike Group were the first to arrive and provide disaster relief and humanitarian assistance to the Japanese people affected by the 9.0 earthquake and ensuing tsunami.

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"My family and I can think of no better way to honor the memory of my father than to be with prideful Americans who are volunteering their time to send a special gift of thanks from home to our deployed heroes," said Michael Reagan. Michael and his wife Colleen are regular visitors on board USS Ronald Reagan.

During the formal Program scheduled for 11:30am, Victory Motorcycles' External Relations Manager, Robert Pandya, will present the Motorcycle gifted in Operation Gratitude's 600,000th care package. That milestone package was delivered on Christmas day by the Commandant of the Marine Corps, General James Amos, to an infantryman of the 3rd Battalion, 5th Marine Regiment who at the time was serving a seven-month deployment in the deadly Sangin district of Aghanistan's Helmand province. The 3/5, also known as the "Dark Horse Battalion," experienced heavy combat throughout the deployment, with 25 of its men killed and more than 150 wounded. The 600,000th package recipient, along with his 3/5 comrades, returned to Camp Pendleton in April. The Marine, who received the package containing symbolic keys to the bike, will join the Operation Gratitude volunteers and guests at the armory on Sunday June 5 to receive the Victory Vegas 8-Ball Motorcycle, generously donated by Victory Motorcycles.

The media and members of the public (aged 12 years and older) are invited to attend the day's activities.

WHAT: Operation Gratitude Volunteers assemble Care Packages for the Crew of USS Ronald Reagan, USS Preble and USS Chancellorsville; Presentation of Victory Motorcycle to Marine Corporal

WHEN: Sunday June 5, 2011

Care Package Assembly starts at 9 a.m.

Program and Presentation will occur: 11:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.

WHERE: California National Guard Armory

17330 Victory Boulevard

Van Nuys, CA 91406

Corner of Victory and Louise; parking available on adjacent lot