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## Grinch Could Spoil Operation Christmas

Willow Grove, PA - A local mother plays Santa to thousands of marines each year by stuffing stockings with Christmas presents, but this year the economy is acting like the Grinch and could spoil the operation.

For the past 5 years, Patty Lewis has worked tirelessly to send Christmas gifts to marines in combat. She began by shipping a thousand stockings to the troops in Iraq when her son was stationed there, and is now up to 4,000 stockings.

"We have the best military in the World, but when I look deep into their eyes I still see the innocence of an 18 or 19 year old."

The gifts are practical things the marines can use, like an LED head lamp they can use at night to read, or hand knit scarves in desert camouflage colors to keep them warm.

"There's a lot of love in this from the people who make them," said Lewis.

She also sends along a Santa suit for the commanding officer to wear at the Christmas celebration. But this year, the Merry Christmas operation is in jeopardy because the major sponsors backed out because of the economy.

It's expensive to buy and shipped the Christmas presents to Afghanistan. Mom 4r Marines needs to raise about 200,000 by the end of the month to pull this off.

"I'm good at bargaining. I can be tenacious as hell when it comes to our Marines, but if I don't have the money then I can't do this," said Lewis.

In 2006, Lance Cpl. William Koprince sent an e-mail to his parents telling them how much it meant to him to get a touch of home.

"If they get a smile for 5 minutes then I've done my job," said Lewis.

The next day he was killed. His parents have never forgotten how much that stocking meant and that's what keeps Patty going.

For more information on how you can help out go to: [www.america4rmarines.org](http://www.america4rmarines.org)