

## Barbara Denson Memorial Volunteer Award

My mom, Barbara Denson, would be so honored to know that a volunteer award has been named in her memory. She was a lifelong volunteer for far too many organizations and causes to list here. She loved Jesus and she knew she was called to serve others.

Much of what she did as a volunteer centered around her church and her family. She had four children, and being a part of organizations to support their endeavors kept her quite busy. She was a sports team mom, a dance mom, a theater mom, a marching band mom, and back in the day, when they had such a thing, she was a room mother for all of our classrooms back in elementary school. All four of us children would tell you, she was always there and she was usually the one running the show.

Barbara was also very involved in organizations affiliated with her church and her community. She participated in these organizations as well as served in leadership roles, often filling officer and board positions.

Barbara left a legacy of serving and volunteering, and you can probably give her some credit for the founding of Military Missions. After growing up under her wings, I, too, became a volunteer mom, jumping in to help wherever my kids were involved in things while they were growing up. When my oldest son, David, joined the Marine Corps, I met many of his friends, and felt a calling to reach out and encourage these brave young men and women who were serving and sacrificing for our country. We started sending care packages to my son's Marine Corp unit when they were deployed. Almost 19 years later, you see that Military Missions is still growing strong, supporting troops all over the world, and you all have been a part of that story.

In addition to being an influence in the birth of Military Missions, Barbara was also a volunteer for this organization. She spent several years making care packages, writing letters and cards, and answering the phone for Military Missions. Barbara did not simply answer the phone. She practically became best friends with the

caller on the other end. Everyone who called found a warm, compassionate voice on the other end, that not only answered their questions, but who was going to make sure that their special person would be loved and spoiled with care packages, cards, and prayer. Barbara did not know a stranger. When people came into the office to help out with care packages, they always asked for Barbara. Everyone loved her.

Barbara was always known for her skills in the kitchen, making dinners for people who were recovering from illnesses or surgeries. She was often found baking for bake sales and other purposes. She was probably most famous for her gingerbread cookies. Back in 1968, she met a friend who shared her gingerbread cookie recipe. To this day, we have never found a better recipe or a better made gingerbread cookie. Barbara made these cookies for EVERYONE! Growing up, we took these to school. In the early days, my mom would make a 12 inch gingerbread man for each child in our elementary classroom....that's about 30 cookies per child....so about 120 very large cookies each Christmas. These cookies were so popular that Barbara began to make them for every family in the neighborhood, church family friends, and anyone else who had any connection to our family. She had to start making a smaller cookie, but she made hundreds every year. Frosting and decorating them became a requirement for each of us. She made them for so many people that we almost had to sneak one to get one ourselves!! Barbara's recipe has been shared countless times and there's no telling how many people are now baking them and sharing them each year. The cookies are always delicious, but the best part of making them is enjoying all the memories of my mom, Barbara, that naturally fill our minds as we bake.

I am so sorry that I have had to miss being here tonight. I am so grateful for all of you that are keeping the organization of Military Missions alive and serving well our military heroes and veterans. Thank you so much for your hard work and your support. You are greatly appreciated.

Beth Pennington