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Luke personnel to receive holiday treats

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Holiday cookies festooned with colorful sprinkles, cut-out cookies topped with red and green sugar, and thousands of bite-size oatmeal chocolate-chip cookies.

These are just a few of the expected varieties of cookies that will be donated Monday to the 600 to 1,000 airmen and women who will be staying at Luke Air Force Base over the holidays.

Debbie Jones, wife of the wing commander at Luke, said about 1,300 dozen cookies will be distributed Monday. The donation is part of a larger program organized through residents of Luke and the Fighter Country Partnership, a community support and advocacy group for the Glendale base.

"It's a whole community thing. We're getting lots from adult living communities, churches and businesses," Jones said, adding that Paradise Bakery & Café's main commissary in Scottsdale is donating 5,000 oatmeal chocolate-chip "chipper" cookies to the cause.

"We're definitely fortunate to have Paradise Bakery to help us with this project," Jones said.

Early Monday morning, active-duty and civilian employees and their families at the base will organize and package the cookies, which will then be delivered to the servicemen and women by first sergeants.

"They're young, single men and women, and for many of them, it's their first time away from home," Jones said.

Steve Yamamori, executive director and CEO of Fighter Country Partnership, said he's delighted by the community response to the cookie donation and, like Jones, is grateful to Paradise Bakery & Café.

"Paradise Bakery were the first people we talked to and the first to say yes," the Goodyear resident said.

Charles Weible, general manager for the Paradise commissary, said he is excited about donating cookies to Luke personnel.

"When we were told that it was for the guys who could not get home for the holidays, we said, 'Oh sure, definitely, we'd love to,' " the Phoenix resident said. "Anytime we can give back to the men and women serving our country and who are not able to spend time with their families during such a family-oriented time, it's the least we can do."

Today and Sunday, Weible said, about 160 pounds of oatmeal chocolate-chip cookie dough will be made into the 5,000 cookies.

"I will be doing a lot of the sampling," he said, laughing.

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