

## Troop support group holds fund-raiser at Clement Park

By Ramsey Scott

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Colorado Supporting Our Troops, a charity that supports members of the armed forces serving overseas, is literally helping soldiers shine a light on their work.



Gabriel Christus

Briana Constance instructs participants in the boot camp to raise money for Colorado Supporting Our Troops at Clement Park.

The group, which held a fund-raising event at Clement Park on Saturday, recently sent an \$800 spotlight to an Army unit serving in Afghanistan. The light, which replaced one destroyed in a mortar attack, is used by trucks on night patrol to search for roadside bombs, said Lainey Hamrick.

The fund-raiser featured a fitness boot camp and silent auction.

"Their truck got hit by mortars, and it blew up the small spotlights they had," said Hamrick, who started the group six years ago. "What we try to do is respond to their needs. We communicate directly with 11 units, and we ask them point blank, 'What do you want? What can we help you with?'"

Not everything the group sends is as substantial as a spotlight. Units request everything from high-energy snacks to moist wipes and sanitary supplies, Hamrick said.

The goal is to supply soldiers with necessities and make sure they know Americans at home are thinking of them. Before the boxes are sent, a group of children from the Rick Center for Gifted Children at the University of Denver paints each box.

"It raises morale. They're bound to get mail only a couple of times a month. When our boxes come in, they're colored with all kinds of crazy cartoons characters from our kids," Hamrick said. "They know we're thinking of them."

Martha Cercey, who helps run the group, said her husband and son served in Afghanistan. When they got back, both said how much those packages meant to them.

"When they come back, they express their gratitude to all the support they get. It just lifts their morale," Cercey said.

Cercey said the group depends on businesses like Interstate Roofing of Denver to supply items to auction at fund-raisers.



Bonnie Nephew, whose husband is a member of the unit that received the spotlight, flew to Colorado from Alaska to be part of the group's Clement Park event on Saturday.

"It's amazing to have a group like this supporting him," Nephew said. "They're looking for those little wires on the side of the road at night. The spotlight they set, it's going to help keep them safe."

To find out more about Colorado Supporting Our Troops, visit [www.cosupportingourtroops.com](http://www.cosupportingourtroops.com).

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