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## Midland Park players help family while dad at war

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Sunday, May 4, 2003

By **JASON McINTYRE**  
STAFF WRITER

The phone rang and as usual, Supermom was in the midst of doing laundry, cooking dinner, and keeping a mother's anxious eye on 4-year old Johnny and 1-year-old Olivia.

For Penny Galvany, who had been awake since 5:30 a.m. to make lunches before dashing to her teaching job in Hoboken, then back home for the kids, the call came at the perfect time.

"Maureen [Fister] called me at the time when I was done being Supermom," said Galvany, three months pregnant and still overwhelmed by the thought of running a household. She's continuing a career by herself while her husband, John, the Midland Park athletic trainer, is serving in the Persian Gulf.

Fister, the Midland Park softball coach, volunteered to send in the cavalry, so to speak. Groups of two or three players have been going to Galvany's Pompton Lakes house when there is no game or practice. They baby-sit and help around the house.

"We're just giving her an extra set of hands," Panthers' first baseman Lori Magda said. "It's actually fun too, because the kids are so cute. And it's nice to know we're helping Penny out. You can tell that she needs a break."



Photo by: TARIQ ZEHAWI

▲ Midland Park softball players help Penny Galvany, wife of school athletic trainer John Galvany, serve dinner to her two children. John Galvany, a member of the Marine reserves, is serving in the Persian Gulf.

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John is stationed aboard the USNS Comfort, a medical treatment facility. A member of the Marine reserves, John left in February for training in North Carolina, and was shipped to the Middle East in preparation for the war in Iraq on March 3.

According to Penny, John isn't in danger. She said John, a medic, assists wounded soldiers and Iraqi prisoners of war. The couple has spoken by telephone once a week and has corresponded by e-mail.

John would be happy to know that the softball team, 11-1, is having another great season, and there are no major injuries to report. With any luck, he'll be back in time for the State tournament.

"John said there's rumors they might downsize the ship," Penny said, her voice filled with hope. "But even if he leaves the ship, it doesn't mean he's coming home. He'd probably go to Kuwait for a while."

Penny knows that just in case, she has a dependable group of pinch-hitters.

"For the first month, I basically did it all," Penny said. "I've done most of the yardwork. When it was snowing, I had to shovel snow. It's just all the little things I miss."

Like taking the kids backpacking or hiking. That's actually how the Galvanys met, while hiking with the Appalachian Mountain Club. Or repairing the car. Or taking Olivia to the doctor when she had the stomach flu. Those were things John might have done.

Never having met Penny, the players offered to lend a hand around the house and with the kids because they were so close to John.

"He does a lot to help the school and all our athletes, and we wanted to help him out with something since he's always helped us," Magda said.

She has played sports for four years at Midland Park, and although she's in the middle of her own hectic senior year, with college applications and graduation looming, Magda has found the time to stop by with her teammates on occasion to pitch in anyway she can.

"It just feels really good to help her out," said senior Christine Jakobsen. "The kids have so many toys, it's easy to keep them busy. If it's nice weather, we'll take them outside to play, or play on the swings and slides."



For Penny, finding time to shower is an adventure. She almost needs to schedule a timeout for some quiet time to herself.

"Taking a shower is a huge thing!" Penny said. "I'm busy without a break straight through the day and night. I'm just thankful for the support of my family, my neighbors, and the softball team. When they

come, I can sit down and eat dinner alone, which is really nice."

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