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DECORATED FAMILY

Lights make it feel like Christmas for Phenix City military family

By **KATIE MCCARTHY**

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When Kim Chapman first got a call from Christmas Decor franchise owner Barry Jowers, she had second thoughts about giving him directions to her Phenix City home.

Without Chapman knowing, her friend Lynda Tillman, who lives in Pennsylvania, nominated her for a program that decorates the homes of active duty military families.

"I thought I was going to get robbed," Chapman said when Tillman told her she found out about the

WANT YOUR HOME DECORATED?

For links to more information about Christmas Decor and the Decorated Family program, click on this story at www.ledger-enquirer.com.

program on Facebook.

But after Jowers, who volunteers his Auburn-based franchise's services for the Decorated Family program, showed up and got to work, she felt at ease.

"They were the sweetest people in the whole world," she said.

And in two hours the Chapman

home was decked out with Christmas decorations.

Chapman said her children, 12-year-old Bobby and 3-year-old Jai-Lyn, were really excited because it meant that Christmas was close and their dad would be coming home soon.

About a week after the house was decorated, Spec. C.J. Chapman, a mechanic in the U.S. Army, arrived at Fort Stewart, Ga. He was able to see his house decorated before heading back to Fort Stewart for reintegration classes.

SEE CHRISTMAS, A5

CHRISTMAS FROM A1

He'll be home again on Christmas Eve.

"It was probably one of the best Christmas presents I've ever had," said Spec. Chapman, who has spent the last two Christmases in Iraq. "It's pretty much like a dream come true."

Kim Chapman said they didn't think they'd get to decorate this year because she wouldn't have been able to do it herself, even though this is the first year they've owned a home.

"It kind of brought the holidays here because before it

was going to be a low-key Christmas," she said.

Although she and the children live in Phenix City, Spec. Chapman is stationed at Fort Stewart. Since he was getting ready to deploy, the Columbus native decided to move back to the area where it would be easier to find a job and she could be closer to family. They were hoping C.J. Chapman would come down on orders for Fort Benning.

He didn't.

So while they'll enjoy the holiday together, in March he is set to move to Fort Bliss, La., where he'll likely deploy again.

Kim said she'll stay in

the area with the house and children.

But she said being selected by the Decorated Family program made this an extra special Christmas for her family.

"Military, they go, they do their thing," she said. "Sometimes they feel forgotten. This made C.J. feel so special. It was a way to say 'Thank you.'"

Though the Chapmans were the recipients of the program, they weren't the only ones to reap the benefits.

This was the first opportunity Jowers had to participate in the Decorated Family program; the Chapmans

were the first local family to be nominated.

"It's really humbling to see how appreciative someone can be like that," Jowers said of Chapman. "I got a lot out of it. Just seeing how happy she was, it makes me tear up."

Decorated Family is a program created by the Christmas Decor company as a way to give back to active duty military by decorating the homes of military families across the nation. Nominations are generally accepted on their website each year between September and November.

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WOMAN USES FACEBOOK TO BUY GIFT FOR LOCAL MILITARY FAMILY



ROBIN TRIMARCHI/trimarchi@ledger-enquirer.com
Bobby Zamora, 12, and his sister, Jai-Lyn Chapman, 3, sit outside their home on Dec. 14 that was decorated for Christmas by the Decorated Family Program.