



MOMENT WITH MO

Spring 2011

It's hard to believe that we are already into the second quarter of 2011!

OTA has experienced **unprecedented growth** over the past few months and we are excited to share some of the memorable milestones and troop support initiatives we have been able to complete as a result.

One of our proudest accomplishments is surpassing the **\$1 million milestone** in donations since our inception in 2004!

We are very excited about this accomplishment and proud of the fact that this level of funding has enabled us to provide for over **80,000 troops** in the past seven years.

We are very proud of the fact that even in the most challenging economic conditions, we have ensured that **98.5 cents of every dollar we spend goes directly to provide "wish list" items for our troops**. We have employed additional cost saving measures to ensure that our troops are taken care of and that your donations are used most prudently.

The end of 2010 also brought us into our new space at Century III Mall in West Mifflin, PA, and we have welcomed a number of new volunteers to our organization.

We have a **new Vice President**, Amanda Thompson, who coordinates all the daily activities and volunteer needs our new space demands. We are so happy to have her in this new leadership role!

In January and March 2011, we completed two of the biggest packing events in our history, sending gifts to over 10,000 deployed troops, representing over 80 separate deployed units!

To put 2011 activity into perspective:

- ★ During the first quarter of 2011, OTA granted wishes to over 10,000 deployed members of the US military deployed to Afghanistan and Iraq.
- ★ In all of 2010 we granted just over 20,000 wishes.
- ★ We have experienced a **150% increase in troop requests** during the first quarter alone, and anticipate that rate to increase over the course of the year.

So you can see that the need for support from home is greater than ever. We are also very close to surpassing 100,000 troops helped since we began in July 2004!

We have been blessed with generous donors and sponsors who enable us to fund these projects. And I cannot stress how important our need for monetary donations is as we continue to provide support for our troops, particularly as we see increased deployments.

Our support from the community has been outstanding and we are grateful for all the individuals, corporations and civic groups who have so generously supported our efforts.

On behalf of all the volunteers, thank you for choosing to support the troops through OTA.

Please continue to bless us with your generosity as we rise to the challenge of providing for the increasing need of our deployed military members.



Monica Orluk
President and COO

FACES FROM THE FRONT

Our troops' "wish list" items range from **entertainment items, eye protective glasses, Under Armour® moisture-wicking shirts to phone cards, bedding, personal hygiene, and snack items**. Here are a few of the smiling faces and the "wish list" items they received from OTA!



Unit: USF-I, B CO

Mission: These soldiers deployed from Ft. Bragg, NC, serve in Iraq to help turn the government over to Iraqis.

"Wish list" items: golf clubs and golf balls



Unit: HHC 225 BSB 25 ID

Mission: These soldiers from Schofield Barracks, HI provide food, water and fuel to troops in Iraq

"Wish list" items: video gaming system, DVD player, TV, board games



Unit: 379th AEW Det 1

Mission: These airmen are meteorologists serving in Bahrain

"Wish list" items: Snacks, hygiene, entertainment items



Unit: B-416th CA BN

Mission: This Army Reserve unit from CA is a Civil Affairs unit in Afghanistan

"Wish list" items: Hair clippers, blankets, bedding, hygiene and other morale-boosting supplies



Unit: 1092 EN BN S3 C

Mission: These WV soldiers are engineers serving in Afghanistan

"Wish list" items: Under Armour shirts®, hygiene items



Unit: 1st MARDIV HQBN G-2

Mission: These Marines from Ft. Pendleton, CA, gather intelligence in Afghanistan

"Wish list" items: Socks, Tac Wear® shirts, work-out shorts, hygiene items, foot care

BEDTIME WITH DADDY

One of our favorite recent stories about helping troops comes from Chaplain Peter Hofman and Captain Larry Torres, both serving with a Special Operations Task Force in Afghanistan. Chaplain Hofman and Captain Torres requested video cameras so their soldiers on base could record bedtime stories for their children back home.

OTA knew how important hearing and seeing their parents on tape would be for kids back home, and we were honored to be able to provide these pieces of equipment.

We were touched to receive emails and photos from both Chaplain Hofman and Cpt Torres who explained how important these cameras were to the soldiers and their families. We share with you Chaplain Hofman's email and photos from Cpt Torres.

Dear OTA,

I received a TV and a video camera from you this past week! The guys here were overwhelmed by your generosity. They kept asking how I was able to get these items and all I could say was "Ask and you shall receive."

I know your organization is called Operation Troop Appreciation but it is us who appreciates you. I want you to know, though, that what you have provided for us will strengthen my men and their families in ways we may never even know about.

It will help Dads stay in touch with their children, husbands remain close to their wives, and strengthen the overall bonds of the family relationships. Having a dad record himself reading a book does so many things. Some are quite obvious, whereas others may be overlooked such as giving mom a break while the kids are entertained by dad reading to them.

Considering we have had 7 KIA's [Killed in Action] in less than 2 weeks here, a dad recording a video of himself has the potential of preserving footage of himself for his kids in the event that he be killed. I think of one of my Soldiers who was killed just a couple days ago who had 2 daughters ages 10 and 8. I can only imagine how meaningful a recording would be to them right now.

I don't think we can underestimate the impact you will have over here and at home. You and your organization are such a blessing to us and we are indebted to your amazing generosity.

God Bless you and your organization for blessing us.

Peter Hofman



These troops in Afghanistan are recording themselves reading to their children back home.

OTA sent video cameras so the Moms and Dads could record themselves reading bedtime stories and send their own personal videos to their families.

IN THEIR OWN WORDS...

Every week we receive letters and emails from our troops. Here are some of our favorite recent messages...

To: Our Supporters,

I would like to thank everyone for sending the letters, the movies, the puzzles, the wipes and the shirts to us. It is nice to know that you are thinking of us and wish us the best. Your letters motivate me to work harder in order to achieve our mission here. The movies will provide us with some entertainment on our down time. I love what you guys are doing, and that is putting smiles on soldiers' faces. Thanks again I appreciate all the hard work you all put in into our packages.

Sincerely,
SPC Orpinela
1-87 In BN Med Plt

-----Original Message-----

From: Nathan Hall
Sent: Friday, December 10, 2010 7:54 PM
Subject: Re: wish list items on the way from OTA!

The Items did arrive, and in great time too. To receive so many things was amazing, I was not expecting to see so much stuff. It was very much needed too, as we ship our personal and Military belongings to Afghanistan it all has to go thru Pakistan, and this deployment we lost approximately 30-30 foot containers due to theft or loss. Coming thru Pakistan, the Army cannot escort the containers and for this reason is why so many of our guys had lost a lot of their gear, along with personal things to get them thru the year or until someone from home can mail them stuff.

We thank you so much for everything you have done to support us, as we are away from family and loved ones. Your generosity and caring goes a long way with us, thank you again so much.

SPC Hall and Battle Buddies

To our supporters,

Thank you very much for the packages of movies & both wipes. Both will come very handy at the right time! Your generosity and support truly boosts the morale of all soldiers who miss and need the essentials and luxuries. Thank you, I appreciate it! ☺

PFC SMITH, BRIANNA
MED PLT 1-87 IN

-----Original Message-----

From: Jelly, Jeremy E USA MAJ
Sent: Wednesday, November 24, 2010 9:58 AM

Subject: RE: wish list items on the way from OTA! (UNCLASSIFIED)

I have been circulating around the battlefield seeing my guys and just returned today. Yes, we did receive all of the boxes of GREAT items for the guys. THANK YOU very much for everything. My Medical officer has taken all of the supplies and is in the process of evenly distributing them into packages for all 7 of our outer locations. Once they get out to the outlying locations we will have the guys take pictures and send them back.

We are truly grateful for you and your organization. It is amazing how many people in the U.S. have no idea how much our soldiers actually do on a daily basis and how much they sacrifice for our country. So it is amazing to us that organizations like Operation Troop Appreciation can and do so much for our Troops without hesitation. Simply seeing the amount of supplies and things that you have sent us in such a short period of time is simply phenomenal. I do not think we will ever be able to truly thank you, but please know that 4-320th FA, GUNS OF GLORY, Paktika Province, Afghanistan, truly appreciate all of your support and pray that God blesses you and your organization with a wonderful Holiday season.

Again, Thank you very much.

wr
MAJ Jelly



DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE
HEADQUARTERS 451 ST AIR EXPEDITIONARY WING (AFCENT)
KANDAHAR AIRFIELD, AFGHANISTAN
APO, AE 09355

Operation Troop Appreciation

On behalf of our patients and staff here at the 451st Contingency Aeromedical Staging Facility (CASF), I would personally like to thank you for the snacks and DVD's you sent for our wounded, injured, and ill warriors.


Your gifts are being passed along to our Army, Air Force, Marine, and Navy men and women who pass through our CASF. The CASF prepares warriors for medical air evacuation and/or land transport to other regional and/or international medical care locations.

All of the items you donated provide our staff much joy as well and your generosity lifts the morale of all the troops. The gifts are greatly appreciated by all of us. Again, thank you for your thoughtfulness and willingness to support our troops. Such gestures mean more than you might think to those far from home and loved ones. Your kindness goes a long way.

Sincerely

Camille R. Looney
CAMILLE R. LOONEY, Lt Col, USAF, MSC

Thank you for all of your support. It's for all of you that we do this and it is greatly appreciated. Knowing that we have so much support back home helps us make it through this

Your Soldier
FV2 Branscum


1-110TH INFANTRY RETURNS HOME

We welcome home the soldiers of the 110th Infantry after a job extremely well done!

Deploying from Pittsburgh in January 2010 and returning home in November right before Thanksgiving, these two companies of National Guard soldiers provided security and worked in counter-insurgency missions in Afghanistan.

Tragically, two of these soldiers lost their lives in a suicide bomb attack while patrolling a market in Zabul, Afghanistan on June 11, 2010.

Sergeant First Class Robert J. Fike of Conneautville and Staff Sergeant Bryan A. Hoover of Elizabeth were long-time members of the Pennsylvania National Guard. They were part of a security force platoon for the Provincial Reconstruction Team, working to rebuild Afghanistan's infrastructure with the help of military personnel serving as engineers, medical personnel, agriculture experts, civilian affairs experts and security personnel. Their fellow soldiers will never forget their brethren and we will never forget their sacrifices.

Coming back home was a memorable day filled with tears of joy and beautiful family reunions. The site of the coach buses coming down the street, flanked by policemen on motorcycles, with family, friends and neighbors waving flags as the buses pulled up to discharge the soldiers is a memory not soon forgotten.

These soldiers have a special place in our hearts, as this unit was the catalyst to the formation of OTA in 2004 during their first deployment to Iraq. The soldiers who wrote cards and letters when they received Under Armour® shirts, socks and other supplies inspired the creation of the organization. It was an honor to support them during this deployment to Afghanistan.

WE ARE COMMITTED TO OUR COURAGEOUS...

Operation Troop Appreciation (OTA) is dedicated to members of our Armed Forces serving and sacrificing for our country. By providing them with "wish list" items to raise their morale and to aid in the success and safety of their missions, we present a united front to our deployed military by supporting them as individuals. We do this because each and every one of them:

- ★ Memorializes our nation's past
- ★ Sacrifices to maintain our nation's culture and freedoms
- ★ Ensures the safety and freedom of our nation's future generations

Our mission is to build and sustain the morale of deployed troops, enabling them to complete their missions with the assurance that the American public supports and appreciates their selfless service and daily sacrifices.

Welcome Home!



A day almost a year in the making, these soldiers return home to loved ones after a successful deployment to Afghanistan.

AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF DRILLING ENGINEERS DONATES \$20,000 TO OTA!



OTA would like to thank the very generous members and officers of the Appalachian Basin Chapter of American Association of Drilling Engineers (AADE) who presented a \$10,000 check to OTA on Veteran's

Day, and another \$10,000 check in April after their spring pistol shoot event.

Wanting to do something to help veterans and troops in the Pittsburgh community, AADE researched a number of charities and ultimately chose OTA for these special gifts.

On Veteran's Day in November 2010, OTA Founder and CEO Kristen Holloway Querriera was honored to speak to this wonderful group and humbled to receive their gracious check, which has been used to provide cold-gear clothing, socks, blankets, and other needed items to many of our troops living in austere conditions in Afghanistan.

But their support didn't stop there!

On Friday March 11, the Appalachian Basin Chapter AADE hosted their pistol shoot event, "Shooting for our Troops," with the \$10,000 proceeds benefitting OTA.

The event was held at Anthony Arms & Accessories Shooting Center in West Mifflin, PA. There were two sessions conducted with approximately 150 shooters participating. Prizes were awarded to the top two shooters in the semi-automatic category, and the top shooter in the revolver category.

There were many prize and raffle drawings, including gift certificates to Anthony Arms and a wonderful lunch was provided to all the shooters. OTA Volunteers Amanda Thompson, and Donna and Bill Leech were on hand to provide information about OTA to support our deployed service members.

OTA would like to thank everyone at AADE - especially Colby Fuser, Ron Handley and Kurt Aucoin for organizing this wonderful event - and the chapter's President John Applegath for the organization's continued support.



As a symbol of OTA's appreciation for the generous \$10,000 donation, Kristen presented the AADE a Certificate of Appreciation and an American flag flown over a base in Afghanistan, both given to OTA from a unit OTA recently helped.



OTA Vice President, Amanda Thompson (center) with OTA volunteer and AADE member Kurt Aucoin and Steve Hohle at AADE's shooting event at Anthony Arms. The event's \$10,000 proceeds benefitted OTA.

OTA WELCOMES NEW VICE PRESIDENT

In March, 2011, the Board of Directors unanimously voted to appoint Amanda Thompson as Vice President of OTA. The organization's growth has created a prime opportunity to promote Amanda into this important and challenging role.

Amanda started her journey with OTA as a volunteer and later accepted the role of Volunteer Director. Amanda clearly demonstrates the dedication and commitment required to lead OTA and we are proud to add her to our volunteer administrative staff. Congratulations Amanda!



The Board also promoted Monica Orluk from Vice President to President. Kristen Holloway Querriera has been promoted from President to CEO.

HOLIDAY ADOPTIONS BENEFIT THOUSANDS OF TROOPS

OTA receives requests from soldiers throughout the entire year; however, the holiday season always proves to be our busiest time as we play Santa for thousands of soldiers at Christmas.

We are incredibly fortunate to have a great support network of corporations, individuals, schools, churches, and families who adopted OTA's troop units this past year, ensuring thousands of troops would receive their "wish list" items in time for Christmas. We thank everyone who donated funds and supplies so generously to bring holiday cheer to our troops so far away!

Although we don't have room to include everyone who contributed for the holidays, we are happy to list a few of the many generous groups who made Christmas so memorable for many troops.

Holiday Adoptions:

\$1 - \$99

- ★ Circleville United Methodist Church
- ★ Perkins Eastman
- ★ Holy Angels Church

\$100 - \$249

- ★ Brownie Troop #50149
- ★ Trinity Christian School

\$250 - \$499

- ★ Bower Hill Church
- ★ Intergroup Communications

\$500 - \$999

- ★ PA Learners Online Cyber Charter School
- ★ Buffalo Valley Sportsman's Club
- ★ McKesson Provider Technologies

\$1,000 - \$1,999

- ★ The Catanese Group
- ★ Sunnyside Supply
- ★ Synergy Intel Group

\$2,000 - \$3,999

- ★ The Captains Table of Monroe, NY, Inc.
- ★ Domer Wellness Center
- ★ CIT & Avaya Financial Services
- ★ PPG Industries, Inc.

\$4,000 - \$10,000

- ★ All Academies Service Ball
- ★ Winthrop Management

Collection Drives:

AARP

Adcom Worldwide Pittsburgh
Advanced Pain Medicine
Alcoa

Apollo Ridge School District
Armstrong School District

Bower Hill Church
Brownie Troop #50149

Circleville United Methodist Church

Eastside Mothers Club
Epic Metals Corporation

Fiserv
Fiserv Loan Servicing Solutions
Forbes Road Career & Tech Center

Hampton Township Middle School
Holy Angels Church

Lenape Elementary School

McKesson Provider Technologies
McKinney Youth Leadership

Perkins Eastman
Peters Township Girl Scouts
Peters Township Newcomers & Neighbors Club
Propel Montour Schools

Richland Elementary School

The Surgery Center of Cranberry
Three Rivers Leatherneck - Detachment 310



Operation Troop Appreciation is **always** in need of donated items to fulfill our troops' "wish list" requests.

If you, your company, church, school or civic group are in the **Pittsburgh area** and would like to hold a collection or fundraising drive for OTA, please contact us. Groups and individuals **nationwide** can also "**adopt**" a unit as part of a fundraising effort.

Please contact President Monica Orluk for a list of needed items, collection guidelines, and adoption information at info@operationtroopappreciation.org

OTA'S NEW DIGS AT CENTURY III MALL

In November, 2010, OTA was blessed to obtain 5,600 square feet of space in the Century III Mall, West Mifflin, PA. Our gratitude goes out to the Simon Malls Corporation and Century III Mall Management staff (Gina Mercorelli) for making this happen!

For two weeks, OTA volunteers cleaned, primed, painted and repaired to prepare for our move from the Hunt Armory in Shadyside. And the results are fantastic! We now have a spacious location that serves as our operational headquarters, where our inventory is stored and all packing activities take place.

We also have mall hours that allow the public to make donations and to tour our new military tribute space that features personal items from local veterans as well as pictures, letters and items we've received from the troops we serve.

We were able to make this move at no cost because generous sponsors provided the much needed services to make it happen. The following deserve our special thanks:

- ★ **Century III Mall and Simon Malls Corporation** donated the space.
- ★ **PPG Industries, Inc.** provided the paint and primer.
- ★ **Home Depot, West Mifflin, PA** donated our maintenance and painting supplies
- ★ **My Way Moving and Storage** transported our operation from the Hunt Armory to Century III Mall.
- ★ Many OTA Volunteers worked so hard to make this move a success, including **Don and Bonnie Wilson, Bruce and Barb Mead, Amanda and Rob Thompson, and Gary McGuirk!**

We have a need for volunteers to help staff our space, so if you are interested, please contact OTA Vice President Amanda Thompson at thompsonab75@yahoo.com.

Check out our hours and stop by and visit us soon. We are located on the lower level of the mall right outside JC Penny. We would love to give you a tour of our new home!

Tuesday and Thursday: Noon – 9 p.m.
Saturday: 10 a.m. – 4 p.m.

Before the move...



...Volunteers unpack and organize...



...Grand Opening!



PITTSBURGH'S MAYOR LUKE RAVENSTAHL PACKS FOR THE TROOPS!

When the Pittsburgh Steelers played the New York Jets in the playoffs, there was a lot more at stake than the Super Bowl.

Pittsburgh Mayor Luke Ravenstahl and New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg had a wager that made a big impact on our troops as well.

The losing team's mayor would have to provide much needed support items to the military members

of the winning team's city. Well, Pittsburgh won the game and Mayor Bloomberg made good on his bet!

On January 29th, Mayor Ravenstahl showed up at OTA headquarters at Century III Mall in West Mifflin, rolled up his sleeves and helped our volunteers pack for some very worthy deployed troops.

We may not have won the Super Bowl, but the city and our troops definitely came out on top!



Mayor Ravenstahl packs for the troops



The Mayor, OTA President Monica Orluk, and OTA volunteer Tricia Staley

STAY CONNECTED TO OTA!



Operation Troop Appreciation is now an official cause on **Facebook**.

Posted on our page are announcements for upcoming events, notices for volunteer opportunities, and pictures of our events and the troops we help.

Please sign on today and "like" our cause so you can get the latest and greatest news from OTA!

Do you know someone who would like to get the OTA newsletter delivered via email?

Anyone not already receiving the e-newsletter can simply sign up in one easy step by providing their name and email address on our website at OperationTroopAppreciation.org. They'll get our newsletter conveniently delivered to their inbox each quarter. We never sell or trade personal information to third parties.



* OTA Newsletter
Name:
Email Address:

Miss an issue? All past editions of the OTA newsletter are available on our website under **Press Room** on the top navigation bar.

WALGREENS LAUNCHES SUPPORT PROGRAM FOR OTA



In early 2011, Walgreens in Moon Township, PA, conducted a **“Treats for Troops”** program that allowed customers to purchase candy and chewing gum and donate them to the troops through OTA. The program was so successful that Walgreens decided to institute an ongoing initiative to provide much needed hygiene, personal care and snack items to OTA.



Now troop supporters can visit 29 Pittsburgh-area Walgreens stores to purchase specially priced items that will be delivered to OTA on a regular basis. Look for the OTA logo on shelf pricing labels and in specially marked sections of each participating Walgreens location.

We kick off this special program with a **“Stuff This Truck”** event at the **Pleasant Hills Walgreens in the Bill Green’s Shopping Center, Saturday, April 30th from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Sunday, May 1st from 10 a.m. – 3 p.m.** Shoppers can purchase specially priced items that will be put in the Army truck for delivery to OTA and packed up for troops serving overseas.

SOCKS FOR SOLDIERS



Photo source: longwarjournal.org



Imagine you are an American soldier serving in Afghanistan.

You wake up every morning while it’s still dark, in a cold tent or out-building, and have just a few minutes to prepare for your next patrol.

Your COP (Combat Outpost) is in a remote area of Afghanistan that’s been infiltrated by Taliban and your day of patrolling the countryside and villages will be long, cold and dangerous. Winter temperatures are below zero, with a biting wind and plenty of snow. Your day may last 18 hours, so it will be a long time until you can return to your COP to warm up with some coffee, a hot meal, and change into something warm and dry.

Aside from your weapon and tactical gear, your most important article is a warm pair of socks. Warm dry feet will sustain you the whole day and help regulate your body temperature.

Knowing what our soldiers contend with every day, is it any wonder that one of the most popular “wish list” requests is warm winter socks?

OTA sends hundreds of pairs every month, and we are pleased to be able to provide YOU a direct way to send warm socks to our troops, too.

Throughout 2011, Fox River Socks is offering a 20% discount on any socks bought for deployed troops.

Many units in Afghanistan have signed up for this amazing program, so there are plenty of soldiers who will benefit from your generous gift of warm socks.

Simply go to <http://www.foxsox.com> to learn more, or go directly to the “wish list” by unit at: <http://www.foxsox.com/catalog/soldierwishlist.aspx#100162>. You can purchase as many socks as you wish for the unit of your choice (don’t worry, you can’t pick wrong – they **all** need your support!). Enter code **SFS2011** to get the 20% discount.

Every pair of socks will be a tremendous gift to our troops, enabling them to complete their missions knowing we back home care about their comfort and warmth while they serve so selflessly for all of us.