



MOMENT WITH MO

Fall 2009



As the holiday season draws near, we at OTA reflect on how blessed we are to be headquartered in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. The outpouring of support and generosity we've seen over the past five years is heartwarming and this year, it is even more significant given the difficult financial climate in which we live. Community support has always been the heart of our success, and the efforts of our community and throughout our country during 2009 were exceptional.

As the year began, we saw our hometown heroes, the PA National Guard 56th Stryker Brigade Combat Team deploy to Iraq and now, thankfully, we welcome them home. Because of you, our donors and sponsors, we were able to take care of over 800 soldiers in this unit, and we are truly grateful for the impact you made on these lives. We're happy to share some other highlights with you as you enjoy this issue of the newsletter.

OTA has also begun working with The Veterans Leadership Program (VLP) of Western PA. VLP provides essential housing, employment, and other vital supportive services to eligible veterans, service members and their families to improve self-sufficiency, sustainability, and quality of life. We are proud to extend our efforts to returning veterans in our community, and help this incredible organization with their own projects to reach out to our returning veterans.

We are very pleased to share with you the story of one area company, Philips Respironics, and how an

entire employee base rallied to show our troops just how much they are appreciated. We're sure you will be touched as we are when you read about this inspirational project.

These are just a few of the very special stories we try to bring to you with each issue of the newsletter. As you read the soldier letters, and view the pictures they share, keep in mind that today there are many, many men and women far from home who need our support. Whether it's a monetary donation, volunteering at our community events, or simply gathering thank you cards, every effort you make to help us achieve our mission makes a difference in the lives of our deployed military members.

As we look forward to 2010, we realize that our challenges will be even greater. We are preparing for the deployment of more PA National Guardsmen to Afghanistan and know that, now, more than ever, our support is needed to help maintain the morale of our troops. And every day, OTA receives requests from the troops in the field, who serve and sacrifice to preserve our freedom.

For those who have helped us achieve our goals, THANK YOU! Your devotion to OTA and to our troops has not gone unnoticed. You've set the example and we hope that these stories inspire others to follow in your footsteps.

Sincerely,

Monica Orluk
Vice President



Committed



to



our



Courageous



WELCOME HOME 56TH STRYKER BRIGADE COMBAT TEAM !

My name is Sergeant Paul Johnson of Delta Co 1/110Th. I was deployed with Alpha Co 2/112th from September, 2008, through September 28, 2009 with the 56th Stryker Brigade. During our deployment we were short some much needed items that our unit was not able to supply or which were on back order for the whole deployment.

Having been a friend and volunteer of OTA's in the past, I knew they could help me. OTA sent my platoon gloves, T-shirts, Safety Glasses, socks, and boots for the soldiers who needed them since the beginning of the deployment. Thanks to OTA our morale was a lot higher which made our deployment much better.

Thank you OTA, all of its staff, supporters, volunteers, and those that donate."

Over the past year, we've shared information about the 56th Stryker Brigade Combat Team who has served this past year in combat operations in the Middle East. It is with great pride and happiness that we now welcome them home from Iraq.

OTA Board Member, Staff Sergeant Mike Fisher, was included in this deployment along with many other soldiers from units across the state of Pennsylvania. Many of these Soldiers deployed from units around the Pittsburgh area, such as the 1-110th Infantry Battalion headquartered in Mount Pleasant, PA.

OTA held a special adoption program earlier this year to help support these soldiers and we were able to quickly take care of requests as our soldiers deployed.

These Soldiers represented Pennsylvania with a proud tradition of service and sacrifice that is part of the Citizen Soldier's heritage. We congratulate them on successful completion of their mission and are happy to welcome them home as they reunite with their loved ones and the ranks of their home units.

The pictures show some of these soldiers on the job in Iraq.



FACES FROM THE FRONT

Since the last newsletter edition, OTA has provided “wish list” items to **2,600 troops**, items ranging from **sports equipment, Under Armour® moisture-wicking shirts, phone cards, pillows, sheets, personal hygiene, and snack items**. Here are a few of the smiling faces and the “wish list” items they received from OTA!



Unit: 41 IBCT, Company of ~100 soldiers

Mission: Provide convoy security in Iraq.

“Wish list” items: Under Armour shirts, recreation items, board games



Unit: B Company, 615th ASB from Ft. Hood, Texas

Mission: Aviation support to all ground units in their area of operation in Iraq

“Wish list” items: sports equipment, snacks, hygiene supplies



Unit: Joint Combat Camera, Ft. Wainwright, Alaska

Mission: Document troop action in Iraq

“Wish list” items: Snacks, cotton t-shirts, hygiene supplies



Unit: HSC, NNC-I (HQ Plt), Ft. Lewis, Washington

Mission: Provide convoy security and troop sustainment and support in Iraq.

“Wish list” items: Phone cards, snacks, hygiene, golf balls, games



Unit: HQ Btry, 1-7 Field Artillery, Ft. Riley, Kansas

Mission: Secure the international zone, perform patrols and escort missions in Iraq

“Wish list” items: Dart board, sports equipment



Unit: E Co, 3-8 Cavalry, 125 soldiers

Mission: Recover and maintain Army vehicles in Iraq

“Wish list” items: Ballistic eye protective glasses



CHRISTMAS ADOPTION PROGRAM

The volunteer staff of Operation Troop Appreciation (OTA) would like to say **Thank You to our donors!** Your support has been overwhelming, and all of us at OTA are grateful for your generosity and support of our brave military men and women. **Even more important, our troops are grateful to you for your support!**

Because of you, OTA has provided “wish list” items to over **55,000 deployed troops** since July 2004 – items that contribute to their **safety, mission effectiveness, and morale**, and remind them they are **remembered and supported**.

With winter approaching, many troops ask us for basic necessities like blankets, gloves and winter socks. Others request items to keep them safer, better in their jobs, or provide entertainment when they return from their long days and weeks on mission.

Again this year we offer two programs to give you options as you remember these brave men and women who are so far from home this holiday season.

<p>Adopt A Soldier – This program allows you to make individual donations for specific items our troops often request. For example:</p>  <p>\$30 – A cold-weather Under Armour® shirt \$50 – A Gerber® multi-tool set \$100 – Wiley X™ ballistics glasses / eye protection</p>	<p>Adopt A Unit – Your civic group, church, friends or company works together to “grant wishes” for an entire unit of troops. We provide an information sheet that includes:</p>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ★ Photo with mission description ★ Background information on the unit ★ Requested “wish list” items ★ Suggested target donation to complete “wish list”
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The need for support and appreciation from the home front has never been greater.

- ★ With your help, OTA will bring a little bit of “home” to those who serve so far away by fulfilling their “wish lists” and giving them gifts that symbolize our support, appreciation and respect.
- ★ In fact, one of our largest projects next year will be to care for the hundreds of **Pittsburgh troops** in the Pennsylvania National Guard who will **deploy to Afghanistan in January 2010**.
- ★ **This holiday season, won’t you consider adding an American soldier or military unit to your Christmas and holiday gift list by making a donation to OTA?**

Individuals and groups who adopt a unit are under no obligation to raise the full target donation -- there is no such thing as too small or large a contribution. **Every dollar you donate makes a significant impact on the morale of our troops!**

We also encourage you to write cards and letters for your unit of soldiers, which OTA will include with the shipment. Please feel free to include your return address so the soldiers may communicate with you directly!

CHRISTMAS ADOPTION PROGRAM... CONTINUED

We have unit Adoptions available for anywhere between \$150 and \$2100. Here are a few of them:

Mission	Target Donation Amount	Items
Advise and train the Iraqi police	\$160	Snacks, hygiene items, pillows, books
Support Central Command in Iraq, equip troops in the field with needed supplies.	\$200	Sports equipment to provide entertainment and additional exercise during down-time
Perform aerial refueling, aeromedical evacuation and strategic airlift operations. The base also provides support for Coalition personnel and cargo transiting in and out of Afghanistan	\$250	Snacks, hygiene supplies, phone cards
Conduct joint operations with the Iraqi Army to disrupt Al Qaeda's ability to attack and disrupt operations on US forces, Iraqi security forces, and civilians.	\$325	Video game consoles, blankets, sheets, games and toys for local children
Transport supplies and personnel throughout the Afghan theater.	\$950	Cold weather clothing
Conduct intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance operations in Afghanistan.	\$630	Sturdy fire-retardant Nomex® work gloves
Eliminate Taliban influence in Afghanistan	\$1,150	Weight lifting equipment, game consoles and games, multi-tools, pocket knives.
Conduct combined patrols with Iraqi National Police to eliminate insurgent attacks in Baghdad.	\$1,700	Ballistic eye-protective glasses

Please contact Monica Orluk at littlemo34@yahoo.com to obtain your adoption packet or for more information.

Please mail contributions and letters to:

Operation Troop Appreciation
 PO Box 14550
 Pittsburgh, PA 15234

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.

IN THEIR OWN WORDS...

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

Dear Operation Troop Appreciation

I would love to thank you for the packages I passed out some of the games and Sunb food and the package of under shirts and under Armour we really love that from our troops we really thank you from the bottoms of our hearts we think that you guys are the real heroes you love our country just as much as the troops over here fighting to keep it free so again I would like to say thank you very much

Sgt Michael Indelicato

Operation Troop Appreciation!

Thank you so much for thinking of us over here. You have no idea how nice it is to get sports equipment. We do group workouts everyday, & Saturday is our sports day. We've been playing volleyball since we got here (because we had no equipment) but this past Saturday we played soccer with our new ball, & have frisbee planned for next week. You've made our workouts so much more fun. All of us in the CJB
Thank you kindly.
Respectfully, LT Rondaie Bats

Dear Kristen Holloway, Monica Onluk and everyone at Operation Troop Appreciation,

Thank you so much for everything you sent to me and my fellow soldiers. We all truly appreciate everything that you have given us. OTA is an amazing organization that helps out numerous soldiers overseas. I'm still a little shocked that you were able to get everything we asked for. The Wiley X eye protection is great, everybody loves it. The under armor shirts are good since it's so hot. And all the food, DVDs and CDs make our off time even better. Thanks for the amazing support I hope there are a lot of American's that feel the way you do. Thank you so much,
Don Wyant + 1st Platoon
B Troop 2-325 AIR

I would like to personally thank you and everyone in your tremendous organization for all of your support & for all the boxes of wonderful items to help out our wounded warriors. Your support means the world to all of us here. Thank you for taking so much time and putting so much thought into each package. God bless you all. We love all of our angels back home who continue to lift us up each day with their support, love & prayers.

Thank you very much.

Christina J. Wood

Dear Kristen + Monica and all those who volunteer and donate to Operation Troop Appreciation,

Thank you for your hard work and effort to raise the money to give us all free leathermans. That someone would go to all that effort on behalf of us means so much to us. The love you all have for us is the true gift the leatherman is just a really nice bonus and we appreciate you for all you have done and will continue to do for our fellow brethren serving over here and elsewhere. Your letter was also appreciated as it is always great to hear from those that support us back home.

Thank you again for doing all this for us. God bless you all.

- Jeremy Durbin

VETERAN'S LEADERSHIP PROGRAM – HELPING OUR RETURNING HEROES



Did you know while veterans are approximately only nine percent of the population, they account for 26% of the homeless?

It's comforting to know there are resources to help our troops once they return from deployment. Many times, these soldiers face uncertain financial futures, debilitating injuries and a tough transition back to the civilian world.

Founded in 1982, the Veterans Leadership Program of Western Pennsylvania (VLP) is a local non-profit agency that provides essential housing, employment and other vital supportive services to veterans, service members and their families to improve self-sufficiency, sustainability and quality of life. Offering scattered site housing to nearly 100 veterans and their families at any given point in time, VLP is the region's largest provider of subsidized housing for veterans.

Armed with an expansive team that is passionately dedicated to serving our veterans' changing and ever-growing needs, VLP operates out of two site locations – one on the historic South Side of Pittsburgh and the other in Johnstown. The Pittsburgh office currently directs six supportive housing programs for homeless veterans and three employment assistance programs. The Johnstown office focuses its efforts on providing outreach and employment assistance to veterans living within southwestern Pennsylvania's rural communities.

In 2008 alone, VLP performed over 4,800 instances of service to veterans and their family members – an increase of nearly 220% from 2007!

To learn more about VLP's extensive support programs and donation opportunities, please visit the VLP website at www.vlpwpa.org or call Annette Romain, Director of Programs & Development, at (412) 481-8200.

DRAVOSBURG AMERICAN LEGION POST 380 BIKE RUN

They say the third time is a charm, and that is certainly the case with the American Legion's attempt to hold a bike run for OTA.

Rained out on both the original date and the rain date, the run was re-scheduled for October 4th and was a great success. The day was sunny, as bikers rode 85 miles to show support for our troops!

The event raised \$1,000 which was donated to OTA. We would like to extend a very special Thank You to Bill and Dee Lockhart and all the Post 380 Volunteers who worked very hard for months to put on this special event



The tireless volunteers of the American Legion Post 380 put on a fabulous bike run, attended by bikers from across the county.

Dee Lockhart (second from right) and her husband Bill spearheaded the event.

IT'S THAT TIME OF YEAR AGAIN! DONATE TO OTA THROUGH UNITED WAY AND CFC

Did you know you can donate directly to OTA through the United Way and the Combined Federal Campaign?



Simply designate Operation Troop Appreciation on your annual giving contribution form with the following codes:

- ★ United Way Agency #1525287
- ★ CFC Code # 94786 (in Southwest PA and Ohio Valley only)



By supporting OTA with these campaigns, you'll be helping OTA make sure our troops are taken care of throughout 2009.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Mark your calendars and plan to join us for our special holiday event! All upcoming event information is available on our website at www.OperationTroopAppreciation.org

Soldier Wish Tree

Date: Friday, November 13 through December 19 (Saturdays and Sundays)
Place: Mall at Robinson (Robinson Township, PA)



OTA volunteers will be busy helping mall shoppers sign Christmas cards for the troops at the Mall at Robinson, in Robinson Township. Shoppers can also fill the Soldier Wish Tree with "Christmas wish stockings" by making donations for various "wish list" items our troops have requested for the holidays.

Santa arrives on November 13, so it's a great time to come out and help make a soldier's wish come true. Stop by the OTA table, located on the 2nd level near Sears and the National Guard Career Center, on Friday, Nov. 13 and each Saturday and Sunday thereafter until Dec. 19.

SCOOPS FOR TROOPS



SDC Nutrition is a Pittsburgh, PA based company founded by food and fitness experts. Founder and CEO Sean Marzalek believes quality nutrition supplements should be a part of everyone's life, including deployed troops!

That's why he has teamed up with OTA this holiday season to bring these high quality products to our troops overseas. For every About Time Whey Isolate purchase made during November and December, SDC will donate an equal amount of product to OTA. And they will also provide 1 free container for every 32 containers bought outside this special program.



Customers may also donate product directly to OTA by selecting the Whey Product with the OTA logo; SDC will also match these purchases.

For more information and to donate to this great cause, please visit SDC's website at www.TryAboutTime.com

HELPING OUR WOUNDED WARRIORS

OTA was pleased to help some of our bravest returning troops this summer – those recovering at Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington, D.C.

Working with the staff of the Executive Services, OTA sent some special care packages to all the in-patients in the hospital, including gift cards for restaurants and retail businesses. Each of the patients also received letters from OTA staff and volunteers.

One recovering soldier on the receiving end of OTA's outreach commented,

"I want to say Thank You to you and the rest of OTA for your efforts and kindness. I am doing better after several surgeries. Your group's efforts will be used by me and my family when I can get out of here for a day trip."

We were also excited to send special adaptive clothing for amputee patients, which help patients dress themselves more easily and move around with more comfort.

We would like to thank the Executive Services Staff for the assistance in getting these items to the patients. They were a dream to work with, and their concern and passion for their patients is heart-warming.



Walter Reed Army Medical Center

PHILIPS RESPIRONICS RAISES \$6,500 FOR OTA

Last year, employees of Philips Respironics read an article about OTA in *Inspiring Times* magazine. Moved by the efforts of our organization, they formed a committee and contacted OTA to start a troop support project within their company.

Throughout the year, they held special events, designed to raise funds to help our troops while engaging the entire employee base. These events included a Penguin Ticket Raffle, Carnation Sale, and bake sale at their annual employee Summerfest event. The funds raised through Summerfest were matched by Philips and the result was a \$6,506 donation to OTA!

This project is part of OTA's "Adopt A Unit" program and will help in our efforts to support 130 members of the PA National Guard's 107th Field Artillery and 1/110th Infantry (both from Pittsburgh) who will deploy to Afghanistan in January.

On September 24, 2009, OTA VP, Monica Orluk attended the company's monthly business unit meeting where she accepted the donation and presented the company with a flag that was flown on Memorial Day in Kandahar, Afghanistan (a gift from one of the units OTA helped earlier this year).

Thank you to all the employees of Philips Respironics who participated in this project and demonstrated that they are truly *Committed to our Courageous*.



OTA VP Monica Orluk (center) with the Philips Respironics team: left to right is Rich Kardos, Rob Borello, Emily Kaszycki, and Eric Kulikowski.