



OPERATION TROOP APPRECIATION



SPRING 2012 NEWSLETTER



OFFICERS' CORNER

The year 2012 brings new challenges and many changes to our military. This is also true of Operation Troop Appreciation (OTA) and our efforts to support them. Before we dive into the New, let's take a moment to reflect on what we accomplished in 2011:

- Reached and surpassed the 100,000 troop-mark for those who have received gifts from OTA!
- Raised over \$1 million in monetary contributions since our inception in 2004.
- Implemented public visiting hours at our headquarters and military tribute space at Century III Mall in West Mifflin, PA.
- Ensured 98.5 cents of every dollar spent went right to our troops — for the 7th year in a row!

The first two milestones represent the collective efforts and hard work of the hundreds of volunteers, donors and sponsors who work so tirelessly to show their support.

It's important to note that our entire organization is comprised of volunteers. Other non-profits supplement their paid staff with volunteers. OTA has no paid staff and volunteers do it all – from running the business, to packing for the troops, stuffing envelopes, fundraising and even cleaning our space. We are grateful for every contribution of time, talent and treasure which has helped us reach over 100,000 troops and one million dollars.

The third milestone represents our commitment to all those who have served and who serve our country today. Everyone can share in this tribute by visiting our headquarters and military tribute space and seeing the wonderful personal mementos our

veterans have loaned to us for display. What better way to learn about their service than through their personal stories? It gives us the opportunity to connect with our community directly. And we think that connection is what differentiates OTA from many other non-profits. The public gets to see first-hand how we operate and the impact our work has on the military. And that experience simply cannot be described in words. If you haven't paid us a visit, put that on your resolution list for this year!

This leads to the final milestone — our efficiency ratio. Our country continues to face economic challenges as we try to recover from the financial crisis. We are committed to putting as much of your donation dollar as possible into direct funding for troops. We realize that many have less to spend on charity, so it's important that our supporters know that 98.5 cents of every dollar donated to OTA goes directly to the troops.

Compare us to other non-profits and you'll find very few operate at the level of efficiency we do. It's because of our dedicated staff of volunteers and the countless businesses in the Pittsburgh community that provide pro-bono services to us — from accounting, web design and maintenance, to marketing and printing – that enable us to direct almost 100% of every donated dollar directly to the troops like our donors and supporters expect.

Finally, we are very happy that our troops have pulled out of Iraq, but concerned about the misconception that our troops are all coming home. Unfortunately, that is simply not the case. Many of the troops who were

in Iraq remain in Kuwait, waiting for redeployment to Afghanistan where conditions and access to basic supplies is not much better than when our troops first arrived there over 10 years ago.

Other service personnel will continue their deployment in Kuwait or be transferred to other countries in and around the Middle East. Their mission is far from over and we are prepared to continue to provide support to them all, for however long they remain away from home. Our hope is that you'll continue to support OTA in the generous manner you have in the past.

From all of us to all of you, we wish you and yours a year filled with much happiness and many blessings!



Left to right: Kristen Holloway Querriera (Founder and CEO), Monica Orluk (President), Amanda Thompson (Vice President)

Inside this Issue

Soldiers March On	2
Over 100,000 Served	3
Holiday Collections Benefit Thousands of Troops	7
The Pittsburgh Penguins Support Our Heros Ticket Holders Support Wounded Warriors	8
AADE's Troop Support Efforts Eagle Scouts Make a Difference	9
Super Troopers Y-108 Soldier Salute Concert.....	10



SOLDIERS MARCH ON

Every unit we work with is special. We delight in finding just the right kind of winter gloves, warm and comfortable bed sheets, the most useful multi-tools, or the right mix of yummy and nutritional goodies to make each care package we send special. We know there are excited troops on the receiving end who will love tearing into the boxes full of their “wish list” items, and being reminded how many folks back home remember and encourage them every day.

With such dangerous missions, harsh living conditions, and long periods away from home, our troops deserve as much comfort and compassion as we can send. Sometimes a group of soldiers touches our hearts, and one Special Forces group we worked with twice last year is one of those distinctive units.

During the summer, an infantry battalion platoon conducting counter-insurgency operations were in the midst of a long deployment to a remote area in Afghanistan. With no creature comforts and almost no access to basic supplies, we learned these troops could really benefit from

moisture-wicking heat gear shirts, new bedding, sports equipment, an acoustic guitar, a video gaming system and TV. We sent the items right away and the troops were thrilled! We received emails indicating how much the items helped with morale and with mental decompression after long, dirty, dangerous days on patrol.

In November, we received the horrible news from our unit’s point-of-contact that their base was attacked while they were out on a mission. They returned to discover their Morale and Welfare tent, which included housing for six soldiers, had burned to the ground. Fortunately, no one was injured.



Along with their personal effects, the TV and video gaming console we sent were also destroyed. The men got together and split up whatever extra blankets, pillows, and other necessities the six Soldiers needed. Lost in the fire were two personal Mini Laptops, four iPods, two ebook readers, and one acoustic guitar.

The loss of these items was more tragic because they also lost the only means of maintaining contact with loved ones through email, and morale-boosting items that help take their minds off the danger and loneliness faced every day.

Through generous donations from the University of Pittsburgh Staff Association Council, and other groups who sponsored this unit, OTA was able to replace all of the lost equipment these troops treasured for family connectedness, down time, and entertainment.

Tragically, these soldiers faced an even more devastating loss on Christmas Day when one of their own was killed in an attack. Our hearts and prayers are with the family of the fallen soldier, and with his brothers-in-arms who remember him every day.

We can never take away their pain. We can only pray that they will return home soon, safe and sound, to the embrace of their loved ones after a job well done. May God bless them.

Over 100,000 Served...

It's hard to believe that OTA has now helped over 100,000 members of the United States military! And we are happy to have been able to share this milestone at a celebratory event held at our operations center at Century III Mall, West Mifflin, Pa.



The celebration included US Army Reserve Sergeant Bob Timney's moving performance of the National Anthem, and the Keystone Young Marines presenting both the colors and a heartwarming tribute to POWs and MIAs.

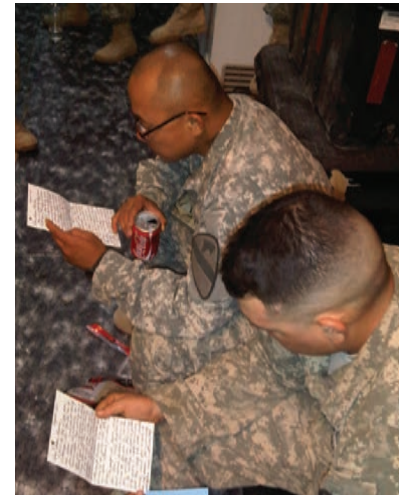


The Keystone Young Marines presented a moving POW / MIA ceremony at the start of the day's celebration

OTA founder and CEO, Kristen Holloway, provided an update on our efforts, sharing poignant stories of our troops and the units we've helped. We also recognized the

tremendous efforts of our "Super Trooper" volunteers and community supporters whose dedication has impacted over 100,000 lives.

On the following pages, you will see how the letters, emails and pictures from troops on the receiving end of OTA say it all. And the sincerity of their words melts our hearts.



Troops reading letters included in OTA's care packages.



SendOutCards

Do you have a family member stationed overseas? Wouldn't it be nice to create your very own greeting card with personal pictures, text, message, artwork or other special items to send to them or another special someone?

Well, Send Out Cards allows you to do just that with a few clicks of a mouse!

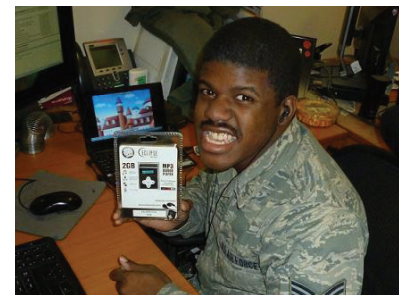
- Log in and select one of 15,000 cards from the online card catalogue (or create one of your own using your own pictures).
- Type a heartfelt message (this can also be done in your own handwriting).

- Add a gift if you wish, like brownies, a gift basket or other special items.
- Hit "Send."

That's it! Send Out Cards will then print a REAL card, stuff it in a REAL envelope, affix a first class stamp on it, and mail it out the very next day - all for about a buck.

This is NOT an e-card. It is a physical card you can hold in your hand. This is the same card you would buy in the store for \$3-\$5.

Learn more at SendOutCards.com



Lieutenant Colonel David Giles (second from left) worked with OTA to support his troops in Afghanistan. LTC Giles is from the South Hills of Pittsburgh.

FROM THE FRONT LINES



Kristen and Operation Troop Appreciation Volunteers:

Thanks so much for the care packages you sent to my unit here in Afghanistan. You really raised the morale level and brought a lot of smiles to our troops. We appreciate the thoughtfulness and kindness that you have sent our way. Hand sanitizers, books, CD's and Snacks...were well appreciated. The notes and encouragement from the kids was a special bonus that lifted everyone's spirits.

I just want to thank you for making our day so bright. I pray God blesses you for your kindness, generosity, and efficiency. You are really special.

And a note of thanks to Nate for writing to us, if I could trouble you to forward the included response letter to him. You guys are the greatest.

Thanks again,

Thank you

[Signature]
MSgt Seng Thong
455 EAMXS First Sergeant
Bagram Airfield, Afghanistan

Thank-You So much
David A Vargas

Thank You All so much!
Your support means
A lot to us!
[Signature]

Thanks for your support All time!

Thank you for your support and generosity!

Thank you very much

Mike S. Johnson

Thank you for your support!
Mike Johnson

Thank you for supporting US

Thank you!

Thank you for everything!

Thank for our support

Thank you so much xoxo
& Cherie

Appreciate the support

Thanks so much
[Signature]

Thank You for your support
[Signature]

Thanks!!

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT

Thank You Very Much!!
Thanks for the support
D. Henry

Thanks for the support

Thank you for everything it means very much!

Thank you so much!
Mud! We appreciate it!
It Means

Thank you for all your support

Kristen,
Thank you very much for the care packages. The guys really loved the Under Armour Shirts. They were perfect for the hot Doha weather. I hope you, and your friends & family have a wonderful holiday. I enclosed a few pictures and a letter from all of us in Africa. I hope you will keep in touch.

-OS'(sw) Randy Norbert, USA



Have a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!
From all of us at The Combined Joint Task Force Horn of Africa



FROM THE FRONT LINES

Kristen,

Thank you for including
OSI Neihart April Operation
Troop Appreciation! He gave me
one to me (under man)

As some product

Thank You For All you
Do Supporting All Deployed
Troops!

Mark



We here at Job Farah chapel
would like to thank you for the lights
May God continue to bless you
Signed on behalf of chaplain Rod Gillie
and all of Task Force Wrester
Job Farah, Afghanistan

Kristen,

My son Sean told me that he
received a care package in
Afghanistan from Operation Troop
Appreciation in Pittsburgh. It
didn't surprise me that such a
caring organization would be in
the greatest city in America. My
husband & I are both from the South
Hills of Pittsburgh and even though
we have been away from the city
for awhile (my husband is retired
Navy) our families are still there
and we consider it home!

This is Sean's first deployment
and I know he appreciates
any gifts from "home." I send
him any articles from our
Virginia newspaper about the
Steelers, because he always
wants to know how they played
each week! — Thank you so
much again — keep up the good
work! Sincerely, Judy Simcik



DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY

29 DECEMBER 2011


Dear Monica and Kristen,

I want to take the opportunity to thank you for your continued support for the Soldiers across the miles. Specifically, the leaders on my 207th Corps Validations Transition Team. We have spent many long months away from our family and friends defending our country and strengthening countries such as Afghanistan and Iraq and doing what we know is right. Your gifts of cookies, books shaving materials and MWR items were greatly appreciated.

Our mission here in Afghanistan involves working with the Afghan National Security Forces—their Army and Police organizations. We are in charge of assessing the readiness of these units for all of the western part of the country. It is a rewarding job to watch these units develop as they begin to take over the lead role in operations on the battlefield. As they become closer to their country's goal of establishing a strong independent military, we are assured that our service members deployed to the Middle East in support of Operation Enduring Freedom will be able to return home soon, knowing that our mission was accomplished.

There a few words to describe our appreciation to what you back home are trying to accomplish by coming together as a family to support us. Your generosity and gratitude are exceptionally heartwarming. It means the world to all of us that you are willing to invest your time, money, and resources during the busy holiday season in order to remind us that we are not forgotten. We continue to cherish and enjoy these gestures and gifts as we receive them from you and hope that one day we may all be home to celebrate the season together.

Although we would all rather be at home for Christmas, there are a few perks that come with being deployed during the holidays. When we are stateside, we scatter to our various home towns to rejoin our families on typical vacation trips. Here in Afghanistan, we enjoy the time to step back from our mission's focus to reflect on our team's accomplishments in the year passing. The camaraderie and esprit de corps that holds us together on the battlefield provides us with exceptional friendship and trust. We enjoy sharing our stories and experiences together with the privilege of spending this year's holiday season with the friends we will keep forever as the brothers-in-arms that we have proudly served with. Again, thank you for your continuous support for Soldiers deployed and reminding us why America is so great. Happy Holidays and have a wonderful New Year.


FREDRICK A. SANTIAGO
MAJ, LG
Commanding



FROM THE FRONT LINES

Dear Volunteers of Operation Troop Appreciation
 My Female Engagement Team Marines
 recieved items from some of the
 awesome care packages you sent.
 Thank you so much! It is so nice
 to know that people back home
 are think about us. We are looking
 forward to being home soon!

Thanks Again!
 1st Lt Melissa Elyewen



Dear Kristen and OTA team,
 Thank you very much for the
 generous and thoughtful items
 you sent the Marines of FOB
 Edinburgh. We are grateful for
 your support out here. My
 detachment provides over watch
 of the Marines on daily patrols,
 convoys and other operations
 via the Scanegie unmanned aerial
 vehicle. I hope all is well back
 home with you. Sincerely, Capt Paul Pinter
 USMC

I want to start this letter, saying THANK YOU!!!
 Thanks a lot for taking the time and be so kind, by
 thinking about us soldiers. Is greatly appreciated. When
 I saw that box and the stuff that were inside of
 it, I got on my knees and started looking throug it, I
 felt like a child in christmas day. I was really excited
 grabbing stuff.

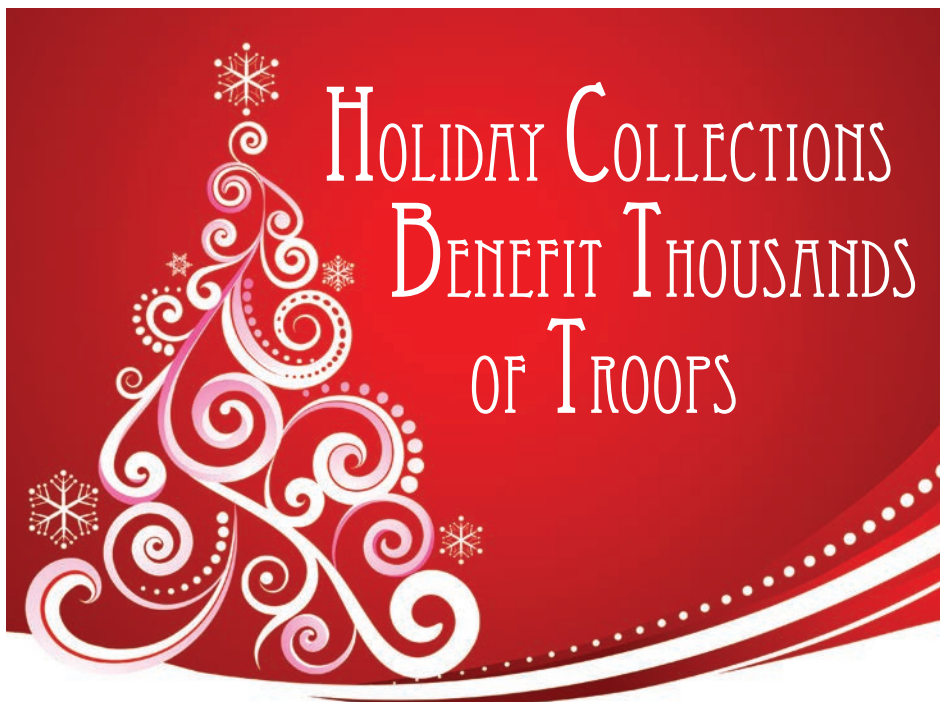
I grabbed a thank you letter from the box and
 read what lil Kirsten wrote. And all I can say is that
 we are here doing our best for our country. And
 hope we go back home soon and safe to our love
 ones.

Keep doing that magnificent work, believe me
 is amazing what yall do. And we feel alot of
 happiness and love from everybody back home. When
 we received this kind of gifts.

Thaks again. Have a bless day.

- SPC Escobar, cyd
 Iraq





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, Sailors, Airmen and Marines at Christmas.

We are incredibly fortunate to have a great support network of corporations, individuals, schools, churches, and families who sponsored 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 the Airmen of 877 EPBS and so many other troops.

From: DJ Derek
To: Kristen Holloway
Subject: Re: holiday items on the way from OTA!

We received the packages, and HOLY COW!!!! You just gave our unit Christmas. Done deal. What an amazing gift. Never would we have thought we'd have a tree with ALL the trimmings. It's amazing. I think it's going to be a better tree than I've ever had at home. Plus, the kids cards were great as well. I'm going to put them under the tree for all the guys. This was really a great thing you have done for us. From the bottom of our hearts, thank you so much!!!

Sincerely, SSgt Derek Egerman and the 877 EPBS



Mohawk Elementary students, under the direction of Beth Simari, collected a two truckloads of much-needed hygiene, snacks, entertainment and other items for OTA. The students also made hundreds of home-made Christmas and holiday cards to include in care packages going to troops in Afghanistan.

OTA Board member and Army National Guard Staff Sergeant Matthew (back right) Claycomb celebrated the school's success on Veteran's Day.

Santa's Little Helpers

3 Rivers Leatherneck
 Arrowood at Southwestern
 Bay Valley Foods Retail Sales Planning
 Boston Shoppes
 Bower Hill Community Church
 Boy Scouts of Grove city
 Brownie Troop 54008
 C.J. Thomas Screening Inc.
 Career Systems Development Corp
 Chartiers Valley Intermediate School
 Circleview United Methodist Church
 City of Bridges Chiropractic
 Clearview Federal Credit Union
 Commercial Employees Inc.
 Cub Scout Pack 870
 Del Monte Foods
 Direct Energy
 Duncan Comics Books and Accessories
 Enterprise Rent a Car
 F/K Industries Inc.
 Fairview Services Plan
 Foerster Instruments
 Grove City Area Middle School
 Holy Angels Church
 Homeville Elementary School
 Howard Hanna Moon Township
 Ideal Integrations Inc.
 Intergroup Communications
 IUP, Chrissy Young
 Korean War Veterans Association
 L.D. Astorino Companies
 Lincoln Place Presbyterian Church
 Lincoln School and
 Jefferson Middle School
 MOAA Pittsburgh Chapter
 Mohawk Elementary School
 Pittsburgh Job Corps Center
 PPG McCandless Customer Service Dept.
 Prime Communications
 Private James Perry VFW Post
 Richland Elementary
 Squirrel Hill Christian Church
 St. Mary of Assumption
 St. Sebastian's Catholic church
 Sunnyside Properties
 The Catanese Group
 Thorndale United Methodist Church
 Travis Manion Foundation
 United Healthcare
 University of Pittsburgh
 Staff Association Council
 UPMC - McKeesport Nurses
 UPMC Presbyterian Hospital
 Valassis Direct Mail
 VFW Post 191 Canonsburg, Pa
 Walsh Collis & Blackmer LLC
 Washington and Jefferson College
 Men's Lacrosse Team
 Waynesburg University, Chi Sigma Iota
 Westinghouse Electric Company
 Wiener Goodman and Company PC
 Winthrop Management

The PITTSBURGH PENGUINS

“Support Our Heroes”



Sidney Crosby signs autographs for a Wounded Warrior

OTA is honored to have been selected as one of four regional charities to benefit from the Pittsburgh Penguins “Support Our Heroes” campaign held this fall.

Personal donations made by hockey game spectators and individuals in the Pittsburgh community were matched by Allegheny Technologies, Inc. (ATI) and First Niagara Bank.

The program also benefitted the Wounded Warrior Project, Ronald McDonald House of Pittsburgh and the Penguins Foundation, and resulted in over \$100,000 in monetary donations shared by the charities.

The “Support Our Heroes” program ran from October 20th through November 11th, culminating in an on-ice check presentation to the recipient charities prior to the Penguins game on Veteran’s Day.

Members of the military and Wounded Warrior Project were invited to games on October 20th and November 11th and were treated to Zamboni rides during the games. The Penguins also hosted a number of military members and wounded warriors at the Pens’ morning skate on Veteran’s Day. The soldiers and veterans enjoyed

breakfast, player practice, a visit to the locker room, and were greeted by Mario Lemieux and Sidney Crosby. Each soldier also received a personalized jersey presented by members of the team and Coach Balsyma.



The soldiers wearing their custom Penguin jerseys – in the Penguins’ locker room

OTA sends a big THANK YOU to the Pittsburgh Penguins, ATI, First Niagara, McDonalds, and the Pittsburgh community for your most generous support!

STEELER SEASON TICKET HOLDERS SUPPORT WOUNDED WARRIORS THROUGH OTA!

While OTA’s primary mission is to help troops who are serving on active deployments, we also work to support the wounded warriors who have returned home. And through the generous support of a number of Steeler season ticket holders (who wish to remain anonymous), OTA



Photos top to bottom:

Dan and Lauren Kernan were able to attend their first Pittsburgh Steelers football game. Dan, a Pennsylvania National Guardsman, was wounded in Afghanistan.

Captain Anthony Kennedy served in Iraq on 2 deployments and is pictured with daughter, Gennaveve.

was able to provide tickets to some wounded warriors this past season!



Those injured in combat face many challenges when they return home. Going to a football game is a rare treat and helps to provide some well-deserved R&R to some very grateful soldiers.

Thank you to those who donated tickets and to our friends who graciously shared their photos! These smiles tell quite a story, don’t they?



AADE's Troop Support Efforts are Right on Target!

In October, the Appalachian Basin Chapter of the American Association of Drilling Engineers (AADE) hosted the third "Shooting for our Troops" competition at Anthony Arms and Accessories Shooting Center in West Mifflin, PA.

OTA volunteers were on hand to talk to attendees about OTA's mission, and ways to help support our deployed service members. OTA

Vice President Amanda Thompson and Board Member Staff Sergeant Matt Claycomb also joined in the shooting competition.

Paul Mitsch, OTA's Director of Business Development, attended AADE's Fall 2011 business meeting where he accepted AADE's check to OTA of \$10,000 resulting from the shooting competition.

OTA is so grateful for the continued support of the wonderful members of AADE who have helped OTA support our troops. Since 2010, AADE has donated \$30,000 to OTA.



AADE President John Applegath (right) presents Paul Mitsch (center) with a \$10,000 check from the proceeds of the shoot to OTA.



Eagle Scouts Make a Difference for Our Troops

One of the greatest opportunities OTA Officers have is working with youth in our community. This past fall, two exceptional young men chose support the troops through OTA for their Eagle Scout projects.



Ben standing in front of the boxes of items he collected for the troops.

Ben Brownfield from Bethel Park, PA, concluded his project in October, after having collected over \$2000 in donations and 1100 pounds of supplies that were shipped to Army and Marine units in Afghanistan. Ben also collected over 130 cards and letters of appreciation from the community to send in his care packages.

OTA recognized Ben's efforts at the 100,000th Soldier party in November, by presenting him with a Certificate of Appreciation. Ben also received many Thank You letters from the troops he helped.

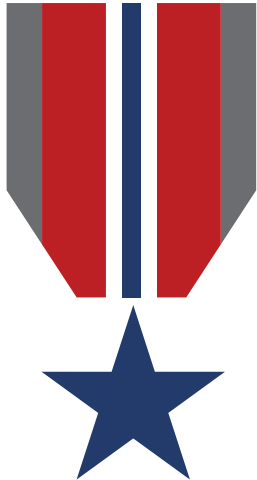
Will Sheffield from Tyler, Texas, also did a great job with his Eagle Scout collection drive project. Will shipped

OTA 13 boxes of much needed sports equipment, hygiene and snack items for the troops, just in time for Christmas. Will also raised over \$1,000 in monetary donations which helped to offset the cost of shipping.

Both of these young Boy Scouts' projects greatly exceeded our expectations. OTA is proud to work with these remarkable young men who are leading the next generation by their selfless example.



*OTA says
"Thank you"
to its
SUPER
TROOPERS*



One of the things that makes OTA special is our 100% volunteer staff. Every OTA officer, board member and helper is a volunteer, and in 2011, OTA volunteers worked over 5,586 hours. Each and every volunteer contributes their unique gifts and skills to help OTA run smoothly.

To recognize their hard work and dedication to the troops, OTA instituted the "Super Trooper" award.

Recipients in 2011 included: Don and Bonnie Wilson, Barb Mead, Kathie Gasior, Amy Hess, Barb Shawhan, the Handshue family, Tricia Staley, Sarah Cannon, Kim Butler, Matthew Claycomb and Carol Hamilton.

Recipients of the "Super Trooper" award will have their pictures displayed at OTA Headquarters in the "Volunteer Hall of Fame."



Pictured above are Kim Butler and SSG Matthew Claycomb, two of OTA's many Super Troopers.

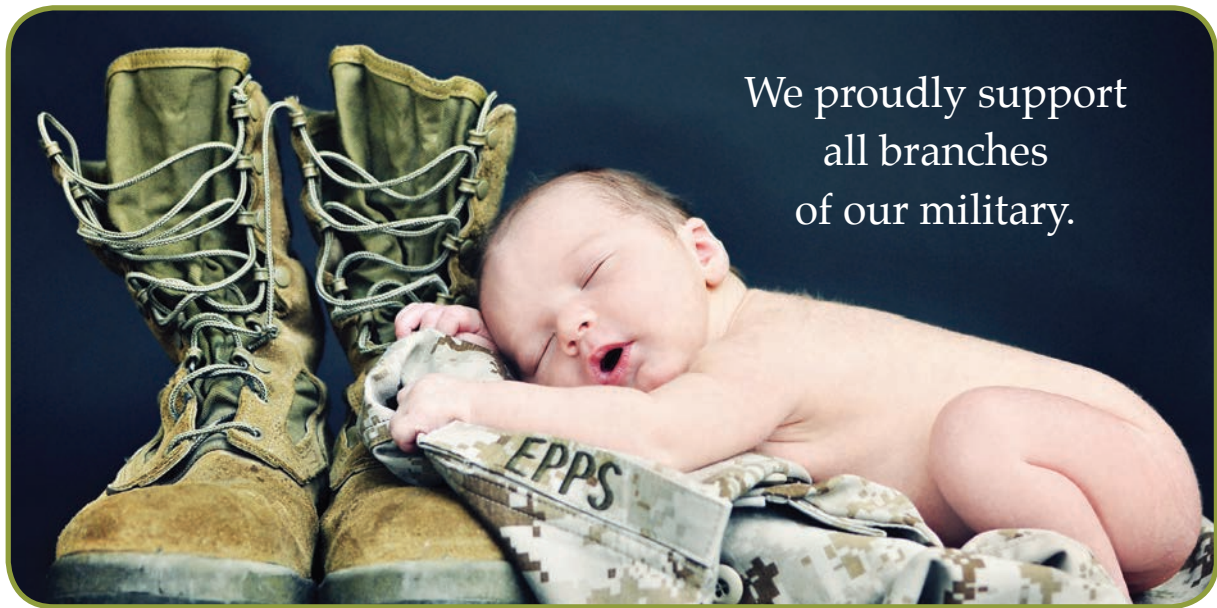
Y-108 Soldier Salute Concert Featuring Uncle Kracker



OTA President Monica Orluk presents Uncle Kracker with an OTA Certificate of Appreciation for his support of our troops.

Y-108, People's Natural Gas and the Pepsi Roadhouse joined forces to salute the troops on December 16th. This special night featured performances by Pittsburgh's own The Stickers, Chris Cagle and Uncle Kracker, and benefitted Operation Troop Appreciation.

Soldiers and their families met with Uncle Kracker backstage and concert-goers filled a Mini-Cooper with items donated to OTA. Thank you to all who made this a wonderful night for our troops!

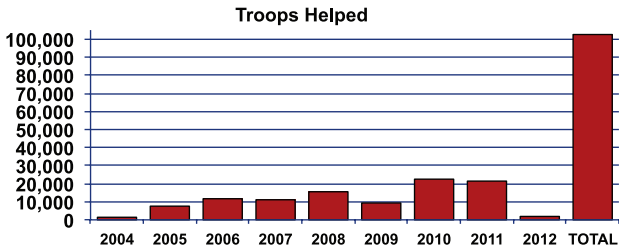


We proudly support
all branches
of our military.



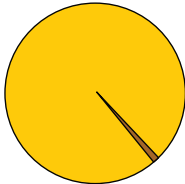
Please remember, there are troops deployed all over the world. Operation Troop Appreciation is always in need of donated items to fulfill our troops' "wish list" requests. If you, your company, church, school or civic group are in the Pittsburgh area and would like to hold a collection or fundraising drive for OTA, please contact us. Groups and individuals nationwide can also sponsor a unit as part of a fundraising effort.

Please contact Vice President Amanda Thompson for a list of needed items, collection guidelines, and sponsorship information at info@OperationTroopAppreciation.org.



Because of the generous support of our donors, more than 100,000 troops have received "wish list" items from OTA.

Direct
Support to
Troops
98.5%



OTA is an all-volunteer organization with minimal overhead expenses. As a result, 98.5 cents of every dollar we have spent since our inception in 2004 has gone directly to our troops. Very few charities can boast this high efficiency rate.

