



**KRISTEN'S CORNER**

**Summer 2009**

**Dear OTA Volunteers, Supporters and Friends,**

We reached a significant milestone on July 1<sup>st</sup> as we celebrated our five-year anniversary as Operation Troop Appreciation.

Monica Orluk and I met on the Fourth of July, 2004, just three days after OTA became operational, and since then we've welcomed hundreds of volunteers and friends into the OTA family.

We've come so far since those early days when we first provided Under Armour® shirts and socks for the 420 soldiers of the 1-201<sup>st</sup> Field Artillery of the West Virginia National Guard.

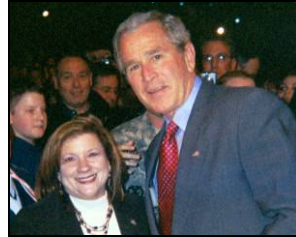
Since then, more than **52,000 troops** in over 800 deployed units throughout Iraq, Afghanistan, Kuwait, Qatar, the Horn of Africa, and Kosovo have received random acts of kindness and "wish list" gifts from OTA – ranging from mine detectors, weight-lifting equipment, ballistics eye protective glasses, phone cards, Christmas trees, even a swimming pool, to simple pleasures from home like favorite snacks, blankets, personal care items and DVDs.

We've been honored on two separate occasions by **President George W. Bush**, met notable figures such as **Dick Cheney**, **Joint Chief of Staff Peter Pace**, and **General David Petraeus** (Commander of the coalition forces in Iraq).

I married the love of my life, **Captain Charles Querriera**, whom I met shortly after OTA provided "wish list" items of children's clothing and shoes to him for his soldiers to give out to the local Iraqi children. We married last June.

With the dedication of our talented and passionate volunteers, we've conducted four annual golf outings, three annual Veteran's Day 5K races, bike runs, concerts and dozens of collection drives and fundraisers, while ensuring **98.5 cents of every dollar we spend** goes directly to our troop programs.

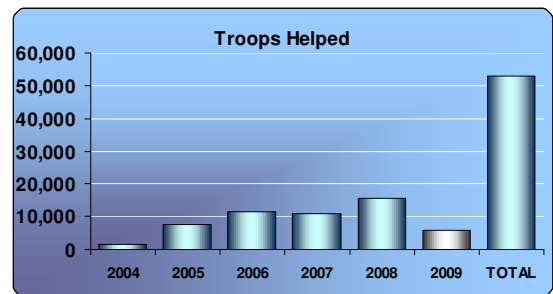
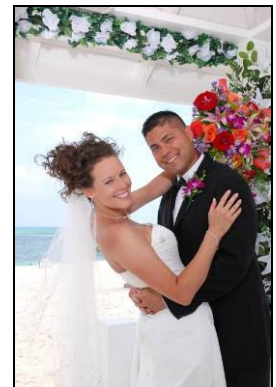
Our favorite invitations for **connecting with our military** are marching with local soldiers in the annual **St. Patrick's Day Parade** in downtown Pittsburgh for the past four years, and cheering our returning troops at their **Homecoming parties**. We've been honored to attend four of these events and can't wait to do so again when the 56<sup>th</sup> Stryker Brigade comes home later this fall.



*Monica (left) and Kristen (right) are honored by President Bush in March 2006 and September 2008)*



*Captain Charles Querriera in Iraq in 2005; we married June 14, 2008.*



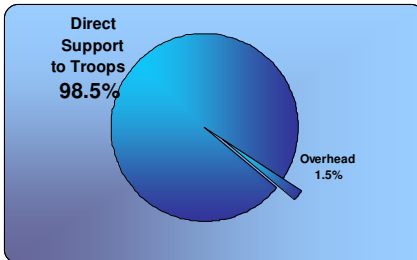
*OTA has provided "wish list" items for more than 52,000 troops since our inception in July 2004.*

Reflecting on all we've accomplished, we know how fortunate we are to help our troops feel the love, support and appreciation from so many miles away, and encourage them in the successful and safe completion of their missions. Our troops provide the opportunity to help; our generous and dedicated volunteers, donors and sponsors provide us the means, and we are honored to be able to bring these parties together.



**Local soldiers and OTA volunteers at the 2009 St. Patrick's Day Parade.**

On behalf of Vice President Monica Orluk and our Board of Directors, we thank all of you who have provided encouragement and your generous support of our efforts for the past five years. And we look forward to all that we will accomplish in the years to come.



Sincerely,

Kristen Holloway  
President and Founder

## OTA PROUDLY SUPPORTS THE 56<sup>TH</sup> STRYKER BRIGADE COMBAT TEAM

We've been fortunate to be able to support our local service men and women who have been deployed since January with the 56th Stryker Brigade Combat Team (SBCT).

A proud part of the 28th Infantry Division, of Pennsylvania's own National Guard, the 56th SBCT is the nation's only reserve component Stryker BCT in existence. This prestigious unit is composed of 100% Pennsylvanians.

Throughout the year, we've provided "wish list" items for almost 1,000 of our fellow Pennsylvanian soldiers, and we will be glad to welcome them home later this year when they return from duty.

In our last newsletter, we announced a very special Unit Adoption Program, developed to support these men and women from our neighborhoods. Many of you, individuals and companies alike, took up the challenge and donated thousands of dollars to ensure these soldiers received the tactical, safety, and morale-boosting items they needed throughout their deployment.

We'd like to share with you the faces of your neighbor-soldiers who you so generously supported and encouraged with your gifts.



**These Soldiers of HHC 1-111th Infantry received hand held games, and a camcorder they used to record themselves reading to their children on DVDs they sent home.**



**OTA sent these Soldiers of A Co, 2-112<sup>th</sup> these Wiley X eye protective glasses, as well as Under Armour shirts and Nomex gloves.**

... MORE OF THE 56TH STRYKER BRIGADE...



*These Soldiers of the 56<sup>th</sup> Stryker Brigade show off the Steelers memorabilia we sent them.*



*These troops of A Company, 2-112<sup>th</sup> Infantry received boots and shemaghs (special head and face scarves) to shield them from the blowing desert sands.*



*OTA sent the soldiers of B Company 2-112<sup>th</sup> Infantry knives and GPSs to aid them in their security missions around Baghdad.*



*These soldiers of B Co, 1-112<sup>th</sup> Infantry were thrilled with the Under Armour shirts we sent them.*



*OTA sent these soldiers of the 2-112<sup>th</sup> Infantry pocket knives and Under Armour shirts.*



*Soldiers of the 1-111<sup>th</sup> Infantry patrol the street of Baghdad to protect the local citizens and troops serving there.*

## ENERGY DRINKS GIVE THE TROOPS A BOOST



Since last summer, Ed and Michelea Helbling of **8eglobal** have been coordinating efforts between local companies, individuals and OTA to supply healthy energy drinks to our troops. After conducting a taste test with local soldiers preparing to deploy to Iraq, they used soldier feedback to determine which **XS Energy Drink** flavors they would concentrate on providing to OTA.

Ed and Michelea collect donations from around the community to purchase the drinks, and they and their dedicated volunteers help get these drinks to OTA for inclusion in our troop care packages.

Prized for its healthy attributes – **these all-natural drinks have zero carbohydrates, zero sugar and only 8 calories** – XS Energy Drinks are very popular alternatives for our troops who are trying to stay healthy, fit and hydrated in a very severe environment. When summer temperatures approach 130 degrees Fahrenheit in Iraq and Afghanistan, these drinks can prevent serious heat casualties from overtaking our troops.

Local companies and individuals have contributed generously to provide hundreds of cases of these delicious drinks to OTA.

We would like to thank **Ed and Michelea Helbling**, these generous **individual and company donors** and **volunteers** for supplying XS Energy Drinks to our troops...



*Ed and Michelea Helbling conduct a taste test with local Pittsburgh soldiers during a drill weekend at Hunt Armory.*

Artex Designs  
 Berryman Foods  
 Haysel Brown  
 Stephanie Burner  
 Jeffrey and Susan Campbell  
 Artilo and Kathleen Campisano  
 Lawrence and Diane Chandler  
 Lauren Conway  
 Talmadge and Margaret Dean  
 William and Tamela Deemer  
 Barb and Rich Drost

Valerie Enslin  
 Robert and Cynthia Famiglietti  
 K.E. Gallo  
 Lisa Gardner  
 D and R Harper  
 Dean Hoover  
 Ibis Tek  
 Crystal Lockwich  
 George and Bonnie Milich  
 Off-Hours Computing  
 Gerri Opat

Michele Opat  
 Clarence and Marlene Passmore  
 Pamela and Richard Picozzi  
 Pro-Trucks Inc.  
 Robert and Doris Rasch  
 Rob's Pizza  
 St. Andrew Orthodox Church  
 Synergy Group Inc.  
 James Wargo  
 Joseph Wargo

If you would like to contribute to this special project, please contact Ed and Michelea at [ehelbling@8eglobal.com](mailto:ehelbling@8eglobal.com)

## WE ARE COMMITTED TO OUR COURAGEOUS...

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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 that raise their morale and aid in the success and safety of their missions, we present a united front to our deployed military by supporting them as individuals, for 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.

## THE 4TH ANNUAL OTA CHARITY GOLF OUTING

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Golfers and OTA supporters came together once again for the Fourth Annual OTA golf outing.

The outing was held at the Hickory Heights Golf Club, Bridgeville, PA, and proved to be the best outing yet! Under sunny skies and cool conditions, our golfers enjoyed a wonderful day of golf while demonstrating support for our deployed soldiers.

An awards ceremony and silent auction were held during the banquet dinner following the golf game, extending the festivities well into the evening. OTA volunteers gave prizes to the top foursomes and the winners of the hole challenges. Golfers also had the opportunity to win raffle prizes, door prizes and participate in a silent auction.

We thank the following for the dedication of their time and talents, and for making this event an amazing success.

- ★ **Golf Committee members** B.J. Schneider, Sue Bott, Stacy Norman and Gary Storie, and our top-notch volunteers worked tirelessly to help make this event a success.
- ★ Peg Chabala of **Peg's Pulled Pork**, for provided a delicious lunch for the golfers prior to tee-off.
- ★ The **Hickory Heights Golf Club**, owner Sam Depe, and his wonderfully attentive staff provided a beautiful and challenging venue and all the services and amenities to make the day enjoyable for golfers and volunteers alike.
- ★ Adam Fitz of **Highland Laurel Gallery** in Beaver, PA, donated beautiful artwork for the silent auction during the awards banquet.
- ★ Frank, Mark and Lynn Caputo, of **1st and Goal Sports**, contributed fabulous sports memorabilia items for silent auction.
- ★ Many **corporate and individual sponsors** supported us with their generosity. We especially thank our Platinum Level Sponsors (\$2000) **Lionsgate Entertainment** and **Fiserv**.

We are grateful to the many sponsors, golfers and volunteers who worked so hard to make this event a success. We are already planning next year's outing, so stay tuned for details!



*Mike Sarsfield, golfing with Lionsgate Entertainment, enjoys his day on the greens.*



*OTA's volunteers worked throughout the day to provide a pleasant day for the golfers.*

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

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Mark your calendars and plan to join us for these special events! Event information is available on our website at [www.OperationTroopAppreciation.org](http://www.OperationTroopAppreciation.org)

### OTA Guest Bartending

Date: August 5, following the 7:05 pm Pirate's Game

Place: Calico Jack's, next to PNC Park on Pittsburgh's North Side



Join OTA and guest bartending Soldiers and Marines at this unique fundraiser! Purchase OTA "Defending Freedom" wristbands at the door and enjoy \$1 drafts, served to you by Pittsburgh's finest military service personnel. A \$5 cover provides entertainment and fun until 2 a.m.

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### Kumite Classic, Pittsburgh Hilton Hotel

Date: August 21-23

Place: Downtown Pittsburgh Hilton



The prestigious **Kumite Classic** is the only event of its kind showcasing multiple sports and fitness events all under one roof. OTA will be on hand accepting donations and encouraging visitors to sign Thank You cards for the troops. For more information, please visit [www.kumiteclassic.com](http://www.kumiteclassic.com)

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### Dravosburg American Legion Auxiliary Post 380 Bike Run

Date: September 26 (registration at 10:30 am). Rainedate is September 27

Place: Legion Post at 51 Duquesne Avenue, Dravosburg, PA 15034



The Dravosburg American Legion is hosting a bike run to support OTA. The run will include two stops. Biker fee for the run is \$20 per bike, \$10 per rider. Coffee and donuts will be provided prior to the run with a full buffet upon return to the Legion post. For more information contact Bill Lockhart, 412-877-6872.

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### 4th Annual Veteran's Day 5K Race

Date: November 8, 9 a.m.

Place: Hampton Community Park in Allison Park, PA



Get ready for the Fourth Annual OTA Veterans Day 5K Race! Enjoy great entertainment before, during and after the race. Runners will receive well-stuffed goody bags, race t-shirts, awards for top 3 finishers in each of 13 age groups, terrific door prizes, and an All-American Post-Race Buffet.

But the best part is that all proceeds will be used to provide Christmas care packages for our troops serving in Iraq and Afghanistan. So grab your walking or running shoes and join us!

## IN THEIR OWN WORDS...

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

I received the box of generous donations today in the mail and on behalf of the men from Aco. 2-112th Infantry Black Platoon I'd like to thank you all.

The cards were a warm and a well needed boost in morale and we greatly appreciate them. The assortment of snacks and baby wipes along with the energy drinks have been passed out and shared with many.

We all greatly appreciate the thoughts, prayers and support that each and every one of you offer. Again I'd like to Thank You for everything.

~ *Specialist A.G.*

We received the package today. THANK YOU. My guys were very excited.

Your package is the only care package that we have received. Thank you for not forgetting about us.

~*Captain F. W.*

Please pass on our gratitude to your staff and all involved. This is huge. A lot of Marines out here tend to identify people back home with what we see on TV out here and it's a wonderful thing to realize that not all Americans have forgotten the need for us to be here. Thank you all so very much for your generosity and support.

~*Staff Sergeant B.S.*

I am very thankful as well as the rest of my squad for your dedication to what you do for us soldiers out here.

We received your box and were very surprised at how diverse it was. It had a little bit of everything which was able to be enjoyed by all.

To all your staff and donors, we thank you!

God Bless.

~ *Specialist F. R.*

We got your boxes, and let me tell you, the look on the soldiers faces when I handed them the Under Armour t-shirts and fans, well, it said it all, they are very happy with them. I thank you very much for the items.

Thank You for sending the care packages. To see my soldiers happy, and their morale skyrocket, well, that is better than anything, and it was needed. I think since we moved to the new base, the morale of the soldiers has gone down, and getting stuff like what you sent, brings their morale back up.

Just knowing that someone out there cares enough to go and purchase this stuff and send it to soldiers that you don't know, it really brings a smile to their faces. Thank you so much.

~ *Sergeant First Class A.D.*

Again I would like to thank you for your support of the troops, and the support and dedication for my troops.

Again my medics can't thank you enough for the medic bags, they absolutely love them. I saw one the other day wiping his bag off from the dust and dirt and not even himself or any other piece of equipment. So they love the bags!

~ *Sergeant T.C.*

From the moment my troops and I opened the box, a sense of pride and importance and love from home filled the air around us.

On behalf of the Soldiers in the Multi-National Corps-Iraq Band and my Chamber Ensemble Detachment, I'd like to express my sincere appreciation for the wonderful gifts of snacks, drinks and hygiene items.

It is organizations like yours that help deployed troops, sailors, airmen, and Department of Defense civilians cope with all the trials and tribulations of war by staying connected back at home.

Items like the ones you have sent to us help instill motivation, strength of mind, and happiness in all deployed service men and women no matter where they are stationed.

~ *Sergeant First Class F.G.*

## ANIMAL FRIENDS AND OTA JOIN FORCES!



Sixty-six years ago, at the height of World War II, a small group of Pittsburgh citizens came together in an effort to find homes for soldiers' pets when they left to serve in the war.

Today, Animal Friends runs a no-kill shelter in Pittsburgh's North Side to find forever homes for misplaced pets all over the Pittsburgh area. And they've continued their original wartime tradition by joining OTA in helping deployed K-9 units serving in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Our first joint project with Animal Friends was to provide food, toys and treats for CSM Bagger, a K-9 search and rescue dog who was injured in the line of duty in Iraq. Since that time, OTA and Animal Friends have worked hard to support our troops and the K-9 animals that help them with two very special events.

### **"Mutt Strut"**

The Animal Friends Mutt Strut event took place Memorial Day weekend on the North Shore of Pittsburgh (pictured right). This annual event began with the 316th Expeditionary Sustainment Command, Army Reserves Honor Guard, followed by a one-mile pet walk along the river.

Attending canines provided paw prints for Thank You posters which OTA shipped to deployed soldiers overseas. It was a great way to honor our soldiers and bring attention to the many dogs Animal Friends has for adoption.



### **"Liberation Day"**

The Fourth of July weekend is one of the busiest for Animal Friends. Many pets get lost or spooked from the fireworks and run away or escape through open windows and doors during busy picnics.

On July 8th, Animal Friends took in 20 dogs from area dog control facilities that were scheduled for euthanasia. Many of these dogs are lost and families have the opportunity to reconnect with their pets. Those who remain unclaimed can be adopted by new families and get the love and care they deserve. When the dogs arrive at the shelter they are given new names and OTA helped to provide some very special names for these deserving animals.

All dogs were named in honor of a fallen Pennsylvania hero. Monica Orluk, OTA Vice President, named the first dog "Mac," a Beagle named in honor of Lieutenant Colonel Michael McLaughlin, a PA National Guardsman, who was killed in the line of duty while serving in Iraq in 2005.



**OTA VP Monica Orluk names a lost beagle "Mac," right before he was adopted into his forever home.**

All 20 dogs were named after soldiers and Marines who fought and gave the ultimate sacrifice for our freedom. A fitting way to celebrate the freedom and second chance these dogs are now getting from Animal Friends. OTA is happy to report that most of the dogs have been adopted, including "Mac" who is now happily residing in the South Hills of Pittsburgh.

For more information on how you can provide a "forever home" to some needy animals, please visit their website at [www.thinkingoutsidethecage.org](http://www.thinkingoutsidethecage.org)



## SPECIAL THANKS

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Many businesses and individuals have been very generous with their time, talent and contributions. We would like to thank the following for their continued support and generosity so freely given on behalf of our troops. Please show them your appreciation for their support of OTA with your patronage.



The **Kaplan University** branch of Ft. Lauderdale, FL has done it again! Faculty and staff donated board games, CDs and DVDs to OTA for the fourth year in a row, during a collection drive organized by Ashley Clark, Event and Community Outreach.

Recreational items are often requested of OTA by our troops, and because of the generosity of the folks at Kaplan, many troops will have great entertainment options on their bases. Kaplan University also has an on-line degree program specifically designed for military personnel – [military.kaplan.edu](http://military.kaplan.edu).

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On May 9, 23 and June 3, **Sam's Club in Robinson** with the help of the **Parkway West Rotary Club**, the **Montour School District**, and the **Montour School Interact Club**, held three "Stuff a Bus" collection drives to help OTA make care packages for local troops represented by Sergeant Josh Ciminella of the 56<sup>th</sup> Stryker Brigade. Josh is also an employee at Sam's Club in Robinson, and we are grateful to the many shoppers and coordinators of this successful event!



As the stuffed school bus rolled up, OTA volunteers were on hand to unload, sort and pack the items. What an amazing sight to see the seats and the aisles packed with snacks and personal care items! The soldiers on the receiving end have these wonderful folks to thank for their "wish list" items!

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Special thanks to **Suzanne Austin, Clyde Barrow and the volunteer staff of the Motorcycles, Metal & Mayhem** rally, held June 4-7 at the Westmoreland County Fairgrounds in Greensburg, PA. Visitors signed dozens of Thank You cards for OTA to send in our care packages, and made generous donations to support our projects. Vendors donated wonderful door prizes, and recruiters from the PA National Guard helped OTA volunteers bring the spirit of troop support to the event.

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This year's Three Rivers Regatta combined a love of Pittsburgh with a celebration of our nation's independence. Taking place over the 4th of July weekend, the Regatta gave attendees an opportunity to send special greetings to those who fight so hard to protect the freedoms and independence we celebrate today.

Special thanks to **All State Career School** who sponsored OTA at the event, and to Pittsburgh radio station **Star 100.7** for inviting OTA and promoting our Thank You card campaign. Special thanks also to the PA National Guard who provided support of our efforts throughout the day!

*Right: OTA Volunteer, Sergeant Matthew Claycomb, shares stories with a veteran at the Regatta.*



**Nick Kaiser** (right) of Pittsburgh's West Hills is 10 years old, but don't let his age fool you. This young entrepreneur is developing some great business skills while demonstrating his patriotism at his own Lemonade Stand. Nick raised **\$56.31** in just four days of selling lemonade!

Nick wanted to help out our armed forces, and chose to support OTA because he wanted to raise money for our troops who are working so hard for our freedom. By the end of summer, Nick plans to raise \$250 or more to support his "adopted unit" of troops in Afghanistan. Way to go Nick!



## OTA WELCOMES NEW BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEMBERS

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As OTA has grown over the past five years, so has our need for expanded membership on our board of directors. Earlier this year, LTC John Dowling joined the board, and this summer, we are proud to welcome two additional members, Captain Bill Ault and Stacy Norman.



### **Captain Bill Ault**

Bill, a native of New Brighton, PA, holds a Bachelors Degree from Robert Morris University and is currently working on his Masters at American Military University. He is employed by Buchanan Ingersoll and Rooney, PC in Pittsburgh as a Network Engineer.

Bill has been serving in the reserve component of the U.S. Army since 1987 and is currently the Headquarters Company Commander for the 1-110th Infantry Battalion located in Mount Pleasant, PA. He has deployed for Operation Enduring Freedom (Afghanistan) and Operation Iraqi Freedom (Iraq) with the PA Army National Guard.

Having to balance school, work and military commitments is a challenge and we're grateful for the support and dedication Bill is giving to OTA.



### **Stacy Norman**

Stacy, a native of Washington, PA, graduated Magna Cum Laude from Robert Morris University in 2005 with an undergraduate degree in Information Systems Management. She currently works for Guru.com in Pittsburgh, PA, where she is Manager of Support Operations and plans to continue to build an Operations career with Guru for a long time to come. In 2010, she will graduate from Carnegie Mellon's Tepper Graduate School of Business with an MBA.

Having had friends and family members serve in WWII, Vietnam, Iraq and Afghanistan, Stacy has always been a passionate supporter of the men and woman serving to protect her country. She was excited to learn of OTA and has since been working to help market OTA through traditional channels as well as through emerging social networking channels such as Facebook, MySpace and Twitter.

Stacy likes to split her free time between the gym, her garden and her Harley.

The other Board of Directors include (left to right) **Lieutenant Colonel John Dowling**, OTA Vice President **Monica Orluk**, **Staff Sergeant Michael Fisher**, and OTA President **Kristen Holloway Querriera**.



Please join us in welcoming Bill and Stacy to the OTA family!

## YOUR HELP NEEDED – PROTECT MILITEC’S DONATIONS TO OUR TROOPS

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# MILITEC-1<sup>®</sup>

Since 9/11, Brad P. Giordani, President of Militec, has provided over 600,000 free bottles MILITEC-1, a weapons cleaner and lubricant, to every service member who made a request. **Free of charge.** He’s even donated cases to OTA so we can get these needed item to our troops.

**But Brad’s generous contributions to our troops will soon disappear** without the Army’s Supply System purchasing it and shipping it through regular supply channels. He has had difficulty getting approval for MILITEC-1 to be included as a National Stock Number (NSN) so it can be ordered by troops in the field.

Thousands of US military personal have provided testimonials to Brad and Militec, testifying to its superior performance in field conditions, especially in dry, dusty or desert environments. **He now needs help from our service members and other users in contacting your Congressmen to break the logjam he is facing**, providing testimonials of your own experience with this product.

**Please use your own words to describe your experiences with MILITEC-1 and send your letters to your Representatives and Senators.**

To contact your Senators, go to the following website and click your state:  
[http://www.senate.gov/general/contact\\_information/senators\\_cfm.cfm](http://www.senate.gov/general/contact_information/senators_cfm.cfm).

For your Representatives, go to this website and click your state and enter your zip code:  
<https://writerep.house.gov/writerep/welcome.shtml>.

Your message should be short and clear about MILITEC-1. Ask your Senators and Representatives to consider your position carefully, and to forward it to **Representative Steny Hoyer**, so he will appreciate the concerns of field users of MILITEC-1. Representative Hoyer is the Majority Leader of the House, and his congressional district in Maryland is home to Militec, Inc.

## DEFIANCE FIGHT GEAR CHOOSES TO BENEFIT OTA

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The **Defiance Fight Gear** (DFG) team has launched a campaign to show their support for those who are currently serving or have served in the United States Armed Forces.

Through the sale of a uniquely designed “Remember Our Fallen” t-shirt, Defiance Fight Gear has chosen to support active duty troops, fallen soldiers and military families. A donation of \$10 from the sale of each t-shirt is being directed to these organizations and OTA is fortunate to be one of them!



Businesses can become part of a permanent “Wall of Fame” on the Defiance Fight Gear website which will contain graphics of, and links to, any business or organization that purchases a minimum of twenty-five “Remember the Fallen” shirts for their members or staff. And companies who send a photo of their staff wearing the shirts will be included in a tribute slideshow on DFG’s website. What a great way to secure advertising!

Visit [www.DefianceFightGear.com](http://www.DefianceFightGear.com) and click on the *Support The Troops* button for more information and to purchase your t-shirt today.