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[www.OperationTroopAppreciation.org](http://www.OperationTroopAppreciation.org)

## OFFICERS' CORNER

Welcome to this edition of the OTA Newsletter! 2017 has been a year of notable change for our charity and we are excited to share the highlights with you.

We bid farewell to our Founder, Kristen Holloway-Querriera as she retired in May. This was a bittersweet time for OTA but we are happy to report that Kristen is doing well and enjoying time with her family in their new home! We are proud to carry on her legacy!

We have settled into our headquarters in West Mifflin and now have a wonderful operating space to support our administrative and program needs. And even though we now have to pay rent, we remain committed to being a 100% volunteer charity and applying your donations to our programs, not to pay staff.

Our "Welcome Home" program continues to fill a gap in veteran support. As the war on terror continues, our veteran needs increase. We're proud to present you with highlights of these services throughout this issue.

We continue to provide critical support to men and women deployed overseas. **We have surpassed 161,000 military members** helped by our active-duty "Wish-List" program. And we continue to support them as military engagements evolve globally.

OTA's mission is to show our commitment to our military community, reflecting our dedication to past and present, active and veteran members of our Armed Forces.

OTA demonstrates its mission to build and sustain the morale and well-being of the military community by providing them with items and services that contribute to their morale, well-being, and self-sufficiency.

We are expanding our Board of Directors and have a leadership team that gives tirelessly to keep our programs running. And we are so proud of our accomplishments, made possible by you – the donors, sponsors and volunteers - - who ensure we have the resources needed to serve the troops and veterans helped by OTA every day.

We are proud of all we've accomplished and poised to continue our mission as long our troops and veterans who need our support!

We hope you enjoy this edition of our newsletter. We are happy to share stories of our volunteers, and the letters and photos of the brave troops and veterans we serve.



**Monica Orluk** (CEO/Executive Director)



OTA has been rated a Top-Rated Charity seven years in a row by *Great Nonprofits*, the nation's leading provider of reviews and ratings of nonprofit organizations.

## WHY WE STILL NEED TO SUPPORT OUR TROOPS

Did you know that there are thousands of troops deployed overseas? They are serving in the Middle East, South Korea, Africa and providing humanitarian support in hurricane affected areas of our country. It's sometimes easy to forget about our nation's military engagements, but today, more than ever, we need to show them we appreciate their sacrifice and self-less service.

At OTA, our servicemen and women and veterans are always our focus and that keeps our lives very busy as well. Requests from overseas come into OTA every day, and we're sending boxes of much needed items weekly. And we provide critical support to, on average, 50 veterans per month.

Running a non-profit like OTA takes a lot of volunteer hours to operate and an incredible amount of time and energy planning, organizing, and fundraising. But what drives us is this: Serving Those Who Serve. And a reminder of why we do what we do often comes in the form of a letter like this one we received recently:

*Dear OTA,*

*Thank You Thank You Thank You!*

*There is so much that comes to mind when I think of all the support we have received and all of the love we've been shown.*

*We have been absolutely blown away by the countless words of encouragement and numerous items sent our way. Our battalion's morale has been increased because of your selflessness, your heart for Soldiers, and your heart for our country.*

*You did things you didn't have to do to grant us access to things we didn't have. For all you have done I offer our sincerest thank you and my personal commitment to complete the task that lies ahead.*

*You are a most needed blessing and an answered prayer for us and I pray God's continued Grace, Mercy, Favor, Peace, Protection, Love, and Success to you. From the Soldiers of 3-29 FA and the Unit Ministry Team, thank you very, very much. (Chaplain Henderson)*

In 2017, OTA has shipped boxes to over **3,000 troops serving in Iraq, Afghanistan and South Korea**. And requests for support over the holidays increase daily!

We've said "Welcome Home" to **over 900 veteran families** this year, ensuring that our returning heroes receive services that no other agency provides today. Critical support that says Thank You for your service in a tangible way!

We continue to carry out our mission with a 100% volunteer staff ensuring that your donations are used to fund our programs. We get paid in letters, smiles & hugs!

It is important that we remember the sacrifice of those who serve our country and protect our freedom.

***We will never forget those who serve, and those we have lost. No, we will never forget.***





# From the Front Lines & the Home front



It is with heartfelt gratitude and tears in my eyes right now that I thank Operation Troop Appreciation from the bottom of my heart for your donation of presents to me and my three girls, ages 15, 10 and 8. I am an Air Force veteran from Operation Desert Shield. 2013, 2014 and 2015 have been the most mentally, medically and physically difficult years of my life and I reached out to the VA for help and they performed miracles. What the VA couldn't do OTA stepped in to assist. Anyway, the surprise and happiness on my girls' faces was overwhelming. Words cannot describe my feelings at that moment but tears of joy said it all, and I'm 49. So again THANK YOU for your donation and what you do for veterans and active duty members in country and out. I was proud to have served my country, still believe in the oath that I took and will be loyal to this country until the day that I die.





## OTA BY THE NUMBERS

For over 13 years, OTA has provided for more than **161,000 deployed troops**, and more than **3,500 veterans in crisis situations**.

As a **100% volunteer organization**, we have kept our overhead costs to a minimum, ensuring financial contributions are spent in the spirit in which they are given: **To provide meaningful support to our military members and veterans, NOT to cover extraneous costs.**

We are grateful for our relationships with local Pittsburgh companies and individuals who provide many of our critical services pro-bono. No one at OTA, including our officers, volunteers or board members, receives a salary or wages. Aside from rent and utilities, all funding is applied to our Active-Duty & Welcome Home programs.

We need your help. We average \$20,000 per month is spending for our programs. The need is great, the cause is worthy.

***“Our military volunteers to serve us, OTA is here to serve them.”***

For full financial reports and additional information on OTA, or any U.S. charity, please visit the world's largest independent source of information on nonprofit organizations at [GuideStar.org](http://GuideStar.org).

Join Us at The Mall at Robinson this holiday season! Send a heartfelt holiday greeting to our troops overseas and help support our programs!

OTA Hours: 11 a.m. – 4 p.m., Saturday & Sunday from November 18 – December 16



## Easy Donations or Organized Collection Drives

Please remember, there are troops deployed all over the world. OTA is always in need of donated items and monetary contributions to fulfill our troops' "Wish List" requests.

In many deployed locations, especially in Afghanistan and Iraq, our troops are unable to purchase many items on their own and must rely on packages from supporters at home.

Please consider donating any of the following items to OTA to help our troops and veterans stay stocked on critical needs.

### Hygiene:

- Body wash
- Men's deodorant
- Baby wipes
- Men's triple blade razors

### Food (unopened and unexpired):

- Nuts & tuna packets
- Beef jerky & beef sticks
- Dried fruit & trail mix
- Granola bars & energy bars
- Microwave popcorn & cookies
- Cookies, crackers, chips & pretzels
- Powdered drink mix (no liquids please)
- Specialty ground coffee

### Veteran Welcome Home kits:

- Multi-purpose cleaner & dish soap
- Aluminum foil & plastic wrap
- Quart & gallon zipper bags
- Tall Kitchen & large trash bags
- Buckets, brooms, dustpan sets
- Kitchen towels & cleaning rags
- Bath towel sets
- Cleaning rags & sponges
- Small Appliances
- Twin and Full-Size Sheet sets & Comforters

***New Items in original packaging, please!***

## Yellow Ribbon Campaign:

A simple and easy way to help raise money for the troops! OTA will provide you with a "Support the Troops" Yellow Ribbon template, you print them and distribute for a donation (typically \$2-\$5). Donors write their names on the ribbons which are then posted in your church, school, or store. Proceeds are given to OTA to purchase "Wish List" items for the troops.

## Cents for Soldiers:

OTA's Cents for Soldiers campaign is a great option to raise funds simply by collecting loose change! Groups place a Cents for Soldiers Donation Jar in a central location, and ask family, friends and coworkers to toss their spare change in. It's also a popular activity for schools to teach students math and counting skills, as well as community awareness.

## Letter Writing:

Our troops love to get cards and letters from supporters (especially school children) back home! It's a great boost to troop morale and facilitates pen-pal correspondence. This is a particularly popular project for schools, church youth groups, day cares and senior centers.

For more information on these programs, please contact OTA Community Projects Coordinator, Sherry Einhaus, [sdeinhaus@comcast.net](mailto:sdeinhaus@comcast.net) or by phone 412-973-1831

## CONNECT WITH US

Operation Troop Appreciation is an official cause on Facebook and Twitter.

Follow us for announcements of upcoming events, notice of volunteer opportunities, pictures and postings from the troops we help.

