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A MOMENT WITH MO

On Sunday, March 3, 2007, I had the pleasure of joining members of the 864th AG Replacement Company on a very special visit to a Pittsburgh-area Veterans Hospital.

The 864th AG Company is from Oakdale, PA, and returned home in November from deployment in Iraq. I've had the honor of meeting some of them and they hold a special place in my heart. Imagine my delight when they asked if OTA would like to accompany some of them to visit the patients and say "Thank You!" I was taken aback - these brave men and women just came home from a year in Iraq and decided they needed to take some time to thank the soldiers who came before them. It was humbling, to say the least.

When we arrived at the VA Hospital, the excitement was evident. Staff members had made coffee and brought in cakes and donuts for the soldiers. We had a briefing with the charge nurse, who instructed us on the proper protocols when visiting patients. There were 17 in our group and 335 patients so we formed eight teams and each took a ward. I teamed up with Captain Michael Mazza to pass out handmade St. Patrick's Day cards and well wishes.

Through the course of the morning, we met and spoke with veterans of World War II, Korea and Viet Nam. Every time we walked into a room and the patients saw a soldier in uniform, their eyes lit up, smiles crossed their faces and stories started to flow. What an incredible history lesson! Capt. Mazza was a delight and had a great talent for immediately connecting with the patients. I was the honored guest to a very special meeting of people who share a bond only those that serve can own.

There were sad moments as well. Most of these men and women do not get visitors, and were so excited to spend time with us. It was hard leaving each room, and we only



OTA Vice President Monica Orluk and members of the 864th AG Replacement Company at a Veterans Hospital.

had a few hours to visit with all the patients. It was obvious that many of these patients are lonely and that injury, illness and age have taken a toll on them.

Today, a lot of attention is on conditions at Walter Reed, the Veteran's Administration, and the medical care (or lack thereof) given to Iraqi War veterans. Our country needs to correct the system and make sure ALL our veterans get the care they deserve. Despite this, we must remember that behind all of the bureaucracy are people. Brave people who put their lives on the line and fought for our freedom. Some chose to serve, others were drafted, and all fought bravely for our country. They deserve our gratitude and our attention.

We would be honored to have you join us as we make more visits to the local VA Hospitals. What better way to show our appreciation! Please contact me if you would like to participate in future visits. littlemo34@yahoo.com

Sincerely,
Monica Orluk, Vice President Operation Troop Appreciation

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 that contribute to their morale and aid in 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.

SECOND ANNUAL OTA CHARITY GOLF OUTING



OTA CHARITY GOLF TOURNAMENT

Spring is coming and once again, we look forward to green grass, flowers and – GOLF! This year, when you hit the links, be sure to make the 2nd Annual OTA Charity Golf Outing the first event you sign up for.

This year's event will be held on Friday, May 18, 2007 at the **Rolling Hills Country Club in McMurray, PA**. A silent auction and banquet dinner will follow. It will be a scramble play with a shot-gun start at noon, so all levels of expertise are welcome to share in this great day. **Get a hole-in one and win a brand new car!** This is just one of many great prizes you can win at the event.

You can participate as a sponsor or join us as a golfer.

To sponsor: As a sponsor, you have the opportunity to promote yourself or your company to a group of people who are very loyal to its sponsors, and to the many area professionals who participate in the outing itself. Please visit the OTA website (OperationTroopAppreciation.org) for a sponsorship form. **All forms and checks must be received no later than May 8, 2007.** Four levels of sponsorship are available:

Patron Level: up to \$250 donation

- You or your company name will be listed in our Charity Golf Program as a Patron.

Silver Level : \$500 donation

- You or your company name will be posted on a sign at a golf tee as a hole sponsor,
- Your name will be listed in our Charity Golf Program as an event contributor at the Silver level.

Gold Level : \$1,000 donation

- You or your company name will be posted on a sign at a golf tee as a hole sponsor,
- Your name and company logo will be listed in our Charity Golf Program as an event contributor at the Gold level.

Platinum Level: \$2,000 donation

- You or your company name will be posted on a sign at a golf tee as a sole hole sponsor,
- Your name and company logo will be listed in our Charity Golf Program as an event contributor at the Platinum level,
- Your name will be included on a banner at our Awards Ceremony banquet. We will include your company logo if you wish.




The greens at Rolling Hills Country Club.

To golf: Registration is \$150 per person and includes greens fees and cart, lunch, and a banquet dinner. You may register as an individual golfer, or as a four-some. Individual golfers will be informed of their foursome prior to the event. Details and confirmation will be sent upon receipt of your registration and payment. Space is limited and registrants will be processed on a first-come, first-served basis. Please visit the OTA website for a golfer registration form. **All forms and checks must be received no later than May 8, 2007.**

We look forward to sharing a great day of troop support and golf with you! We'll see you on the greens!

SEARCH THE WEB AND SUPPORT THE TROOPS

 Think about how many times a day you use an internet search engine... Now, imagine that every time you searched, money was given to the charity of your choice. You don't have to imagine any longer, as Good Search now allows you to raise money for Operation Troop Appreciation just for surfing the net!

All you need to do is use **GoodSearch.com** to search the Internet. The first time you use the search engine, type Operation Troop Appreciation in the second box, click "Verify," and search as you normally would. It's that easy, and funds will automatically be directed to OTA every time

you perform a search! We hope you'll give it a try and support OTA through this easy, convenient method.

The site is powered by Yahoo!, so you will get the same quality search results that you are used to. Last year, search engines generated close to \$6 billion in revenue from advertisers. With GoodSearch, part of this advertising revenue will now be directed to OTA. The more people who use this site, the more money will go to OTA. So please spread the word to your friends and family. You can send the link to your contact list directly from the GoodSearch web page: www.goodsearch.com

VISIT THE NEW OTA WEBSITE

It is with great pride that we announce the launch of the new and improved Operation Troop Appreciation website! The gang at BuzzHoney outdid themselves by creating a site that represents the best of our organization and the troops we support!



Highlights include:

- Great new look and easy navigation
- Photo gallery featuring some of the troop members who have benefited from OTA
- Troop Letter section, sharing the great feedback we receive from the troops we help
- Scrolling section on the homepage that explains to donors what their donations can provide for a soldier
- Updated News and Events sections

Special thanks to the talented staff of BuzzHoney who went above and beyond and delivered a website that differentiates us from other organizations and celebrates those who have made OTA a success!

Visit the new site today! www.OperationTroopAppreciation.org

SPECIAL THANKS

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.

John Stetor, owner of **Smithfield Outlet** in Market Square (downtown Pittsburgh), and former Army Major, has been a staunch supporter of OTA for several years. He is a genius at helping us locate discounted items in bulk that our troops need, such as sunglasses, winter gloves, and other special requests. We are grateful to John and his staff for their unwavering support of OTA and our troops.

Arnie Thompson, Army veteran and owner of **McCabe Printing**, has been an important contributor by printing and folding thousands of letters that OTA sends to our troops. These letters accompany the "wish list" items we send and are just as important in conveying our appreciation for our troops as the items themselves. Arnie has donated the cost of printing these letters and OTA is grateful for his and his staff's kindness and generosity.

The Pittsburgh CPA and business advisory firm of **Horovitz, Rudoy and Roteman** has been OTA's financial consultant since our inception. They have provided expertise with fantastic service and support, enabling OTA to best utilize our financial resources to care for as many troops as possible. We proudly recognize HRR partner Alex Kindler for his generosity and continuous support of OTA, and Mike Regan for his indefatigable patience, expert guidance and warm friendship.

We also thank all the businesses and civic groups who have recently "adopted" troop units by providing the funds necessary for our soldiers' wishes. We offer our sincere thanks to

- St. Teresa of Avila (Pittsburgh)
- Nativity Church (Pittsburgh)
- Lake Falls Church (Lindstrom, MN)
- Patterson Schwartz Real Estate (Hockessin, DE)
- Brian Murray, CPA (Newark, DE)

OTA SENDS 1,500 UTILITY TOOLS TO MARINES IN IRAQ

OTA is thrilled once again to work with the Marines! Ooh-rah!

When Lt. Barry Edwards from Camp Lejeune contacted OTA in October of 2006, it prompted a flood of memories. We previously worked with the Lieutenant to supply a deployment of Marines in June 2005 with 600 moisture-wicking Under Armour® brand t-shirts and socks. This time, the request was different. The USMC Regimental Combat Team 6 (RCT-6) needed 800 Leatherman® multi-purpose utility tools for their difficult and dangerous jobs in Fallujah, Iraq.

With the Marines scheduled to deploy in January and March, OTA had time to raise the \$25,000 needed to outfit these Marines (and another battalion of 700 Marines we picked up along the way). By February, the 10-tool devices were in the hands of junior enlisted Marines in each battalion, and a flood of pictures and letters from grateful young men poured into OTA.

Lt. Edwards explained why the Marines especially love these particular utility tools. First, the tools are critical to RCT-6 as they maintain weapons systems and communications equipment. Often the gear the Marines have on hand to complete their tasks is too heavy and cumbersome for the Marines on foot. These smaller tools enable a Marine to carry all the assigned tools in one small package, and they fit into the webbing of the fragmentation vest for easy access.

As a Thank You to OTA, Lt. Edwards sent a beautiful collage of pictures of his Marines, a flag flown over their base in Fallujah, and a touching letter from their Colonel thanking OTA for their support. We are humbled by these gracious gifts, which will serve as reminders of our work with this very special unit.

Photos of Marines featured are courtesy RCT-6 unit.

RCT-6's Mission in Fallujah and the surrounding towns

- Secure critical infrastructure and facilities from terrorists
- Train and develop Iraqi Security Forces and support their operations and missions without encouraging dependence
- Support cooperation between the Iraqi Army, Iraqi Police, local government and local population
- Root out terrorists and foster intolerance among the population for terrorist activities.



Marines receive the utility tools and read their letters from OTA.



RCT- 6 Marines.



A Marine uses his new tool to repair equipment.



OTA President Kristen Holloway with the Thank You gifts from Lt. Edwards.

IN THE MARINES' OWN WORDS...

We've read bucketfuls of letters from the Marines who received the utility tools, letting us know how much OTA's letters and gifts mean to them. Here are just some of the messages from Marines who received these gifts...

I honestly wish there were more people like you – people who value service above selfishness, and place faith amongst their foremost priorities in life. ~ Lcpl D. W.

It is because of people like you and your continuing support that keeps us pushing forward!

Your dedication and support is greatly appreciated. ~ Sgt. J. N.

Thank you for your hard work and effort to raise the money to give us all Leathermans.

That someone would go to all that effort on behalf of us means so much.

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. ~ Lcpl J. D.

We appreciate the Leatherman tools we received.

The efforts and sentiments of good American patriots like yourselves mean so much to us, and make our deployment more comfortable and rewarding.

It is our hope that you can continue your good work at the home front and that you honor and remember the sacrifices of our fallen as we shall. ~ Cpl P. T.

The Leatherman is by far one of the ideal gifts to send us, for we have many uses for it.

The degree of empathy and patriotism you have shown is a standard that I hope every American can live up to. ~ Lcpl D. M.

This is a letter to show my appreciation for the Leatherman you sent to us.

It was a good morale booster, and is showed that some people in the States really do support our troops. Thank you! ~ Cpl H

There's nothing like getting a gift from someone you don't know. It's like Christmas!

I didn't think anyone would be out there to still support us. Thank you! ~ Anonymous Marine

I thank you not only for the Leatherman, but for your love of your country and the support you give to the operating forces. ~ SSgt S. D.

I would like to thank you, OTA staff, and everyone that supports you for the gift. It will come in good use.

The support you give is greatly appreciated. Thank you! ~ Lcpl R. G

It is refreshing to hear that you and your organization and the people who contribute to OTA support us.

It is hard sometimes when we turn on the news or open a newspaper to see so many people not supporting us or the cause we fight for.

On behalf of myself and the Marines around me, we thank you for your generous gift and unwavering support. ~ Lcpl S. Y

I would like to thank you for the Leatherman you chose to send our scout platoon.

It is a great gift, but what is more rewarding is to know that people like yourselves are taking the time to send us a gift.

Thank you for your support and blessings. ~ Cpl R. H.

Although you deserve much more than just a "thank you", that is all I can offer at this point.

You have truly made an impact on my deployment. Thank you. ~ HN M. S.

We are grateful for your organization's generosity and to have people like you support us. ~ Lcpl N. C

COMMUNITY GROUPS SUPPORT THE TROOPS IN SPECIAL WAYS

We are honored to provide the outlet for local civic groups to support our troops. Their stories are constant inspiration to OTA's volunteers and patrons...



For the past few months, Ryan Allan has been working with OTA by collecting items and donations for the Soldiers serving in the Middle East.

He is doing this for his Eagle Scout project and titled it "Supplies for Soldiers."

Ryan got the idea for his project from his local American Legion Post 548 and jumped on the opportunity because he

wanted to do something for the Soldiers in conjunction with his Eagle project.

The American Legion forwarded him to OTA, and he continues working with us to send needed supplies to troops overseas.

Ryan has directed local support for the troops and has provided over 500 soldiers from eight different units with basic items that help improve their morale.

Photo: Pine Richland High School sophomore Ryan Allan.



Girl Scouts, business owners and members of the Mt. Lebanon Community have worked in concert with OTA to send a 'little bit of home' to members of our military serving in the Middle East.

The Hometown Mail Center of Mt. Lebanon served as a collection point for the Local Girl Scout and Brownie Troop cookie drive.

Mt. Lebanon resident Carmen DiGiacomo, a veteran and retired Army Colonel, spearheaded the project, while Dan Coll, owner of Hometown Mail Center agreed to package and send the cookies.

The Girls Scouts and Brownies sent notes and cards with the packages, sending their love along with more than 600 pounds of delicious cookies to Western Pennsylvanian troops.

Photo: Marlene Pisarcik and Richard Bruns of the Mt. Lebanon Hometown Mail Center pack Girl Scout Cookies for local troops.

East Allegheny High School honor students in North Versailles helped make Easter and Passover a little brighter for some local troops.



The students created cards and messages for Easter, Passover and Spring for the military in Iraq, and even produced and created a video with group greetings. Cathy G Charities delivered the students' cards and video and other donated items to OTA.

President of Cathy G Charities, Gary Greisinger knows how important support for the deployed Soldier is. Gary is a disabled Vietnam veteran.

Following his war duty, Gary founded Cathy G Charities in memory of his daughter Cathy, and carries on her legacy of volunteer work with the homeless, veterans, animals, and children.

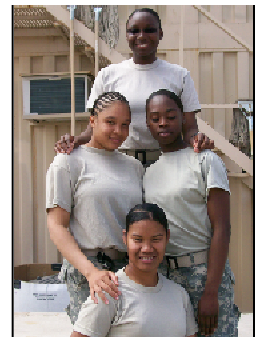
Photo: Gary Greisinger supervises students as they create Easter greetings for troops. Courtesy Michael Greisinger

OTA volunteer Pam Vorhees and her women's Bible study wanted to "adopt" one of OTA's needy female units. We paired them up with an army unit recently arriving in Afghanistan whose personal items had been stolen on their way overseas. The soldiers arrived in a hostile land without even the barest of essentials and no comforts from home.

Pam and her Bible study group paired up with Mothers with Multiples, and all got busy collecting the requested items for this unit of 17 women and 5 men. The items arrived in good order, and the soldiers gushed with gratitude for the support from strangers, now friends, from home.



The women's Bible study group collected necessities for the soldiers pictured to the right...



... and the soldiers were grateful: "We want to thank you and all the people who put together those wonderful boxes. All the soldiers were very excited!"

COMPANIES COLLECT FOR THE TROOPS

OTA would like to recognize four outstanding corporate citizens for their support of our troops:

- BioLife Plasma Services (Fayetteville NC, Mounds View and St. Cloud, MN)
- Utz Quality Foods (Hanover, PA)
- Hanover Architectural Products (Hanover, PA)
- QVC (West Chester, PA)

Three **BioLife Plasma Services** centers collected needed items for their adopted unit of 1,000 Marines currently stationed in Iraq. The Marines requested hygiene supplies, snacks, and entertainment items.

The centers held drawings for their donors during the collection. Donors increased their chances of winning by bringing in items or making monetary donations. The drawings made the collection drive fun and rewarding for everyone!

Aside from collecting, the centers also raised \$625, which was used to purchase additional items for the troops. In total, the centers collected more than 400 pounds of needed items for the Marines! In addition, donors and employees wrote letters of thanks and encouragement to their adopted unit and included information about BioLife so the Marines could connect with the generous people behind this amazing project.



Troops of MNFI-Stratops with their bags of Grandma Utz chips right before digging in!

President Kristen Holloway understood why a Strat-ops unit from Eastern PA serving in the Green Zone of Baghdad requested Grandma Utz's potato chips. Having grown up where these chips are made and only regionally distributed, they're her favorite, too! **Utz Quality Foods** generously donated five cases of snack sized bags for these local soldiers, and **Hanover Architectural Products** packaged and shipped the items to the soldiers who loved every crunchy bite!

OTA volunteer Bev Hiller and her colleagues at **QVC** got right to work collecting supplies requested by a company of the Combat Logistics Battalion-1. These troops serve in Afghanistan providing strategic and tactical support for coalition and NATO forces. The unit needed warm clothing and blankets, as well as personal hygiene supplies. They collected all the items the 80 troops needed to stay warm and comfortable during the cold winter in the Afghan mountains. The QVC colleagues also sent cards and letters for the troops, and were surprised and humbled to receive a commendation from the battalion commander for their support.



The framed letter now hangs in the QVC department reminding them of our deployed troops and the spirit of giving.

Many thanks go out to these companies for working so hard to make someone else's day a little brighter!

THE POVERTYNECK HILLBILLIES HELP OTA'S TROOPS

Pittsburgh country music fans have already discovered the wealth of talent sitting in their backyard – The PovertyNeck Hillbillies. PNH is now conquering the national music scene with hits like “Mr. Right Now” and “One Night in New Orleans.” And they are showing support for the troops – through OTA!

On December 30, 2006 the band held their New Year celebration concert at the Pepsi Roadhouse in Burgettstown, PA. OTA was a special guest at the show and sold raffle tickets for a custom PovertyNeck Hillbilly guitar signed by the band. Thanks to these fine patriots, OTA raised over \$1,000 to fund more troop projects.



PovertyNeck Hillbillies autographed this guitar for OTA to raffle off at PNH's New Year's concert.

SPECIAL SUPPORT FROM THE PAA

The Pittsburgh Athletic Association (PAA) has been a constant and generous supporter of OTA and our deployed troops. Each year the PAA holds the Mercury Awards Banquet highlighting the best high school football athletes in the area. This year, they not only made a generous contribution, but also invited OTA to the banquet and recognized our organization.

Legendary Pitt football coach, Johnny Majors, OTA VP Monica Orluk, OTA President Kristen Holloway and former Pittsburgh Steeler, Franco Harris at PAA Mercury Awards Dinner.



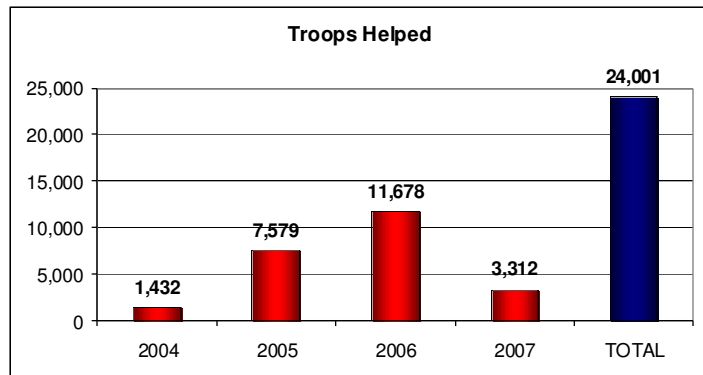
PROGRESS TO DATE

Many of the items we provide our troops are expensive (e.g., Under Armour, tactical gear and supplies), so we have a great need for financial contributions.

Only with your generosity can we continue to insure our troops feel the love and support we send them from so many miles away.

You may make a secure on-line donation, or send contributions to us at:

Operation Troop Appreciation
PO Box 14550
Pittsburgh, PA 15234
www.OperationTroopAppreciation.org



OTA has provided "wish list" items for 24,000 troops since our inception in July 2004

We need your help. Please join us in our commitment to our courageous.

MORE SUCCESS STORIES

Since our last newsletter update, more than 3,000 deployed troops received "wish list" items from OTA. Here is a snapshot of some of these units, what they are doing, and what OTA provided:

| <u>Branch</u> | <u>Mission</u> | <u>Wish List</u> |
|---------------|--|---|
| Army | An active duty unit from Ft. Bragg, NC, this unit halts gun trafficking from Iran to Iraq, assists the Iraqi army and provides humanitarian assistance to the Iraqi civilians. | Ear plugs, Ballistics glasses |
| Air Force | This Air Traffic Control unit in Iraq hails from Tyndall AFB in Florida. | Cleaning supplies and floor mats to keep their barracks clean |
| Army | This active duty army unit from Ft. Bragg is starting a FOB in a remote area in Afghanistan. | Solar Showers, TV, DVD player |
| Navy | These Seabees are from Gulfport, MS and are rebuilding the infrastructure of Iraq. | PS2 system and games, phone cards, softball equipment |
| Marines | These Marines from Camp Lejeune support forward-operating Marines in Iraq. | Snacks, DVDs, magazines |
| Army | This reserve unit from Franklin, PA drives trucks in convoys in Iraq. | Ballistics glasses, Nomex fire retardant gloves |

