



OPERATION TROOP APPRECIATION

Committed to our Courageous: The deployed members of the U.S. Armed Forces

Summer 2007
Newsletter

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KRISTEN'S CORNER

Dear OTA Supporters and Volunteers,

As we reflect this month on our nation's 231st birthday, we remember the millions of men and women in our military, who for more than two centuries, have ensured our nation, its values, and culture will endure for many more generations of Americans.

For all those who have served, and who serve today, Thank You for preserving our nation.

In the spirit of celebrating our nation's proud history and remembering those who make our celebration possible, I dedicate the following letter to our troops winning the War on Terror.



Top: Five Marines and one Navy corpsman raise the American flag atop Mount Suribachi during the Battle of Iwo Jima in World War II (photo by Joe Rosenthal, Feb. 23, 1945)

Bottom: Troops from the 203rd Corp Navy ETT serving in Afghanistan in Operation Enduring Freedom.

Dear Soldier, Sailor, Airman and Marine,

On behalf of all of us at Operation Troop Appreciation, we would like to take this opportunity to reinforce our support and appreciation for your service and sacrifice.

The good people of OTA have immense pride for all the U.S. armed forces and feel incredibly blessed to live in the country YOU fight every day to protect. We wish we could personally thank every Soldier, Sailor, Airman, and Marine who fights so bravely and valiantly. But since we are unable to do that, I hope you will allow me to convey our never-ending gratitude to you in this letter. Know that we remember you every day and pray for your safe return.

Try as we might, we will never understand how difficult it is for you to be so far from home and to face the reality of war first-hand every day. Please accept the love, support and appreciation from a grateful nation that stands beside you. You all make it possible for us to live freely, and you give us this opportunity to give something back. From the bottom of our hearts, thank you very much.

For every second of terror and fear you endure, for every grain of sand you curse, for all the blood and tears you shed to defend our great nation, we are indebted to you. We thank you from the bottom of our hearts for fighting so hard to defend those 300 million of us at home who rest all our hopes on you, and for memorializing the soul of every soldier who went before you in the past 231 years of our country's great history.

We salute you, we pray for you and we stand beside you as grateful, dutiful and patriotic Americans do. May God bless and protect you, and may He continue to bless America.



Sincerely,

Kristen Holloway
President & Founder,
Operation Troop Appreciation

IN MEMORIAM: ARMY SERGEANT DARREN PATRICK HUBBELL

We mourn the loss of a great man, and a great soldier. Sergeant Darren Patrick Hubbell was killed on June 20, 2007, when the vehicle he was riding in was hit by an IED. He was a great Soldier who served in Panama, Desert Storm, Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) I, III, and V. He will be missed, and never forgotten. His fellow soldiers will carry his memory with them for the rest of their lives.

Sgt Hubbell was a medic with the 1st Battalion, 64th Armor Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division from Fort Stewart, GA. Please read more about these dedicated soldiers on page 3 of this newsletter.



SGT Darren Hubbell treated an Iraqi boy the day before he was killed by an IED.

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.

GI ROSES – \$10 MILLION IN GIFTS FOR THOSE NEAR AND FAR



OTA is thrilled to announce our newest corporate sponsor and participation in a **\$10 Million Promotion!** We proudly introduce **GIroses.com**. GI Roses is an on-line wholesaler of fresh cut flowers, gift baskets, and coming soon, specialty supplies the troops love to have for themselves.

To jointly help military personnel and promote OTA, GI Roses CEO Jason Pinto is offering over \$10 Million in gift cards and promotional discounts to military personnel to purchase flowers and gift baskets for loved ones back home. They will soon also be able use the gift cards to purchase items for themselves while deployed – items such as knives, ballistic glasses, Under

Armour, high-protein beef jerky, and other favorites.

For every order made with the discount card, OTA will receive a \$5 donation from GI Roses. GI Roses also enables the general public to purchase gift items for their deployed loved ones as well. For every purchase made without the discount card or promotional code, OTA will receive a \$10 donation from GI Roses.

This project helps provide for our deployed troops in three major ways:

- Our troops will be able to affordably send flowers and care baskets to their loved ones, or make discount purchases for themselves,
- Loved ones can send gifts of needed military items to their deployed troops,
- GI Roses' donations will enable OTA to continue to provide for thousands more troops who rely on us during their deployment.

"I am humbled by Jason Pinto's generosity because together we will be able to impact many more thousands of military and their families than either of our organizations could otherwise do alone. It is an honor to be part of this amazing project!" says OTA President Kristen Holloway.

Why not visit www.GIRoses.com today and see the great gifts they have? Make a purchase for someone special in your life and take advantage of the \$25 discount. Simply enter promotional code **OTA07** when ordering.

HELP FOR OUR WOUNDED WARRIORS

OTA has embarked on very a special project aimed at the troops who need our support the most – the Soldiers and Marines who have been injured in battle.

Our most recent efforts have been directed towards the 28th Division Combat Support Hospitals (CSH), whom we have provided dozens of boxes full of personal care items, Under Armor clothing, undergarments, socks, entertainment items, and travel bags to two of the 28th CSH's trauma hospitals located in Mosul and Baghdad. We also sent snacks and gifts for the fine nurses and doctors who work diligently every day to save the lives of these brave men and women.

When a soldier is injured in combat, these hospitals provide their first line of full medical care. As injuries can be extensive, patients spend just enough time to be stabilized and treated before they are transported to medical facilities outside Iraq. The patients usually have no personal items or clothing while at the hospital, nor do they have supplies to take with them once transported to other medical facilities. In most cases, uniforms are cut off leaving the patients with no other clothing than hospital gowns.

ARMY MEDICS OF THE 1-64 ARMOR THANK OTA

"I first contacted OTA in 2005 during the 1-64 Armor Battalion's deployment to Baghdad with a "wish list" for Under Armor socks and t-shirts for my group of medics. The troops were extremely grateful to OTA, but we all know, of course, this project would not have been possible without the donations from all of the great Americans that love to support the troops.

My team of medics are back in Iraq, and their mission is the same. This time, however, the zone is much more dangerous to my Soldiers of the 1-64 Armor. The medic's job this time has become even more paramount with the threat from the insurgents. The battalion is currently searching for the enemy, securing routes, providing security in the neighborhoods, and working and living with the Iraqi Army to ensure they are trained to ultimately provide a safe and secure Iraq. My medics provide the first line of medical care to the soldiers who are injured during these activities.

Now on our second deployment, OTA recently sent us another batch of moisture wicking Under Armor shirts, in addition to blankets, pillows, and sheets that provide them a sense of home and give the soldiers a comfortable place to rest their weary bodies after a long day of missions.

More importantly, OTA also sent a Camelbak M.U.L.E. to each of the medics to utilize on their patrols or security missions. This piece of equipment has greatly enhanced the combat effectiveness of all the medics. Not only does it provide a critical hydration source, but the two pouches on the outer side hold the necessary Emergency Medical Equipment used to secure the airway and stop bleeding -- the two top causes of death on the battlefield.

The Soldiers were ecstatic when they received this equipment, as they knew how much it would help them help their Infantry and Armor Soldiers on the front line. None of this would be possible without the support of OTA's patrons, supporters, and volunteers. We would like to thank everyone that has donated to OTA so they could purchase all the items provided to our Medical Platoon. Thank you!" ~ **Sergeant First Class Martyn Pauwels, 1-64 Armor Battalion**



OTA volunteers help pack up dozens of boxes of items for our wounded warriors.

Donations from Under Armor, ABATE, and Shop 'N Save grocery stores (refer to "Local Bike Group..." article on p. 7) have enabled us to provide needed items for hundreds of wounded warriors. While we hope the day comes when our help is no longer needed, we will continue to support these brave men and women through our thoughts, prayers and these special gifts.



Medics of the 1-64 Armor Battalion

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.

Alexander's Athletic Club (Creighton, PA), and their clients raised \$1,100 for OTA in a day of fun, exercise and patriotism with a twist. Participants donated \$5 to OTA to participate in Spinning Classes led by trainers Sue Giucardi and Jim Boyer. Owner Geoff Alexander then matched all donations, doubling the impact of this project! Gym customers were also invited to sign a banner to show their support for our troops, and OTA sent it over to a unit serving in Afghanistan. We would like to thank Geoff Alexander for his generosity and making this project possible, Sue and Jim for their tireless teaching, and the generous clients of Alexander's gym for supporting this great event!

The **Kaplan University** branch of Ft. Lauderdale, FL has done it again! Faculty and staff donated CDs and DVDs to OTA for the second year in a row, during a collection drive organized by Sherry Thompson, KHE Event and Community Outreach. CDs and DVDs are one of the most requested recreational items our troops request of OTA, and because of the generosity of the folks at Kaplan, many troops will have great movies to watch and terrific music to listen to for the duration of their deployment. Kaplan University also has an on-line degree program specifically designed for military personnel – military.kaplan.edu.

The **Military Officers of Willow Grove PA** have been generously donating needed items to OTA for quite awhile. Their members have graciously donated books, DVDs, CDs, Under Armour, and other items our troops have requested of OTA to help ease their deployment. We thank this wonderful veterans organization for their continued support of our troops through OTA, and also thank the members themselves for their dedicated service to our country.

SECOND ANNUAL OTA CHARITY GOLF OUTING



Rolling Hills Country Club.

The annual OTA golf outing took place this year on May 18th at the Rolling Hills Country Club in McMurray, PA. Eighty-four golfers came out to compete in a scramble tournament to raise money in support of our deployed troops, and the day proved to be an overwhelming success for OTA!

An awards banquet and silent auction were held immediately after the tournament, extending the festivities well into the evening. OTA volunteers gave prizes to the top four foursomes and the winners of the hole challenges. Golfers also had the opportunity to win the grand prize set of golf clubs, participate in a silent auction, win door prize give-aways and a 50/50 raffle.

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

- Event coordinators Virginia "B.J." Schneider and Sue Bott. These two amazing women worked tirelessly to secure sponsors, plan the day and coordinate a special team of volunteers who made sure that no detail was overlooked.
- The Rolling Hills Country Club, Club Manager Eric Trautman, Golf Pro John Rech, and Susan Dolinar for providing a beautiful and challenging venue and all the services and amenities to make the day enjoyable for golfers and volunteers alike.
- Robert Neilson for supporting OTA and our mission at this event.
- Frank, Mark and Lynn Caputo, of 1st and Goal Sports provided fabulous sports memorabilia items for auction, and managed the silent auction.
- Our many corporate and individual sponsors who supported us with their generosity.



Golfers get ready to hit the links!

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.

IN THEIR OWN WORDS...

Every week we receive letters and emails from our troops, letting us know how much OTA's gifts and letters mean to them. Here are some of their messages...

"I'm writing this letter in appreciation for all the gifts that the soldiers and I received. Thank you to everyone involved in putting the care packages together." ~ PFC D.J., Army

"Thank you for the Girl Scout cookies. I am very happy to report the soldiers continue to comment on how much they enjoy these cookies!" ~ Chaplain H.M., Army

"Packages are very important to soldiers that do not receive mail and packages normally, that's why it is important for you to know that you have brightened several soldiers' days. All the soldiers want to tell you thank you for your support." ~ SFC A.S., Army

"I just wanted to write to you and tell you how grateful I am to know there are still caring people out there after so long. Thank you!" ~ Sgt. D.W., USMC

"Knowing we have such strong support from America's citizens means a lot to us. A strong base of support from organizations like OTA helps keep our morale high." ~ Cpt. G.D., Army

"Thank you for your extremely generous gifts to our soldiers. We received the snacks, MWR items and Under Armour shirts, and you can be sure they will be put to good use." ~ 1LT J.R., Army

"Thank you so much for the mini-Leatherman tools you sent to the Marines and Sailors of this company. I can not thank you enough for this. God bless you and God bless America!" ~ Cpt. D.S., USMC

"Thank you and everyone in your tremendous organization for all your support and for all the boxes of wonderful items to help our wounded warriors. Your support means the world to all of us here. God bless you all." ~ Cpt. C.W., Air Force

"I thank you and your organization for all your patriotism and love." ~ Sgt T.G., Army

It is your organization and the people who have donated their time and money to send us these gifts that make us realize why we do what we do. You provide a great service to all of us that serve. Thank you." ~ LCpl J.R., USMC

The gloves were great, just what we needed. Thank you for everything. You are fast and very good. We all send you our thanks and gratitude." ~ SSG C.B., Army

"Thank you for the gift of pillows you sent to my unit. The pillow I received will be put to good use under my chest as I have dislocated a rib. I thank you for your organization and for your patriotism and love." ~ Sgt. T.G., Army



Soldiers from an Explosives Ordnance Disposal unit wear the ballistics glasses OTA sent them to aid their explosives diffusion duties.



OTA sent Under Armour shirts and MWR items to this Medevac Air Ambulance platoon, who provides emergency medical attention for US soldiers in Afghanistan.



This Airborne unit, building a base in remote Afghanistan, received basic supplies and solar showers from OTA, making their base more comfortable.

COMMUNITIES 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...

The **Brandywine Area Community Choir of Chester County PA** has come together biannually for nearly 30 years to perform inspirational music, and most recently sang to benefit OTA.

The events of 9/11 led the choir to sing a benefit concert in the fall of 2001 for the brave police and fire fighters who responded to the call on that tragic day. In that same spirit, the BACC performed a moving patriotic and religious cantata in five concerts this spring. At all concerts, the audience had an opportunity to learn about OTA. When combined with the beautiful and patriotic music the audience had just heard, the OTA presentation spurred an overwhelming audience response. Audience members donated more than \$7,500 to OTA.

Requests to sing in new venues keep coming! The choir has a full schedule again for the fall and according to founding director, Steve McFalls, the group will continue to offer this moving music in support of our troops as long as the requests keep coming in.



The Brandywine Area Community Choir raised more than \$7500 for OTA this spring.



SPC Tim Rau got to see the stained glass window benefiting his unit when he was home for a two-week leave.

Stained Glass Corner in Warrendale, PA held a unique raffle in May to raise money for a special OTA project: Army **SPC Timothy Rau** requested Gerber® multi-tools for his Bravo Troop, 1/7 Cavalry, 1 BCT, 1CD stationed in Iraq. SPC Rau is the son of **Sally Hoover**, Co-Owner of Stained Glass Corner and active OTA volunteer.

A stained glass panel featuring a beveled eagle and a red, white and blue flag was won by Darrell Brooke of Pasadena, California. Mr. Brooke is a Pittsburgh native. Anchorwoman Kelly Frey of WTAE-TV drew the winning ticket on May 1. By the end of the raffle, Stained Glass Window raised \$2,100 for this project!

The panel was created by Ms. Hoover's business partner, Nina Sattely. The owners were proud to make the beautiful panel and honored that the public donated so generously.

SPC Rau is a 2005 graduate of Pine Richland High School in Gibsonia. He is a Cavalry Scout, assigned to the 1/7 Cavalry (the regiment once commanded by General George Custer) based at Fort Hood, Texas. The 1/7 has been deployed in Iraq since October 2006.

Girl Scout Cookies are a familiar part of American culture, and one of our favorite snacks. Girls have been selling them for more than 80 years to help fund girl scout activities in their communities.

One Girl Scout in particular, **Soleil Nagoda**, wanted to take her sales a step farther. While selling cookies in her neighborhood and to family and friends, she asked if people would like to buy extra cookies to be sent over to the soldiers. This idea impressed a lot of customers, and Soleil sold over 75 boxes just for the soldiers!

Soleil gave these cookies to OTA to send over to Iraq and Afghanistan. The soldiers wrote letters to thank Soleil for the special treats and really appreciated the reminder of home these cookies provided.



Nine-year old Soleil Nagoda from Pittsburgh, PA sold Girl Scout cookies for the troops.

LOCAL BIKE CLUB TURNS \$500 INTO A FORTUNE!

OTA was proud to partner with two local Shop 'N Saves, and the Westmoreland County chapter of the motorcycle group, ABATE (Alliance of Bikers Aimed Towards Education) in a very special project.

Collecting \$500 in a fundraiser, ABATE wanted the money to benefit our troops. They contacted Ray Charley, owner of two Westmoreland County Shop 'N Save grocery stores, for help on purchasing personal care items to send overseas. Mr. Charley contacted his suppliers, who in turn donated personal care items worth thousands!

ABATE's next challenge was getting the items to the troops, and they turned to OTA for help. On April 7, 2007, a Shop 'N Save truck pulled up to the OTA storage facility in Shadyside, PA. Four pallets of razors, toothpaste, toothbrushes, foot care products, socks, deodorant and other personal care items were unloaded. It was a sight to behold!

And OTA had the perfect group to receive these items – the patients at two 28th Division Combat Support Hospitals in Mosul and Baghdad, Iraq (refer to "Wounded Warrior" article on p. 3).



This story reminds us that every project has a very big impact on those we help. The men and women of ABATE worked hard to raise the money and convert it to thousands of dollars worth of supplies. And without the generosity of Ray Charley and his suppliers, this project would have never been so successful. We at OTA are truly blessed to have the support of such fine people, dedicated to helping those most worthy of our efforts.

Photo: ABATE representative Tony Dickson looks on as 1SG Richard Lawrence unloads the Shop 'n Save truck

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 home.

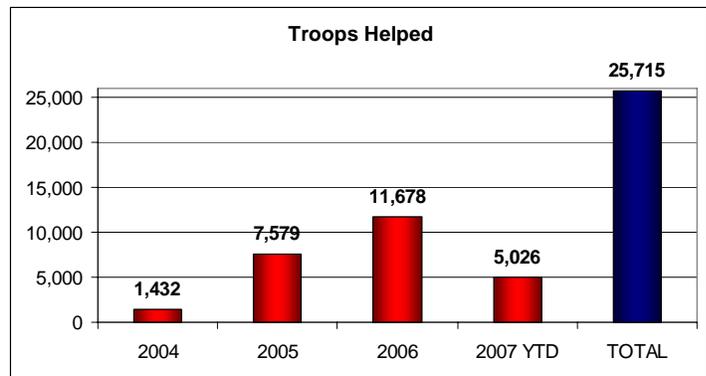
You may make a secure on-line donation, or send contributions to us at:

Operation Troop Appreciation
PO Box 14550

Pittsburgh, PA 15234

www.OperationTroopAppreciation.org

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



OTA has provided "wish list" items for more than 25,000 troops since our inception in July 2004.



OTA sent a company of Field Artillery soldiers in Iraq snacks and MWR items to help keep them comfortable.



This platoon of infantry soldiers in Iraq received head lamps, Under Armour and other tactical supplies from OTA to aid them in their combat missions.



OTA sent this squad of a Military Training Unit the flashlights they show off here, as well as Nomex gloves and utility knives.

MORE SUCCESS STORIES

Since our last newsletter update, 2,000 more 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	This EOD (explosives ordnance disposal) unit from Ft. Carson, CO disposes of IEDs and other anti-personnel and vehicle explosives in Afghanistan	Ballistics glasses, work gloves
Air Force	From Eglin AFB in Florida, this unit is a command surgeon's office in Iraq.	Under Armour shirts
Army	From Ft. Carson, CO, this Special Forces unit trains the Iraqi army and police in Baqubah, Iraq.	Knives, Leathermen tools, ammo pouches, Under Armour
Navy	This PRT (Provincial Reconstruction Team) is based in Khost, Afghanistan with a mission to rebuild the community with schools, district centers, clinics, etc., and help reinforce the newly formed government.	Under Armour, video games, DVDs, ballistic glasses
Marines	This Marine unit from Camp Lejeune, NC supports other combat units and provides transportation in Iraq.	Pocket knives, high powered flashlights.
Army	This combat unit serves in Afghanistan, searching for insurgents and training the Afghan army.	Freeze dried food, Under Armour, headlamps, snacks



CALLING ALL SPORTS ENTHUSIASTS!

1st and Goal Sports, Century III Mall has a special offer to support the troops. They are offering a limited number of special “10 packs” that contain:

- Ten 8x10 autographed Pittsburgh sports celebrity photos.
- One raffle ticket for a 20 x 20 framed and matted autographed photo of Pittsburgh Penguin, Sidney Crosby valued at over \$400.
- In addition, 1 out of every 2 envelopes contains an award certificate for an additional prize valued at \$100 or more!

Each prize pack is \$100, and all revenues go to OTA. Once all the packs have been sold, the Sidney Crosby photo winner will be drawn and notified.

Don't miss your chance to grab a piece of Pittsburgh sports history! Stop by 1st and Goal Sports to get your “10 pack” and show your support for the troops! For more details, contact Mark Caputo at 412-653-9731 or stop by the store, located on the annex level of Century III Mall near Sears.

The Second Annual OTA Veterans Day 5K Race will be held this year in the Hampton Community Park in Hampton Township on Sunday, November 11th at 8:30 a.m. The race will feature music by community performers, a complimentary post-race All-American Buffet, and prizes for each of the nine age categories.

The course is mainly flat, with one challenging hill, and winds through the scenic grounds of the Hampton Park. Last year the winning times were extremely competitive (the winning time was 16:34) but the wide range in skill levels among the entrants provided enjoyment for participants of all abilities.

Registration forms can be downloaded directly from the OTA website at OperationTroopAppreciation.org. Or visit ACTIVE.COM for the Running opportunities – look for Operation Troop Appreciation Veterans Day 5K on November 11th, 2007.