

KRISTEN'S CORNER

Autumn 2010

The fall season is a time of change. We prepare for the cold winter ahead and look back at the days of summer that passed all too quickly. This fall also brings a time of great change to OTA and to my personal life.

Personally, I am happy to announce that my husband Charles has re-activated his commission with the United States Army. I am so proud of him and his desire to continue serving our country. This decision affects both our family and OTA as it means we will be leaving the Pittsburgh area shortly.

Rest assured, this does not affect my commitment to OTA or to the donors, sponsors and volunteers who have worked so hard to make it a success. With the hard work and dedication of our Board of Directors and volunteers, this transition will be smooth and transparent to you.

Charles and I are also very excited to share that we are expecting our first baby in December! We are looking forward to this blessed event, but do face some challenges as Baby Q enters this world. Our baby has been diagnosed with a condition that will require extensive medical treatment over the first few years of his life.

I want to take this opportunity to thank those of you who have rallied around us at this difficult time. We truly love and appreciate every one of you and are grateful for your good thoughts and prayers. Change has also come to OTA in another exciting way! We are proud to announce an expansion in our Board of Directors with the addition of Staff Sergeant Matthew Claycomb. Matthew is a long term volunteer and a soldier whose unit benefitted from OTA when he was deployed to Iraq.

As we see the shift of focus from Iraq to Afghanistan, OTA has realized great change in the types of requests we are receiving from the field. Most are coming from Afghanistan where basic supplies like hygiene and personal care supplies, healthy snacks and entertainment items are nearly impossible for our troops to source for themselves. The troops tell us that were it not for organizations like ours, they would not get any of these items during their year-long deployment.

As of today, we have granted wishes to more troops this year than we did in all of 2009. And we will continue to support our troops, as their needs change.

On behalf of our Vice President Monica Orluk, my husband Charles and myself, thank you for your continued support and generosity. We could not do this without you and we treasure your friendship and your commitment.



Kristen Holloway Querriera

President and Founder

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 to raise their morale and to aid in the success and safety of their missions, we present a united front to our deployed military by supporting them as individuals. We do this because each and 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.



FACES FROM THE FRONT

So far during 2010, OTA has provided "wish list" items to **17,000 troops**, items ranging from **sports equipment**, **Under Armour® moisture-wicking shirts**, **phone cards**, **pillows**, **sheets**, **personal hygiene**, **and snack items**. Here are a few of the smiling faces and the "wish list" items they received from OTA!



Unit: HHT 4-73rd Cavalry

Mission: These troops serve in a remote Afghan base fighting the Taliban and live in very sparse conditions.

"Wish list" items: Pool sticks, ping pong supplies, boot insoles, gloves, guitars, snacks and hygiene supplies



Unit: JTF 435-J6

Mission: From Ft. Detrick, MD, these soldiers run detention operations in Afghanistan

"Wish list" items: sports equipment, video gaming and games



Unit: Kandahar CID Office

Mission: These special agents investigate felony offenses in Afghanistan

"Wish list" items: Protein mix, snacks, Under Armour® shirts



Unit: B Company, 1-14 Infantry

Mission: These troops from Schofield Barracks, HI, provide transition training to Iraqi forces

"Wish list" items: Under Armour® shirts and socks



Unit: Medical Platoon, HHC,1-87 Infantry Battalion

Mission:. This medical platoon provides care for wounded soldiers in Afghanistan

"Wish list" items: Supplies for traveling wounded soldiers, blankets, bread maker mix, hair clippers, socks



Unit: A Company, 1-87 Infantry

Mission: From Ft. Drum, NY, these soldiers train and mentor the Afghan army

"Wish list" items: Tactical gloves, Under Armour® shirts, Gerber multi tools, electric converters, gaming system



A SOLDIER'S HOCKEY STORY

One of our favorite stories about helping troops comes from Specialist Tim Keener, a soldier recently stationed in Iraq with the 504 Parachute Infantry Battalion of the 82nd Airborne.

Looking for some hockey equipment to help the soldiers decompress, Spc Keener contacted OTA who worked with a local business to provide hockey sticks, balls and pucks to these soldiers.

With great humor, Spc Keener describes the soldiers' reaction to their new equipment over a four-and-a-half hour period (explained in military time).



So we received the hockey sticks yesterday it went something like this:

- 16:30: The guys and I are playing volleyball, I am told I have a big box of hockey sticks. I smile to myself.
- 17:00: I return to the barracks and open the box I am pleased with the actual quality of the sticks. People begin asking where they came from.
- 17:03: The stick that I have deemed "mine" has been taped and nobbed. I am giddy.
- 17:06: One of the guys from Boston grabs a stick and we head outside and pass one of the balls back and forth.
- 17:20: I go to the gym. Burnsy and I do forearms and biceps, I am distracted by the fact that there are hockey sticks across the street not being touched.
- 18:00: We return to the barracks to find the sticks in a teepee pattern strewn about my living area. Burnsy taunts me that a "Senior Specialist" (me) won't smoke a Private for screwing with my stuff.
- 18:02: More taunting
- 18:04: Power goes out and I can't take a shower. I am sweaty, this irritates me. I go outside and read.
- 18:07: I am joined by several of the squad leaders. One "Hurrraaahhh" breaks out some cigars.
- 18:09: We smoke cigars and wait for the power to come on and tell jokes.
- 18:45: We give up on showers, and with cigars complete get dressed and go to chow.
- 19:50: After choking down a delicious meal of steak, mashed taters and green beans (the only thing that was bearable was the mashed potatoes), we return to the barracks.
- 20:00: Back at the barracks the power is finally on. I change, shower and return.
- 20:20: Burnsy and I grab sticks and one of the balls and go screw around out on the balcony.
- 20:26: Ball is hit off for the first time. I retrieve it by flicking it up and swatting it out of the air (high stick) into the second floor. I am proud.
- 20:28: Ball again flies off the balcony. I retrieve again flicking it up to repeat the previous awesomeness.
- 20:28+20seconds: Ball is on the roof because I flung it too far up and the wind took it.
- 20:29: We put up our sticks.
- 20:30: Half the platoon grabs sticks and we begin playing a 3 on 3 game on the balcony.
- 20:31: I can maneuver around almost everyone with the ball. I am King.
- 20:34: First slashing
- 20:35 First hook
- 20:36: Someone has said for the fourth time "its knuckle puck time. " I am becoming irritated with Mighty Ducks 20:38: They decide trashcan goals are a great idea.
- 20:39: Trash can goals are a bad idea (Trash can juice smells. Who knew?)
- 20:42: Enough people have had their toes slashed (we are playing in sandals) and they decide to quit.
- 20:45: SSG CaramelBear (CB) names his stick something in Spanish that translates to: "the bread meat"
- 20:46: We question his sanity.
- 20:50: SSG CB decides he can't get enough of hockey and begins finding things in the barracks to shoot around in the bay since he has already lost the ball inside somewhere.
- 20:55: Everyone has calmed down and they begin discussing playing ice hockey when we get back. I ask if they can skate. They almost all reply, No. I smile, this will be funny.



IN THEIR OWN WORDS...

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

The members of From: Peter Hofman Sent: Friday, October 01, 2010 4:01 AM Subject: Re: RE: Troop Request Form the 363rd would the 36319 Would life to take the opportunity to thank you for all g your dedication and support. Thoops would be lost with out you! We appreciate the sacrifice you make to volunteer Dear OTA, I received a TV and a video camera this past week! The guys here were overwhelmed by your generosity. They kept asking how I was able to get these items and all I could say was "Ask and you shall receive". I know your organization is called Operation Troop Appreciation but it is us who appreciates you Once I get this all set up I will send some pics or a video :). I want you to know though that what you have provided for us will strengthen my men and their families in ways we may never even know about. It will help Dad's stay in touch with their children, Husbands remain close to their wives and strengthen the overall bonds of the family relationships. Having a dad record himself reading a book does so many things. Some are quite obvious whereas others may be overlooked such as: giving mom a break while the kids are entertained by dad reading to them. Considering we have had 7 KIA's in less than 2 weeks here a dad recording a video of himself has the potential of preserving footage of himself for his kids in the event that he be killed. I think of one of my Soldiers who was killed just a couple days ago who had 2 daughters ages 10 and 8. I can only imagine how meaningful a recording would be to them right now. I don't think we can underestimate the impact you will have over here and at home. You and your organization are such a blessing to us and we are your time Shank You indebted to your amazing generosity. God Bless you and your organization for blessing us. Peter Hofman Special Operations Task Force Southeast - Chaplain Operation Troop Appreciation: From: Oneal, James R Jr SFC Subject: Re: wish list items on the way from OTA! Thank you the Care package your Ma'am Organization sends to deployed Soutiers we are greatly oppreviative Hello from Afghanistan. We received the Under Armour t-shirts today and the guys got the biggest kick out of them, they said it was like Christmas. It is hard for soldiers to heave their On behalf of the team we would like to Thank You so very much for sending them to us. If you could please Thank everyone involved in the arranging and lamilies but these gestures aftirm shipping of the shirts for their Patriotism and Support I would greatly appreciate it. we serve a great country! You and your team have brought some much needed smiles to a bunch of guys that don't usually have a reason or desire to smile. Thanks Thank You 1SGBaltley .lames

-----Original Message-----From: C. D., SSG Subject: Re: wish list items on the way from OTA!

Dear OTA,

Thank you so much for the items you sent to FOB Salerno. The Under Armour shirts arrived just in time for the cold season. Temperatures on the Afghan mountains were unforgiving and those shirts worked like a charm. The word spread to other sections who work with my organization that I was handing out shirts and it got a little hairy for a second but I survived the wave of soldiers swormed me to get a shirt as well.

I left Salerno shortly after that to another location in the south. I got word of other boxes which were sent to me for your organization and I instructed one of the senior sergeants to open the boxes and distribute the goodies among the soldiers. A christmas tree? You sent a christmas tree. When I heard of this...well, this is kind of... well...I got very emotional (just don't tell anyone, this is our secret). Our christmas will be complete! I had made a request to the chaplains organization and they sent an enormous amount of Chistmas tree fertilizer (gifts) for the soldiers. It was special and it was possible because of people like you.

You have no idea how much joy you and OTA have brought to the soldiers here. Well, you do have an idea, but I can tell you that words cannot describe what you have done. You are saints.

Operation Troop Appreciation, From the Soldiers of 25A 100 Thank you So very much for the Care package you Cent us. Me certainly appreceate the support provide to the Calque deployed around the Whe loved the healthy Snacka the pullows and the staters thank you you do . W De Omono

God Bless You.



HOLIDAY ADOPTION PROGRAMS BENEFIT TROOPS

The volunteer staff OTA would like to say **Thank You!** Your commitment to our troops has been overwhelming, and we are grateful for your generosity and support of our brave military men and women. **Even more important, our troops are grateful for your support!**

Because of you, OTA has provided "wish list" items to over **70,000 deployed troops** since July 2004 – items that contribute to their **safety, mission effectiveness and morale**, and remind them they are **remembered and that we appreciate their service and sacrifice**.

This year we offer <u>two programs</u> to give you options as you remember these brave men and women so far from home this Christmas and holiday season.

Adopt A Soldier or Unit – Make an individual monetary contribution or

work with your church, school, civic group, friends or family to donate funds in support of a soldier or unit with specific needs.

We provide an information sheet that includes:

- ★ Photo with mission description
- ★ Background information on the unit
- ★ Requested "wish list" items
- ★ Suggested target donation to complete "wish list"

The next page includes examples of units available for adoption.

"Wish List" Program – Help keep our troops more comfortable in their difficult environments and *donate items* they have requested in their "wish lists," like:



- Personal care
- ★ Hygiene supplies
- ★ Snacks
- ★ Recreational items
- ★ Other care and comfort goodies

To make an even bigger impact, coordinate a collection drive of "wish list" items within your church, school, neighborhood or circle of friends.

The next page includes a list of items we are actively collecting.

The need for support and appreciation from the home front has never been greater, and OTA is facing the most challenging holiday season ever. We have experienced a significant increase in requests from our troops as missions shift from Iraq to Afghanistan, where conditions are harsh and access to basic supplies severely lacking.

- ★ With winter approaching, many troops are in need of basic necessities like blankets, gloves and winter socks. Others have requested items that keep them safe, perform better in their jobs, or provide entertainment when they return to base from their long days and weeks on missions.
- ★ With your help, OTA will bring a little bit of "home" to those who serve so far away by fulfilling their "wish lists" and giving them gifts that symbolize our support, appreciation and respect.
- This holiday season, won't you consider adding an American soldier or military unit to your Christmas and holiday list by making a donation to OTA?

Thank you for your kind consideration of this program. Our resources are limited, but our visions are boundless and we believe we have placed our hopes in the right hands – yours.

The next page includes details of these two programs.



ADOPT A SOLDIER OR UNIT

We have dozens of Soldier and Unit Adoptions available at many levels. Here are a few examples:

Mission	Target Donation Amount	Items	
Advise and train the Afghan police	\$150	Tactical knives, multi- tools, forensics kits	
Convoy equipment and supplies to troops in Iraq	\$200	Sports and exercise equipment	
Provide emergency medical services to troops wounded in Afghanistan	\$325	Web cams and phone cards for wounded soldiers	
Conduct intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance operations in Afghanistan	\$455	Cold weather moisture wicking clothing	
Eliminate Taliban influence in Afghanistan	\$630	Sturdy fire-retardant Nomex® work gloves	
Train and mentor the Iraqi army	\$950	Solar showers, headlamps, tactical flashlights	
Dismantle IEDs and other explosive devices planted by the Taliban	\$1,120	Ballistic eye-protective glasses	

ADOPTION TIPS

- Individuals and groups who adopt a unit are under no obligation to raise the full target donation -- there is no such thing as too small or large a contribution. Every dollar you donate makes a significant impact on the morale of our troops!
- ★ We also encourage you to write cards and letters for your unit of soldiers. OTA will include them in our shipments to the troops.
- ★ Consider including your return address on your cards and letters so the soldiers may communicate with you directly.
- Please contact OTA Vice President Monica Orluk to obtain your adoption packet or for more information: littlemo34@yahoo.com

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"WISH LIST" PROGRAM

Contribute to OTA's "Wish List" program by donating the following items:

RECREATION ITEMS (NEW OR GENTLY USED) CLOTHING / BEDDING (NEW)

DVD movies or TV series CDs of CURRENT artists **Board Games** AAA and AA Alkaline batteries Hand held electronics games Playing cards and poker chips Video gaming systems and games Magazines Puzzle books Sports equipment

FOOD / DRINK MIX (UNOPENED)

Pre-packaged snacks such as

- · Beef jerky, nuts, tuna packets, beef sticks, popcorn, granola bars
- Powdered drink mix (no liquids please)
- · Individual serving packets of cookies, crackers, chips, pretzels, drink mix

Specialty ground coffee such as · Starbucks, Dunkin' Donuts, Tully's

Athletic socks Twin sized sheet sets Twin sized blankets Men's boxers, undershirts Women's sports bras Pillows

HYGIENE ITEMS (UNUSED)

Triple blade razors Non-aerosol shave gel Shampoo / conditioner Shower gel Soap Lotion Foot powder and spray Deodorant Hand sanitizer Baby wipes and hand wipes Chapstick Travel sized toothpaste **Dental supplies** Feminine hygiene supplies

ITEM DONATION GUIDELINES

- ★ Please, **NO OPENED** foods or used clothing or hygiene items.
- ★ Expiration dates on supplies should be good for at least 6 months from date of donation.
- \star Monetary donations are very much appreciated to offset the rising cost of shipping and to purchase supplemental supplies.
- ★ Please contact OTA Vice President Monica Orluk at littlemo34@yahoo.com to make arrangements to deliver your supplies at our storage and packing facility.



COMMUNITY SUPPORT FOR TROOPS

OTA receives tremendous support throughout community efforts in Western PA and all across the country. Here are just a few examples of how the community comes out in very special ways to support our troops through OTA.

Fallen Marine Spurs Support

On June 26, 2010, America lost a brave Marine, Sergeant Joseph Caskey (right) who was killed in action serving his country in Afghanistan.

His family wanted to honor his service and sacrifice by supporting those who continue to fight with a collection drive to aid OTA. Family member Megan Lenz spearheaded the project that extended to all members of the Caskey family as well as supporters throughout the community who wanted to participate in a project that would honor Sgt. Caskey's service and the result was overwhelming.

Megan and her family collected much-needed personal care, hygiene, snack and entertainment items and delivered them to OTA who immediately packed them up and shipped them to Soldiers and Marines serving in Afghanistan.

We are honored to be the recipients of this project and are proud to be able to recognize the sacrifice Sgt. Caskey and his family have made for our country. Our thoughts and prayers remain with the family. May Sgt. Caskey rest in peace. Semper Fidelis.

Thermo Fisher Scientific Delivers in a Big Way

Thermo Fisher Scientific's Safety department is a group that independently adopted soldiers overseas through an internal support program. Once this project was completed, donations were collected and needed a home. Jennifer Ziegler of the Fisher Safety group went on a mission to find the right home for these items and decided OTA would be the best outlet to get these lovingly collected items to our troops. She delivered a truckload of much needed supplies, including sturdy work gloves, snacks and hygiene items, to OTA who had no trouble sending them to many units deployed to Afghanistan and Iraq.

One of the units who received the work gloves wrote in saying, "We have received multiple packages containing headlamps, gloves (all 3 kinds!), razors and batteries. Our guys out here were super excited about everything that was received. They were surprised that someone would take that kind of time and energy and devote it to a single unit. I attached a picture of one of our platoon sergeants wearing a pair of the gloves that you all sent out [right]. It's acts of kindness like this that remind us of what we're fighting for. Once again, thank you so very much for your support and well wishes.



Warmest Regards, Christopher J. Schmitt, SPC, USA

Gateway High School Robotics Club



Recently, the Robotics Club of Gateway High School conducted a robotic competition and wanted to use that venue to demonstrate support for our troops.

The students held a fundraising event and OTA was on hand to discuss the great work we do with the attendees of the tournament. Students from the club met OTA and delivered a

check to OTA President, Kristen Holloway at a recent packing event, giving them the chance to see our organization in action. The students certainly earned an A+ for this project and we are grateful for their support!





TROOP SWAP CONNECTS MILITARY MEMBERS



TroopSwap (<u>TroopSwap.com</u>) is the first veteran-owned and operated platform designed exclusively for members of the military, their families, and the businesses which serve them.

Members can post free Craigslist-style listings or use Paypal to sell

securely through the site, buying, selling and advertising almost anything related to military life. The site also has an exhaustive, easily searchable listing of MWR and military-run vacation resorts.

TroopSwap connects members of the military community, from base to base across the world, helping the military and their families swap into what they need and out of what they don't. Its goal is to leverage the values that underpin the military community in order to create a trusted marketplace designed for the most transient demographic in America.

To honor the men and women who gave a part of themselves to this country, **TroopSwap** also donates 10% of its profits to the **Wounded Warrior Project** (www.woundedwarriorproject.org).

IT'S THAT TIME OF YEAR AGAIN! DONATE TO OTA THROUGH UNITED WAY AND CFC

Did you know you can donate directly to OTA through the United Way and the Combined Federal Campaign?

Simply designate Operation Troop Appreciation on your annual giving contribution form with the following codes:

- United Way Agency #1525287
- CFC Code **# 94786** (in Southwest PA and Ohio Valley only)

By supporting OTA with these campaigns, you'll be helping OTA make sure our troops are taken care of throughout 2011.

DRAVOSBURG AMERICAN LEGION POST 380 HOSTS SECOND ANNUAL OTA BIKE RUN

On a bright and sunny morning in September, over 60 motorcycle enthusiasts and troop supporters gathered at the Dravosburg American Legion Post 380 for the second Annual Bike Run for Operation Troop Appreciation.

Members of the Legion, the Ladies Auxiliary, and a host of volunteers organized the event, prepared coffee and treats before the run, and welcomed the riders back with an awesome buffet dinner.

Special thanks go to the McKeesport police officers who escorted the ride and kept the bikers safe!

OTA is very grateful to the Legion's leaders and volunteers who organized the run, and to all who came out to enjoy this wonderful event, raising \$5000 for our worthy cause!



OTA Vice President Monica Orluk and Ride Captain and Legion member Bill Lockhart.







STAY CONNECTED TO OTA!

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Operation Troop Appreciation is now an official cause on **Facebook.**

Posted on our page are announcements for upcoming events, notices for volunteer opportunities, and pictures of our events and the troops we help.

Please sign on today and "like" our cause so you can get the latest and greatest news from OTA! Do you know someone who would like to get the OTA newsletter delivered via email?

Anyone not already receiving the newsletter electronically can sign up in one easy step by providing their name and email address on our website at <u>OperationTroopAppreciation.org</u>. They'll get our newsletter conveniently delivered to their inbox each quarter. We never provide personal information to third parties.

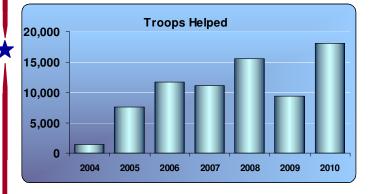


Miss an issue? Past editions of the OTA newsletter are available on our website under **Press Room** on the top navigation bar.

DONATIONS

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

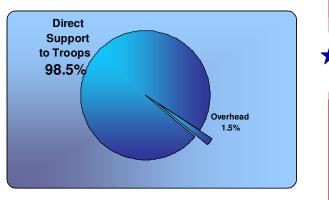
Only with your generosity can we continue to insure our troops feel the love and support we send them from home. Every dollar matters!



OTA has provided "wish list" items for more than 75,000 troops since our inception in July 2004.

We serve active duty, Reserves and National Guard Soldiers, Marines, Sailors, and Airmen serving in Iraq, Afghanistan and other theaters. You can make a secure on-line donation, or send contributions to:

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



OTA is an all-volunteer organization with minimal overhead expenses. As a result, 98.5 cents of every dollar we spend directly supports our troops in the field.

Very few charities can boast this high efficiency rate.



CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Looking for an opportunity to support OTA in the community? Check out these upcoming events and let us know if you are interested in volunteering, or just come out and show your support as a participant.

5th Annual OTA Veteran's Day 5K Race Sunday, November 7, 2010 Hampton Community Park, Allison Park, PA

Enjoy great entertainment before, during and after the race. Every participant will receive a goody bag, race t-shirt, and an All-American post-race buffet.

All runners, walkers, dog-walkers, families and stoller-pushers welcome! Awards will be given for top 3 finishers in each of 13 age groups. But the best prize of all is that all profits will be used to provide holiday care packages for our troops serving in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Visit <u>www.OperationTroopAppreciation.org</u> to register today!

Military Appreciation Day Saturday, November 13, 2010 Century III Mall, West Mifflin, PA

Join OTA and members of the military as we demonstrate support for our troops.

Visit the OTA table and sign a Thank You or Christmas card for the troops.

Donations and contributions of snacks, hygiene supplies, or entertainment items are also welcome!

Annual Soldiers' Wish Tree and Christmas Card Drive November 12 – December 19 (Saturdays, Sundays, Black Friday) Mall at Robinson, Pittsburgh, PA

Starting Friday, Nov. 12 and continuing each Saturday and Sunday right before Christmas, OTA will be collecting Christmas and holiday greetings from mall shoppers. The OTA table will be located at the lower level Grand Court by Starbucks, Guest Services, and Zales.

Shoppers can sign cards which we will put in our care packages, and can also make donations to fill the Soldiers Christmas Wish Tree with stockings representing a gift to a Soldier, Sailor, Airman or Marine.

Look for Operation Troop Appreciation at the Mall at Robinson every weekend from the time Santa arrives to the Sunday before Christmas and send a holiday greeting to the troops! We'll provide the cards and the postage, all you need to do is stop by and add your message!

If you'd like to volunteer at the OTA table at the mall for this fun event, please contact OTA Volunteer Coordinator Amanda Thompson at thompsonab75@yahoo.com.

Zac Brown Band December 4, 2010 Burgettstown, PA

Pittsburgh Country Radio Station Y-108 Welcomes the Zac Brown Band to the Pepsi Roadhouse in Burgettstown for their Y-108 Soldier Salute.

Tickets are going fast at Y108.com and proceeds benefit Operation Troop Appreciation.

See the *Zac Brown Band, Craig Campbell* and Western PA's own *The Stickers* at the Pepsi Roadhouse December 4. To purchase tickets, visit <u>www.y108.com.</u>