



Spring 2008 Newsletter

A MOMENT WITH MO

Dear OTA Supporters and Volunteers,

While you all know me as Vice President of OTA, I am actually employed by Fiserv, Inc. In the many years I've been with Fiserv, I have achieved much success. But Fiserv, Inc. is more than just a good employer. The company fosters a giving culture I've never experienced at other places I've worked. And while Fiserv has always supported OTA through sponsorship of troop projects and other activities, there is another dimension to the Fiserv story when it comes to supporting the troops.

Our company is headquartered in Brookfield, Wisconsin, and this past March, was granted the "Above & Beyond Award" from the Wisconsin Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR), a Department of Defense agency. The award recognizes employers at the state level who have gone above and beyond the legal requirements for granting leave and providing support for their employees' military duty.

As someone dedicated to troop support, you can only imagine the pride I feel at being part of a company that has achieved this honor. The award was granted based on the support given to Fiserv employee, Sergeant Major Ray Stitz, of the 3rd Army Area Support Group. Sergeant Major Stitz completed one 18 month tour in Kuwait during 2005 – 2006 and is currently on his second Middle East deployment performing support services in Qatar. He will be deployed until January 2009.

Ray shared his experience in a press release issued April 4th: "The one thing that has remained constant through these deployments has been the support that I have received from Fiserv," explained Stitz from Qatar. "Whether it was the tremendous send off they gave me, or the constant emails, cards and care packages they provided me during this and the prior deployment, Fiserv has truly kept me part of their life. But the thing that meant the most to me was when I came back to work, it was as if Fiserv gave me a big hug. They truly made me feel welcome. Fiserv is a shining example of how this program should work."

We at OTA are grateful to every company that provides support above and beyond the legal requirements. Without those who serve, our businesses would not have the opportunity to succeed. I am truly blessed to work for a company that illustrates exemplary troop support from the corporate perspective. From the entire volunteer staff of OTA, thank you Fiserv for going above and beyond to help our brave troops!

Monica Orluk
Vice President



WE ARE COMMITTED TO OUR COURAGEOUS...

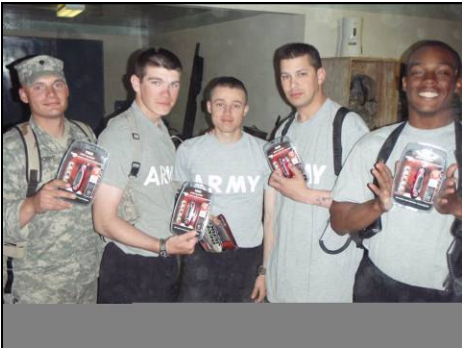
Operation Troop Appreciation (OTA) is dedicated to members of our Armed Forces serving and sacrificing for our country. By providing them with "wish list" items that contribute to their morale and aid in the success and safety of their missions, we present a united front to our deployed military by supporting 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.

FACES FROM THE FRONT

Meet some of the troops who have touched our lives. Their smiles are our biggest reward!



Along with these MP3 players OTA sent Security Force soldiers in Afghanistan, OTA also sent weapons cleaning kits, and phone cards.



These soldiers from A Co 1STB, 1 BCT, 1AD received plenty of yummy snacks from OTA while they served in Iraq.



OTA was proud to send these infantry soldiers from Ft. Polk, LA, Under Armour shirts, snacks, hygiene, and entertainment supplies, items they have a hard time getting on FOB Loyalty in Iraq.



These soldiers of Task Force 5331 assist in humanitarian, civil affairs and special operations in Iraq. OTA sent them heavy-duty military watches and other personal supplies, and the soldiers sent us this autographed picture of their platoon.



These infantry soldiers work with the Iraqi army and police to keep the roads safe in Iraq. They live on a remote base with almost no access to basic supplies. OTA sent them needed tactical supplies to aid in the success and safety of their missions, as well as other needed personal and fun items.



These soldiers who support the Iraqi Security Forces in Baghdad, were thrilled to receive Under Armour shirts and hygiene items from OTA.



The Sailors of USS Kitty Hawk protect the waters of the 7th fleet in the waters near Japan and North Korea. OTA sent them recreational and personal items.



This Division Force Field Artillery HQ unit received entertainment and recreational items from OTA.

LOCAL COMPANY HELPS SOLDIERS STAY SAFER DURING DANGEROUS MISSIONS

Earlier this year, OTA received a very special request from some soldiers on the front lines of Iraq who requested a mine detector to aid and protect them in their very dangerous missions of uncovering weapons caches buried by insurgents.

Rob Sickles, OTA volunteer, former Iraq war veteran and infantry scout, approached his employer **Foerster Instruments, Inc.** to see if they could help OTA fulfill this request. Foerster offers the highest quality and widest range of electromagnetic instruments, accessories, and testing systems in the world, and has long been recognized as a leader in the field of electromagnetic non-destructive testing.

Without batting an eye, Foerster donated a top-of-the-line mine detector to OTA so we could fulfill this request. "We, at Foerster, have employees and relatives that are serving or have served in all branches of the military and feel a responsibility to help them. We recognize the sacrifices being made by our troops and appreciate all that they are doing. Therefore, we are glad to donate a Foerster Minex mine detector to their efforts in order to increase their safety in some small way," said Foerster President Matthew Davin.

The soldiers were ecstatic, and sent a beautiful letter and pictures of the success they have enjoyed as a result of Foerster's gracious generosity.

We'll never know how many lives of American servicemen this mine detector may have saved, but it is abundantly clear that these soldiers can carry out their missions more safely and with more success because of Foerster's generous support of our troops through OTA.

Dear Operation Troop Appreciation and Foerster,

The mine detector you sent was above and beyond anything we ever expected. It has been an enormous time saver. It is perfect for searching the farms and large mud-floored courtyards - the insurgents bury almost all of their caches here.

Before we had the mine detector, it was incredibly painful and slow to dig up all the "suspicious" areas on an insurgent's property. Now, we simply sweep the mine detector over an area to decide whether it requires further investigation.

Just yesterday, we used it to search three different farms after an eleven-year old boy told us he found "dough fingers" in a partially buried chest on his farm no more than 175 meters from our Joint Combat Out-Post. The dough-fingers were sticks of TNT that lined a ready-to-use suicide vest. Other platoons frequently borrow the mine detector when they get tips on possible caches as well.

*Sincerely,
Lt. A.T*



U.S. soldiers use the Foerster mine detector to uncover weapons caches in Iraq.

SPECIAL ADOPTIONS

Many very special groups have adopted OTA units or conducted fund drives for their “adopted” units. We are proud to bring you some of their stories:

Sgt. Jerry Schilling of the PA National Guard is currently deployed as part of a special unit at PRT Ghazni, Afghanistan. Shortly after his arrival, there was a fire in the base MWR (Morale, Welfare, Recreation) tent, leaving a huge need for recreational items. As this is his second deployment, he remembered his friends at OTA and how he was helped when deployed to Iraq a few years ago.

At the same time, Gregg Altieri of IMC Documents (A Highmark Company in Pittsburgh), contacted OTA looking for a unit of soldiers to adopt. IMC wanted to do something that would boost the morale of deployed soldiers.



IMC Documents Employees with donated items for PRT Ghazni.

IMC held a collection drive that provided Sgt Schilling’s unit with replacement items for the MWR tent. Included with the donation were plenty of the requested “wish list” items (such as an X-Box, games, DVDs and other recreational gifts) for the men and women on base. Just days prior receiving these packages, Schilling’s unit lost 2 soldiers in an attack. So these gifts were especially well received by this unit living after these tragic events.

Sometimes, when you refer to “a ton” it can be an exaggeration; however, in the case of **Jefferson Hills Elementary School**, a ton of donated items is literally what they collected during their recent collection drive for OTA.

As box after box was unloaded at OTA headquarters, it became very clear that these students were serious about troop support. The boxes were decorated in red, white and blue and contained items our soldiers most frequently request.

This drive enabled OTA to send snack and hygiene items to thousands of deployed troop members. Way to go kids!

The **Darroch Funeral Home** in Aliquippa, Pa worked with **Raccoon and Independence Elementary Schools** to demonstrate support for our brave soldiers. The results were outstanding!

The two schools are in the Hopewell School District and each carried a week long series of events in an effort to collect much needed items for our troops.

OTA Board Member Sgt. Mike Fisher visited each school and spoke to the students about life as a soldier, deployment and the importance of troop support.

These schools earned an “A” for their effort. Many thanks to the Darroch Funeral Home for coordinating this effort!



Operation Troop appreciation is **always** in need of donated items to fulfill all our troops’ “wish list” requests.

If you, your company, church, school or civic group are in the **Pittsburgh area** and would like to hold a collection drive for OTA, please contact Vice President Monica Orluk at 412-759-0696 or littlemo34@yahoo.com for a list of needed items and collection guidelines.

Groups and individuals nationwide can also “adopt” a unit as part of a fundraising effort. Please contact Monica for adoption information as well.

IN THEIR OWN WORDS...

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

"We got the boxes you sent, and they were a HUGE hit. Definitely one of the best care packages I have seen throughout the deployment! We cannot thank you enough for the kindness, time, and thought that went into putting those care packages together for the troops." ~ Lt K.M., USMC

"Thank you so very much – you guys sent a lot more stuff than was expected. No one will have to spend money on toiletries for a long time. THANK YOU!" ~ Specialist G.H., Army

"Wow! Thank you so much for the children's toys. We appreciate them so much and look forward to passing out to the children here – they will assist us in bridging the gap between Americans and Iraqis. May God bless you!" ~ Major N.C., Army

"Yet again I must thank you for your amazing ability to take the bite off our long deployment here. Even on my third deployment, I can not begin to imagine that support would well up so well after the continuous negativity I saw on the second one. I am truly glad to know genuine people like you from these tours." ~ Cpt. J.G., Army

"I am currently in Fort Knox Kentucky, I am going to school for a new engineer vehicle called the ABV. It is pretty neat and will give me some time to spend with my family.

I am now happily married with a four year old step daughter and my wife is pregnant with a baby boy. She is due late August I am very excited and can't wait for him to be born.

I just returned in November from my second tour to Iraq. I went back where I was before and stayed in the same area. I went to visit the Marines living in my old house and they were actually sitting there listening to a Marine play the guitar you had previously sent over to my unit when I was there. So your gifts are being well taken care of and used frequently. Thanks so much for everything you have done for me and my fellow Marines. Also thank you very much for all the work you do and time you give to the Armed services. We ALL really appreciate your time and effort." ~ Cpl A.B., USMC.

"Thank you very much. You just don't know how much what you do means to my soldiers and me, that there are actually Americans out there thinking about us. Even though it seems as if everyone forgot about September 11. Thanks for all you have done for me and my soldiers" ~ Sgt. K.A., Army

"I know you probably get tons of letters from soldiers, but I would like to thank you for the support, not only for me, but for everyone that serves. Thank you for the items you sent, but most importantly, Thank You for your love and support." ~ Sergeant J.F., Army

"I want you to know that for some of my troops, your packages and letters might be the only mail they will receive while they are here. You absolutely have touched the hearts of many of America's finest. You can rest assured that the men and women out here are working hard, sweating in the heat and trying our best to ensure the Iraqis have a stable and free environment. We never stop thinking about back home and the people who support us. I want to send everyone who supports your organization our sincere appreciation." ~ SSG L.A., Army

"The simple words of Thank You cannot begin to express how much your packages and letters mean not only to me, but to all the soldiers who you reach out to! We are very grateful to have people like yourselves help us during our time of need. It shows we are not forgotten and that there are people that care about us." ~ SFC K.L., Army

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Don't miss your chance to participate in these fun upcoming events to support our troops!

August 23: Win Clay's Chopper

Place: Ice Garden in Rostraver Township, Belle Vernon, PA

Clay Kollar's life revolves around motorcycles. Every year he designs and builds a custom old-school chopper-style motorcycle, and then holds a huge party to give it away! This year, he decided that the bike and the **Win Clay's Chopper** party will benefit Operation Troop Appreciation.

The bike is decked out in official military digi-cami gel paint and the seat is covered in the uniform of a PA National Guardsman. This one-of-a-kind OTA bike will be a lasting tribute to all who have served in the past and those who serve today.

This year's party will be held on August 23, 2008 at the Ice Garden in Rostraver. Tickets are \$30 in advance, \$45 at the door and include:

- Two chances to win the OTA Chopper, based on the 7 p.m. PA Lottery Big 4 Drawing on August 23, 2008
- Concert performances by Molly Hatchet and Blackfoot and a number of local bands
- Beverages
- A "Dice Run" will be held prior to the party and the winner will receive a 2008 Harley Davidson Sportster!

Molly Hatchet and **Blackfoot** have each donated autographed guitars that are being raffled off. Each ticket gives you two chances to win!

You don't want to miss the chance to attend the biggest party in the 'Burgh! Tickets are on sale now! To get yours, contact Monica Orluk, 412-759-0696 or order securely on-line at www.OperationTroopAppreciation.org

Go to www.WinClaysChopper.com to see more pictures of the bike and to learn about events that Clay will be attending with this bike over the summer.



November 9: Veteran's Day 5K Race

Place: Hampton Community Park, Pittsburgh



The Third Annual **Veteran's Day 5K Race** will take place on Sunday, November 9 at 8:30 am in Hampton Community Park. More details will be forthcoming and additional details will be posted on our website soon. Stay tuned, and please plan to join us for the largest OTA 5K race yet!

SPECIAL THANKS

Many businesses and civic groups have been very generous with their time, talent and contributions. We would like to especially 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 and support.

Alexander's Gym in Creighton, PA held yet another special spinning class to raise funds for their "adopted" soldier unit, their fourth such project! Each spinner donated \$5 to partake in a special spinning class led by trainers Sue Guiciardi (pictured right) and Jim Boyer. The gym raised over \$1000 for OTA, and gym members signed a special *Thank You* banner for us to send to the troops as well.

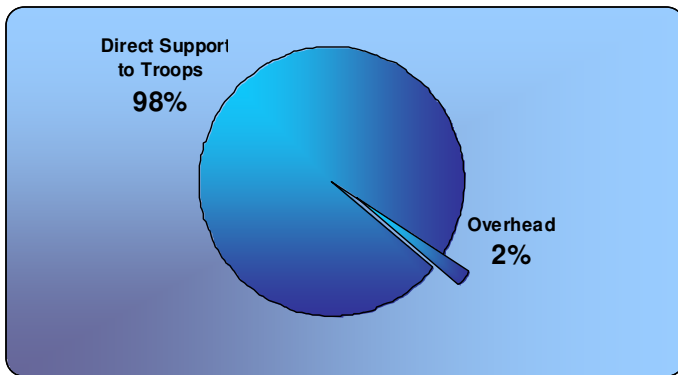


We would like to thank the **Upper St. Clair Rotary** and the **Mt. Lebanon Rotary** for their continued support of Operation Troop Appreciation. The Rotaries recently donated a total of \$750 to OTA in support of our work with deployed troops. We are grateful to these generous Rotarians!

On July 4, **Shootz Café** in Pittsburgh's South Side hosted a fundraiser for OTA. Joining the festivities and playing for the crowds were local favorite bands **3 a.m.** and the **Sofa King Cool Band**. OTA's newest partner, **The Patriot Girls** – a grassroots effort to help support the men and women of the United States Military, joined us for this exciting Independence Day fundraiser. Pictured right: **Mike Suska** (President Patriot Girls), **Antonio Garcia** (owner Shootz Café), **Kristen Holloway** (OTA President), and **Wayne Livingston** (Marketing Director Patriot Girls) at the fundraiser.

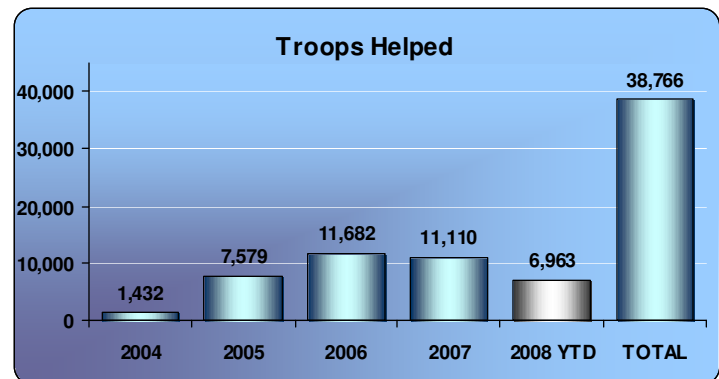


PROGRESS TO DATE



OTA is an all-volunteer organization with minimal overhead expenses. As a result, 98 cents of every dollar we spend directly supports our troops in the field.

Very few charities can boast this high efficiency rate.



OTA has provided "wish list" items for almost 40,000 troops since our inception in July 2004.

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!

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

MORE SUCCESS STORIES

Since our last newsletter update, 3,700 more deployed troops received “wish list” items from OTA, bringing the total number of troops who have benefited from OTA to over 38,000! Here is a snapshot of some of these units, what they are doing, and what OTA provided.

Branch	Mission	Wish List
Air Force	This provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) is responsible for rebuilding the Infrastructure of Afghanistan.	Commercial bingo set
Army	This border transition team works on the remote and dangerous Iran-Iraq border.	Footballs, baseball equipment, Under Armour shirts
Army	From Ft. Drum, NY, these infantry soldiers perform ambushes, patrols, raids and intelligence gathering in Iraq.	Gerber tools, gloves and ballistics glasses, Under Armour shirts
Army	This squad is responsible for the maintenance of over 80 military vehicles in Iraq.	Mechanics gloves, safety goggles, coveralls
Army	These infantry soldiers sleep in tents on the ground. They have no amenities on their remote base in Afghanistan.	Solar showers, air beds
Marines	These Marines provide security in their area of operations inside Iraq.	PS2 game console and video games
Army	This unit guards inmates in Kuwait.	Army uniform shirts, hygiene items



OTA RECOGNIZED BY ALLEGHENY COUNTY COUNCIL

OTA President Kristen Holloway and Vice President Monica Orluk were granted a very special honor by the Allegheny County Council by way of a Council Proclamation acknowledging the work they perform in support of our deployed servicemen and women.

Nominated by OTA volunteer and former Marine Victoria Mohney, and sponsored by Council President Rich Fitzgerald, and Council Members Chuck Martoni, Jim Burn, Bob Macey, Michael Finnerty, Joan Cleary, Amanda Green, Jim Ellenbogen, Nicholas Futules, and William Russell, the proclamation was awarded to Kristen and Monica on May 6, 2008.

“As a life-long resident of Allegheny County, this honor is truly appreciated,” said Monica Orluk. “We could not have realized the success we’ve achieved without the good people of Allegheny County and the surrounding areas.”



Kristen, Monica and County Council President Rich Fitzgerald.

THE PATRIOT GIRLS JOIN THE OTA TEAM!



OTA has been fortunate to become involved with The Patriot Girls, a Western-PA based company, formed in May 2007, with the mission of supporting the service men and women of the U.S. Armed Forces. This for-profit company is devoted to raising awareness and funds for veterans and troop support charities such as OTA.

The company's first product was the 2008 **Patriot Girls Calendar**, and they donated \$1 to the Wounded Warrior Project (WWP) for every calendar sold. WWP honors and empowers wounded veterans by helping them transition back to civilian life after being injured in service of our country.

Next year, OTA will have the honor of being the Patriot Girls' beneficiary of the 2009 Calendar. But their support does not stop there.

The Patriot Girls President, Mike Suska, and Marketing Director, Wayne Livingston, have become invaluable partners with OTA. These patriotic businessmen and several of the Patriot Girls participated in a recent OTA packing party, packing "wish list" boxes for over 1,000 troop members, and donating 1,000 calendars to include in our care packages. The group also supported OTA at our Independence Day fundraiser at Shootz Café in Pittsburgh's South Side.

You can meet The Patriot Girls this summer throughout Pittsburgh, as they help to promote OTA events, such as Win Clay's Chopper.

LOCAL WOMAN RECEIVES PRESIDENTIAL SERVICE AWARD

President Bush presented local Pittsburgh woman, **Dawnle Scheetz**, with his Presidential Service Award on May 6 in honor of Military Spouses Day. Dawnle is a Family Readiness Group (FRG) Volunteer at the 475th QM Group in Farrell, PA. She was one of six outstanding military spouse volunteers from across the nation selected to receive such a prestigious award at the White House.

Dawnle received this award in recognition of initiating "**Operation Schoolhouse**" in her community, collecting, packaging and shipping over five tons of school supplies, toys and clothing to our soldiers to distribute to children and teachers in Iraq and Afghanistan, while her husband was deployed there.

And she did all this while battling breast cancer. Her husband, Major Larry Scheetz, received a Commander's coin with the Presidential Seal from the Commander in Chief. Their 16 year old daughter, Adrienne, accompanied them to the White House.



President Bush said of Dawnle (seated third from right) when he read her accomplishments and presented her award: "Dawnle, your service has changed young lives in Iraq and Afghanistan, and your service has inspired the whole nation."

Tom Cannon, the 99th Regional Readiness Command Family Programs Director who had nominated Dawnle for the award, and Tom's wife Maria accepted special Presidential invitations to accompany the Scheetz Family to the ceremonies at the White House. It was certainly a special honor for Dawnle and her family, as well as the 475th QM Group, the 316th ESC, the 99th RRC, and the United States Army Reserve.

3RD ANNUAL OTA GOLF OUTING

For the 3rd year in a row, OTA kicked off golf season with another successful outing! This year's event was held at the Rolling Hills Country Club in McMurray, PA. Over 70 golfers came out to compete in a scramble tournament to raise money in support of our deployed troops, enabling OTA to purchase more "wish list" items for our active troop projects.

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 foursomes and the winners of the hole challenges. Golfers also had the opportunity to participate in a silent auction, and win door prizes.



Rolling Hills Country Club hosted OTA's golf outing for the second year in a row.

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

- Golf Committee members Gary Storie and Bob Reese who worked tirelessly to help make this event a success.
- Frank, Mark and Lynn Caputo, of *1st and Goal Sports* provided fabulous sports memorabilia items for auction, and managed the silent auction.
- Erica Newport of *Tastefully Gourmet* for catering the lunch.
- *Lionsgate Entertainment*, who was our event Platinum Sponsor for the second year in a row.

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


JOSEPH-BETH BOOKSELLERS TO HOLD OTA FUNDRAISER

Joseph-Beth Booksellers, in Pittsburgh's South Side, will hold a fundraiser for OTA on Saturday, August 9.

From 10 am to 10 pm that day, Joseph-Beth will donate 20% of every purchase made with the attached voucher. Simply clip and present at check-out!

In addition, OTA executives will be at the store to give an informational presentation at 7 p.m.

We are grateful to Joseph-Beth for their support of our troops and look forward to this great event!



Operation Troop Appreciation Book Fair

Saturday, August 9, 7:00pm


Present this coupon *anytime* on Saturday, August 9th so that 20% of your purchase will go back to Operation Troop Appreciation!

You'll also enjoy a presentation by representatives from OTA at 7:00PM. So stop by the bookstore and find out more about this amazing Pittsburgh organization!

When: Saturday, August 9 at 7:00pm

Where: Joseph-Beth Booksellers
2705 E. Carson Street
Pittsburgh, PA 15203

Why: Operation Troop Appreciation will receive a donation for 20% of your total purchase!



Present this voucher with your purchase on Saturday, August 9 from 10:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. and OTA will receive a 20% donation based on your total purchase. Gift cards, prior purchases, periodicals and already discounted items are not included.