



OPERATION TROOP APPRECIATION

COMMITTED TO
OUR COURAGEOUS
MEMBERS OF THE
US MILITARY, PAST
AND PRESENT

THE Eagle

Winter 2020

OPERATION REACH OUT IN A COVID-19 WORLD



Pre-Covid
Operation Reach
Out Packing day.

Last year, OTA partnered with GBU Financial Life to continue their program Operation Reach Out. And it was a rousing success! Together we were able to ship 5,000 care packages overseas. OTA hosted more than 200 volunteers who assembled the boxes and completed our first shipment of over 300 cartons to locations throughout the Middle East.

Unfortunately, **2020 has forced us to change the process** – while we increase our goal to help even more troops and veterans. Our primary concern was the health and safety of our volunteers and GBU members and there is no way we could do that with current restrictions.

Operation Reach Out 2020 has been extended from October 1st to March 30th, which allows us to spread out the activities

and hold twice monthly volunteer packing days, limited to 25 volunteers. We are now fulfilling specific wish list requests, instead of sending individual care packages. And instead of GBU pre-purchasing items to ship, they are going to fund the cost of the items we purchase for both our Active-Duty Wishlist requests and Veteran Welcome Home services.

Since we launched in October, we have helped over 3,000 troops and veterans and we are only two months into the program! If you would like to take part in Operation Reach Out visit <https://www.gbucares.org/operation-reach-out> to sign up for a volunteer day, download a coloring page, or simply make a donation.



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MISSION

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

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

MESSAGE FROM MO



We approach the end of another year – and what a year 2020 turned out to be! As the year began, we were full of hope, then came Covid-19. And everything changed. We quickly learned that we were “essential” and terms like “PPE,” “Social Distancing” and “lockdowns” became a focus. As unemployment increased, our donations decreased. Our volunteer staff was reduced greatly so we could protect those at high risk. And we immediately went to work.

In addition to maintaining our Active-Duty Wishlist & Veteran Welcome Home programs, we added twice weekly distribution of non-perishable food and personal care/hygiene boxes to first responders, active military, and veteran families in need.

We spent a lot of time cleaning, sanitizing, securing masks for our volunteers and cancelling key fundraising events. We were faced with challenges that we could have never imagined and are still facing nine months later.

So how did we do? I have to say we've weathered the pandemic brilliantly. We were able to utilize corporate sponsors who provided help when we needed volunteers. We secured additional grant funding and continued our partnership with GBU Financial Life through their Operation Reach Out project. **We were able to hold 3 significant events: our 4th Annual Motorcycle Run, Annual Jewelry Sale and 15th Annual Veterans Day 5K Race.** They were a great success and enabled us to continue our mission. You can read all about them in this issue of *The Eagle*.

And we maintained our position as a Top-Rated Charity for the 10th consecutive year!

While the end of 2020 and the new year seem to be full of uncertainty, one thing is certain. Our troops and veterans need our support. And you can be certain that OTA will be here to provide that help. But we can't do it without you. For 16 years your generosity has allowed us to help over 190,000 deployed troops and veterans and for that we THANK YOU from the bottom of our hearts.

We hope that during this strange and challenging holiday season, you and your family find joy and peace. We wish the same for our troops serving far from home this holiday season, and our veterans struggling to make their way back home.

– *Monica*



WORDS OF GRATITUDE FROM OUR TROOPS AND VETERANS

We are happy to share these letters of gratitude and photos of those we serve:



To The OTA Family,

Through my almost 17 years of service, I have been deployed several times to three different continents. I continue to be amazed by organizations like yours that keep supporting service members for almost two decades now. Where most of the stateside population has become fatigued and “supporting the troops” has become cliché, people like OTA remind us that there are plenty of people who still remember why we’re here.

We cannot adequately articulate to you how much your effort and generosity truly means to us and all the service members you support. Please understand – what you do, it truly matters and makes a difference! So from the 79th and this guy from a small town in East Texas... THANK YOU!

SFC Sanders, US Army

Dear Operation Troop Appreciation,

Thank you for such a generous gift! The boxes couldn’t have come at a more perfect time. We were preparing for Easter, and getting some treats together for our Soldiers when the boxes arrived. What a blessing, because I was running out of things to put in their goodie bags. Thank you!

It’s never an easy thing to be away from the ones you love around the holidays, but receiving love and good thoughts from people back home make it a little easier – especially when it comes from a home-town organization! We have quite a few Soldiers with us from Western Pennsylvania (Go Pens!)

Again, thank you for what you do and thank you for your kindness and support.

God Bless,

Chaplain, PAARNG

To the Volunteers of OTA,

I am happy to say that our platoon received a box of snacks including beef jerky (Probably the platoons favorite of all) chips, cookies and other goodies! We are truly grateful for this gesture of goodwill as we are doing our duty to go where our nation beckons. Your letter was very heartfelt and it moves us to have such support from people back home, people that we don’t even know, who would care enough to reach out to those separated from family and loved ones! Blessings to you and all those that support us and to the many, many other military you support.

God bless,

Spc US Army



2020 EVENT HIGHLIGHTS

While most of our fundraising events were cancelled for the year, we were able to conduct a few that brought us together, even if we were socially distanced! Here are the highlights!

5th Annual Country Sounds For Soldiers Concert

On a Sunday in June, some of the most talented musicians in Western PA came together to show their support for our troops and veterans. Lead by **Keith Gill, Jr.** a two-set, round robin show featured performances by **Keith Gill Jr., Frank Viera, Marty Zundel,**

Logan Brice, Katelyn Rose, Antolena, Rachel Leigh, and **Lacy May.**

The Plum JROTC flag and Color Guard also performed.

Antolena started the show with her moving rendition of *God Bless America*.

Sponsored by Turner Dairies, we are grateful to these performers who donated their performance and raised over 1,000 that day!



Antolena singing God Bless America.

Annual Gently Used Jewelry Sale

Many kudos to **Kathy Gasior** and her team for pulling off a COVID-19 safe, socially distanced event that raised over \$9,000 over the course of two days! November 6 and 7 marked two days of much needed retail therapy where



nothing cost more than \$5 and many were 3 for \$1!

We offered the deals and the team worked very hard to ensure everyone had a great time and remained safe.

15th Annual Veterans Day 5K Race

It is hard to believe that **Alice McLaughlin** has directed this event for 15 years in a row! And she did not disappoint! We had the largest number of pre-registrants, over 200 and many who signed up to run or walk the challenging course through Hampton Community Park. We are proud of the winners in every age category who all went home with a medal and an apple pie!



4th Annual Motorcycle Run

It was a challenge and we maneuvered through COVID-19 cancellations, bad weather, a date change and new finish location, but we pulled off a successful bike run this year!

On September 27th, approximately 100 motorcycles roared through the Mon Valley for a 100 mile ride that ended at the El Rama Fire Hall. We used their picnic pavilion for our post-race dinner and gift basket raffle. We were blessed with a beautiful day and many patriotic people who helped us raise over \$2,500!



COMING SOON!

OTA and Veterans Tell Our Story



HOW YOU CAN HELP

Easy Donations or Organized Collection Drives

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

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

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

Hygiene

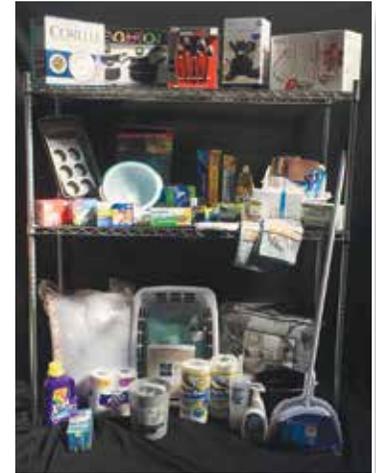
- Body wash
- Men's deodorant
- Men's triple blade razors

Food (unopened and unexpired)

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

Veteran Welcome Home Kits

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



NEW ITEMS IN ORIGINAL PACKAGING, PLEASE!

Yellow Ribbon Campaign

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

Cents for Soldiers

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

Support OTA When Shopping Online

To purchase Welcome Home Kit items that are shipped directly to us, go to:

smile.amazon.com/gp/ch/list/81-0651982

You shop, Amazon Smile donates!

Go to Smile.Amazon.com, search for us and log onto your Amazon account to donate to OTA when making purchases.

Cards and letters are always welcome and included in the gifts we provide to troops and veterans.

For more information on these programs, please contact OTA Community Projects Coordinator, **Sherry Einhaus**, sdeinhaus@comcast.net or by phone at 412-973-1831.

Connect With Us

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

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





HELP A HERO THIS HOLIDAY SEASON!

THE TROOPS WE SERVE

You are far from home, missing your family.

Most of your days are spent out on patrol, never knowing when the fighting will start again.

The weather is extreme – over 100 degrees in summer, far below zero in winter.

Your missions are dangerous and you worry about those you serve with and those you left at home.

The conditions you live in are austere, and basic necessities like shampoo, toothbrushes, and razors are scarce.

Now imagine, you come back to your tent after a long mission and sitting on your cot is a box full of the things you miss most from home. **A box from OTA!**

YOUR GIFT TO OTA

Target donation items OTA provides:

- \$50** Foul weather moisture wicking clothing for a soldier
- \$100** Transportation to doctor appointments for a veteran
- \$275** Brand new bed for a veteran
- \$350** Tactical gloves and eye-protective glasses for a unit of troops
- \$500** Full size bed, mattress set, and Welcome Home Kit for a veteran
- \$900** Sports equipment, nutritional supplements, work out gear and healthy snacks to a platoon of troops
- \$1,250** Beds and a welcome home kit for a veteran family of four.

THE VETERANS WE SERVE

You've made it home and you receive the VA help you deserve: medical care, job and housing assistance.

You move into your new home, but you don't have a bed so you're sleeping on the floor.

You don't have anything to cook with, so you eat fast food, if you eat anything at all.

You have a doctor's appointment, but no car and no way to get there.

You're starting a new job, but worry because you haven't slept well, haven't eaten and will have to walk to get there.

Now imagine, you get a phone call and a knock on the door. A brand new bed is delivered along with boxes and bags of all the things you need to make your house a home. You get a phone call and you now have transportation to get to work and your doctor appointments. **All provided by OTA!**



**100% VOLUNTEER
FOR 16 YEARS!**

**WE SERVE THOSE
WHO VOLUNTEER
TO SERVE OUR
COUNTRY!**



16 YEARS OF SUPPORT

Total Donations:

3.3 MILLION DOLLARS!

Launched Active Duty Wish List Program 2004:

190,000 TROOPS HELPED

Launched Veteran Welcome Home Program 2014:

5,500 VETERAN PROJECTS COMPLETED

With a 100% volunteer staff, we ensure that 90% of all funding is used to fund our programs – not to line our pockets!



*We are actively seeking sponsors, donations and volunteers for all events.
Please contact Sherri Einhaus, sdeinhaus@comcast.net if interested.*



Donate

Many of the "wish list" and "welcome home" items we provide are expensive and available only from specialized suppliers. We are in need of funds to purchase these specialty items.

Conduct a Collection Drive

There are many ways to conduct collection drives for needed items throughout your community, church, school or workplace.

Donations are accepted for delivery at our Operations Center located at 1200 Lebanon Rd., West Mifflin PA 15122.

Hours: **Tuesdays & Thursdays** 10 a.m.-3 p.m.

Saturdays 10 a.m.-1 p.m.

Be a Sponsor or Partner

We are always in need of sponsors and partners who donate their goods or services to our organization or help to sponsor fund-raising events with monetary contributions.

Learn More About Us

Visit www.OperationTroopAppreciation.org for more information and to make a secure on-line donation.

Or send a check payable to OTA to:

Operation Troop Appreciation

PO Box 18052

Pittsburgh, PA 15236



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