

OPERATION

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ Troop Appreciation

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

★ ★ ★ KRISTEN'S CORNER ★ ★ ★

THANK YOU! For the last seven years, YOU have been the reason for our success in providing "wish list" items for our troops in Iraq, Afghanistan, throughout the Middle East, and most recently, in the Mediterranean Sea.

Your consistent support has helped OTA mark **five important milestones:**

- ★ Providing for more than **100,000 troops** engaged in the War on Terror
- ★ Raising more than **\$1 million** to help our deployed troops stay more comfortable, safe and mission-effective
- ★ Celebrating on July 1 **seven years** of dedicated and tangible support to our troops
- ★ Improving our **new packing and drop off center** at Century III Mall in West Mifflin, PA
- ★ Continuing to direct **98.5 cents of every dollar spent** to "wish list" items for our troops

With your help, OTA has provided thousands of troops their requested "wish list" items this summer, such as:

Ballistic protective eye glasses ★ GPS systems ★ sports equipment ★ multi-tools and tactical knives ★ phone cards ★ musical instruments for chapel services ★ moisture-wicking extreme weather clothing ★ video game consoles ★ fire-retardant work gloves ★ nutritious snacks and protein supplements ★ personal hygiene items ★ and other needed, morale-boosting supplies.

With many of these troops serving on their third, fourth, fifth, or even sixth deployment overseas, our support of them is critical.

- ★ Basic hygiene, personal care and morale-boosting items are difficult, if not impossible, to find in **Iraq** due to the troop drawdown and closure of U.S. bases and military resources.
- ★ The treacherous terrain, lack of infrastructure, non-existence of military exchanges, and remote base locations in **Afghanistan** prevent our troops from obtaining basic supplies. Many live on remote outposts where there are no creature comforts or reliable electricity and running water.

As we celebrate seven wonderful years of operation, I'd like to let you know how much more work we have to do, and how your support of our troops through OTA is as important as ever. For example, **did you know:**

- ★ Only **1%** of the U.S. population serves in the military?
- ★ Over **two million troops** have been deployed since 2001 to defend our nation and our freedom?
- ★ There are currently **130,000 American Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Marines** deployed to Afghanistan, Iraq, the Middle East and the Mediterranean Sea?

With your continued 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.

We do not know how and where our military will be serving in the next seven years. But I know there will always be a need for OTA, and our volunteers are prepared to do whatever it takes to tangibly support our troops in any way they need. We all pray for the safe return of all our deployed military, and as long as we have troops deployed and protecting our freedom, OTA will be there for them.



Thank you for all you've done to help us in our first seven years. And for your continued support that will enable us to continue far into the future.

Kristen Holloway Querriera
Founder, CEO, Chairman of the Board

Spring 2011 Newsletter

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★ ★ ★ FROM THE FRONT LINES ★ ★ ★

These letters and emails from troops on the receiving end of OTA say it all. And the sincerity of their pictures melts our hearts.



 UNITED STATES ARMY

Dear Kisten : Operation Troop Appreciation,

It's been long overdue, but I wanted you to know how nice it was to receive your packages while I was deployed. We were stationed in a pretty remote area of Afghanistan, which made it quite hard to enjoy many comforts. But believe me your packages came like presents on Christmas morning. I thoroughly enjoyed every single thing that was sent and I know my Platoon felt the same way. Operation Troop Appreciation is a wonderful organization and you all of shall I say "we", can't be thanked enough for your time and energy. From the bottom of my heart THANK YOU!

Jonathan Barnes

-----Original Message-----
 Sent: Thursday, June 30, 2011 3:51 AM
 Subject: Thank you

Ma'am,

The items did arrive and the troops loved them! We were getting several boxes everyday for quite a while. The Soldiers were so excited for the end of the day formations because they were looking forward to the boxes coming from OTAA!

I cannot thank you enough for what you guys do for us. Your support really brought smiles to my Soldiers' faces and a beam of light in a really dark time for them. Things were getting hard over here and the moral was boosted by the packages you sent. They really appreciate it. On behalf of the MRT Platoon,

THANK YOU SO MUCH!! God bless you.

CPL L. Pita



-----Original Message-----
 Sent: Wednesday, July 27, 2011 11:20 PM
 Subject: Thank You!

Ms. Holloway and Supporters of OTA,

I have just received 2 boxes in the mail. I cannot thank you all enough for these items.

We are grateful for everything everyone sends us, but the items included with OTA's items are HUGELY needed and can be utilized by everyone. We are in a very remote place in Afghanistan with no access to the amenities of larger bases. Additionally, the terrain is very unforgiving and the socks I just received were like gold here. We go through socks daily.

As all of the items are great, I wanted to give me a specific example of how it immediately went to work. Mail typically takes 20 to 30 days to get to us. Yesterday I received the box containing food and supplements. It is very refreshing to have something other than an MRE. This is true for all of us and not just me.

Again, I can't thank you all enough. It is great to see and hear people have not put the war completely by the wayside, especially with so many other national issues. A lot of Marines often wonder what people really think about the war sometimes. We are aware it rarely makes the news and when one of our brothers is hurt or killed, the recognition is a small blurb in a "military newspaper". Organizations such as OTA really bring "home" to us and really boost morale. It helps maintain a positive atmosphere, especially when one of our brothers are hurt or pays the ultimate sacrifice.

Thank you again.

Sincerely,
 SSGT Z. Hancock



★ ★ ★ **SOME EXTRA TLC FOR AFGHANISTAN** ★ ★ ★

COMBATIVES TRAINING FOR A MEDICAL OPS PLATOON

When Sergeant First Class Keith Frain contacted OTA in May, he presented us with a special challenge.

SFC Frain wanted to conduct combatives and mixed martial arts training for his platoon and other soldiers on their base. The only problem was he had very little equipment with which to train.

SFC Frain knew exactly what he needed in order to effectively train his soldiers, so OTA and he worked closely together to fulfill his "wish list."

A few weeks later, OTA sent over floor mats, sparring gloves, body shields, a punching bag and other necessary equipment. In no time at all, his soldiers were taking classes, and looking like the guy below after sparring with SFC Frain!

Every day, Frain and his team train a multitude of Soldiers, Sailors, and National Coalition Forces on their base.

The mission of his platoon of Medical Ops soldiers (below left) includes counterinsurgency missions, mentorship and training of the Afghan National Army.

They live with their Afghan counterparts in a very remote area of Afghanistan, and most of the U.S. team speaks the local languages of Erdu, Pashto, or Dari.

We really enjoyed this special project with SFC Frain and liked the challenge of working on some non-conventional "wish list" items for these special soldiers!



Don't worry, he is not knocked out... it just looks that way. Rest assured, no soldiers were injured in the making of this picture!



SFC Frain has also embarked on a personal mission to improve the lives of the Afghan children in his village.

After seeing the deplorable conditions in which they live, he rustled up some clothes, shoes, treats, and school supplies to hand out to the local kids.

SPONSORING MARINES

For several years now, National Flood Services, a national insurance company, has sponsored thousands of OTA's troops with their company's donations of personal care, hygiene, snacks and entertainment items. Following is an excerpt of an email from the Chaplain's Assistant who received NFS's most recent generous gifts ...

Thank you very much for all the great hygiene gear, sports equipment, magazines, puzzle books, DVDs, baby wipes, zip lock bags and snacks.

The Baby Wipes have already been sent to another location, where they need it much more than we do, -- no showers whatsoever there -- we can shower at least every couple of days here. The hygiene gear got handed out to everyone here as well as some sent downrange. The body wash, shaving cream and razors were a big hit, just not stuff you can find here.

The DVD's I gave out to several different marine attachments, which each put into their library and already have started watching.

The Frisbees and Football will be leaving today, I found a Team that will be stuck in the middle of nowhere creating a new base with no phones or internet for many months. The Ziploc bags and women's products went to our Female Enhancement Team. They work with the local women and children.

As you can see when I get care packages in I give it out to all. There are hundreds of marines on this base I take care of as well as thousands at other locations that I take care of.

A small way I can help out the men/women and marines/sailors around here is giving them something that they used to enjoy back home, and that's where the care package items come in handy. Pretty much every person out here has a different need. Care packages fill those needs or wants.

Thank you again for your generosity and support!

RPN N. Otters, USMC

★ ★ ★ **FUN AND FAMILY WAYS TO SUPPORT OTA** ★ ★ ★

Supporting OTA is easy, and full of family fun. We look forward to seeing you at these community events!

Mylan Classic
August 29 – September 4, 2011
Canonsburg, PA at Southpointe Golf Club



OTA is proud to announce our partnership with the Mylan Classic's **ANSYS TICKETS Fore CHARITY™** program.

The Mylan Classic is a professional golf event on the PGA TOUR's 2011 Nationwide Tour schedule. Through the ANSYS TICKETS Fore CHARITY™ program, the Mylan Classic will donate 100% of all ticket sales to local charities including OTA.



Please help support our mission by purchasing your tournament tickets online at <https://www.mylanclassic.com> and by selecting **Operation Troop Appreciation** from the drop-down menu so that we will receive 100% of the ticket sale.

Rally for America
Sunday, September 11, 2011 ~ 7 pm
Peters Township High School, Peters Township, PA

Join Peters Township Character Counts as they honor the 10 year anniversary of 9/11. Celebrate the lives of those who died that day and honor our local service men and women and first responders.

This special event will feature performances by Scott Blasey of The Clarks, PTHS Marching Band & Chorus, and more!

Donations accepted that evening will benefit OTA.

West Mifflin Community Days
Saturday, September 10, 2011
Allegheny County Airport
Lebanon Church Road

Stop by OTA's booth to sign a Thank you card for the troops, talk to our volunteers, and get your Defending Freedom wristband!

Visit West Mifflin's website at <http://15122.com/> for more information

3rd Annual Dravosburg American Legion Post 380 Bike Run for the Troops!
Saturday, September 17, 2011
Dravosburg American Legion Post 380

Get your motor runnin'! There will be three stops for a total of 100 miles (West Newton VFW, Donegal American Legion, Connellsville American Legion & returning to Post 380 Dravosburg). All participants will receive a Camo T-Shirt (while supplies last). Coffee and donuts provided during registration, buffet dinner provided upon return.

Registration at 10:30 am at the Post. \$25 per rider, \$10 per passenger. For more information, contact Ride Captain, Bill Lockhart at 412-877-6872.

Switch to Verizon and Support OTA!



OTA is a qualified non-profit for the **Verizon Velocity Fundraising** program that allows you to direct a donation to OTA when you purchase new services from Verizon.

PA residents call 1-888-345-7544 to order your service and give the **OTA Code 50835** to your Verizon rep and a one-time donation will be made to OTA! Switch to Fios and support your troops today! More information can be found on the OTA website (www.OperationTroopAppreciation.org) and Facebook pages.

★★★ **MILITARY RESOURCES: MEMBERSHIP HAS ITS PRIVILEGES!** ★★★

Check out these terrific deals for military members, veterans and their families!



TroopSwap.com was founded by two veterans who are passionate about creating an outlet for businesses to connect with the members of the military community.

TroopSwap offers deeply discounted deals, along the lines of Groupon, or Living Social, only the discounts are tailored to military families -- defined as veterans, service members, military spouses and their immediate family members.

The site debuted in Hampton Roads, Virginia where TroopSwap employs twelve military spouses for community outreach.

The company has plans to expand to more military bases this fall and continue its policy of only hiring military spouses to source deals and drive community engagement.

10% of the site's profits are donated to the Wounded Warrior Project. Visit www.TroopSwap.com or e-mail co-founder Blake Hall at blake@troopswap.com to learn more.



MILITARY CONNECTION.COM

There is no way we can ever properly thank members of the U.S. Military for all that they have done.

They are certainly not paid enough for their work and their great sacrifice. Iraq and Afghanistan have been particularly tough and stressful for members of the military, their families and loved ones.

MilitaryConnection.com has found stores and services doing their part to make life easier by offering discounts to active, reserve, and retired members of the U.S. Military and their immediate family members. (source: MilitaryConnection.com)

Visit the site at: www.militaryconnection.com/deals.asp to find hundreds of retailers, restaurants, service providers, hotels, vacation destinations, and on-line shops that offer discounts to our nation's most worthy.



The Veteran's Holidays® (VET) is a "space available" program that offers military and other Department of Defense-affiliated personnel the opportunity to enjoy vacations at popular destinations around the world – for as low as \$369 per week.

The program is available to all active and retired members of the Armed Forces, Department of Defense employees and select civilian employees in military support roles. Part of Endless Vacation Rentals (one the world's largest hospitality companies), VET has accommodations at 3,500 resorts, apartments, condominiums and homes in more than 80 countries.

The VET offers vacation plans for seven-night Space Available options, High Demand locations, Nightly Getaways and other Special Offers from independent hotels, bed and breakfasts and campgrounds.

Learn more at www.VeteransHolidays.com

★ ★ ★ **Did You Know?** ★ ★ ★

- ✓ Approximately **1.5 million veterans** are at risk of homelessness?
- ✓ Over **130,000** veterans sleep on the streets on any given night of the year?
- ✓ Two-thirds of homeless veterans served for at least **three years**, and **1/3** were in a war zone?
- ✓ Veterans are at an increased risk of homelessness due to injuries and psychological trauma?
- ✓ Statistics collected by the Veterans Administration show that no region in the country has enough shelter beds available to serve all homeless veterans?

Did you know that you can help alleviate this problem ?



Although veterans make up 8% of the overall population in the United States, according to a recent Department of Housing & Urban Development (HUD) study, 16% of the adult homeless population is veterans.

The Veterans Site provides simple, effective, feel-good ways to address hunger for veterans in need and their families: providing nutritious meals.

The Veterans Site has partnered with charities across the nation to fund nutritious meals for these veterans, who selflessly served our country and have earned our respect and gratitude.

Click to Give FREE Meals!

1. You click daily.
2. Sponsors pay for meals for veterans.
3. Shop our store and give more.

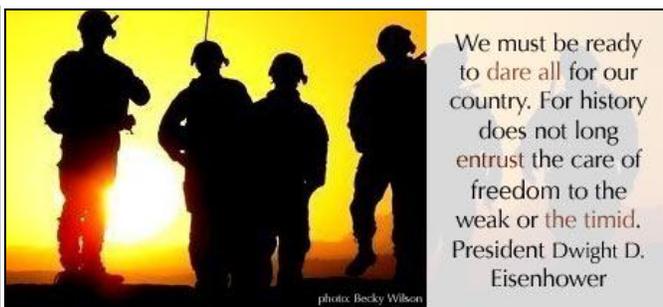
Click Here to Give - it's FREE!

100% of sponsor money goes to charity.

In less than five seconds, visitors to The Veterans Site can click on the "**Click Here to Give - it's FREE**" button and provide meals for homeless and hungry veterans and their families.

How? Each click (free to the visitor) generates funds paid by site sponsors. The funding goes to The Veteran Site's charity partners who use it specifically to provide meals for veterans.

With your daily click, you can feed a homeless veteran for a night. Won't you please help?



(source: www.TheVeteransSite.com)

★ ★ ★ **ANGELS IN OUR COMMUNITY** ★ ★ ★

OTA is blessed to have those in our Pittsburgh community serve our military with their own special gifts and talents. We are proud to share two of their stories and contributions, and recognize them for their devotion to our military men and women.



Ryan Coennen is a shining example of the best of this nation's youth.

As part of his senior project at Seneca Valley High School, he wrote a paper comparing which was more difficult for our veterans to handle – mental or physical disabilities – after interviewing veterans from Vietnam, the first Gulf war, and Iraq. Part of his project required a community service project as well, and Ryan decided he wanted to plan and execute his own 5K race.

Familiar with OTA's annual Veteran's Day 5K Race, Ryan decided to dedicate his energy towards supporting OTA. Ryan solicited financial and in-kind donations from local businesses to contribute to the success of his event, and coordinated prizes for the race participants.

In an astounding victory for Ryan and the troops he worked so hard to support, he raised \$5,000! The local paper referred to Ryan's race as "The 5K for the 5K."

Inspired by the success of the project, the impact his donation made on the troops who benefitted from his fundraiser, and the generosity of local businesses and runners, Ryan and his family have decided to make this an annual event in honor of our nation's military.

This remarkable young man is a perfect example of dedication and selflessness, and is an inspiration to the volunteers and officers of OTA. Ryan is headed to Kent State this fall to major in Aeronautical Engineering Technology and plans to join the Navy or Marines after graduation.



Local Troops Honored at OTA

If you haven't visited OTA at Century III Mall in West Mifflin, PA, make it a point to do so soon! You won't be disappointed, especially after seeing the beautiful contribution by **Harry Munson**, owner of **HTM Designs**.



HTM Designs has created banners that bear the image of local military members who have served in Iraq and Afghanistan. These breath-taking banners are a fitting testament to the service and sacrifice all of our troops make every day to keep our country safe.

Harry Munson of HTM Designs graciously donated these banners to OTA at the Castle Shannon Memorial Day Parade and Ceremony, where OTA President Monica Orluk, served as a keynote speaker.

Harry's banners bearing local military members, both past and present, can still be viewed on the quaint streets of Castle Shannon.

★ ★ ★ **YOU ARE CORDIALLY INVITED . . .** ★ ★ ★

Come visit us! OTA's public space is located on the lower level of Century III Mall, right outside JC Penney. Our volunteers will be glad to give you a tour of our space, which showcases pictures, letters, and special mementos donated by local service personnel. While you're there, please sign a Thank You card for our troops!

Saturdays are Donation Drop-Off Days. If you have items you'd like to give OTA for inclusion in our care packages, please stop by any Saturday from 10 am to 4 pm.

We are also open Tuesday and Thursday from noon to 9 pm.

Questions? Want to learn more? Want to volunteer? Stop by or call us at 412-653-1317.

★ ★ ★ **OUT AND ABOUT WITH OTA** ★ ★ ★

OTA is very active in the Pittsburgh community, showing our neighbors what their support has enabled us to do over the past seven years. It gives us an opportunity to say "Thank You Pittsburgh" for making OTA a successful non-profit that has impacted 100,000 troops. Here are a few things we've been up to!



"Run for a Reason" in the Pittsburgh Marathon

At 6 am on Sunday May 15, 18,000 runners lined up at the starting line to participate in the Dick's Sporting Goods Pittsburgh Marathon. Thirty-five of them were running for OTA.

OTA's marathon team raised over \$17,000, which will be used for much-needed tactical equipment and morale-boosting items for the troops.

Dave Coogan, a member of the Marine Corps who ran the full marathon on behalf of OTA said: *"Thanks for all your hard work with OTA. During my deployments, I always had plenty of support from friends and family but many Marines and soldiers don't have that support. That's why your organization is so great. You are there for the guys and gals who don't have anyone stateside looking out for them. Thanks again."*

Running the half marathon along with the team was OTA Board member Matthew Claycomb and OTA's Marathon Director, Tricia Staley. Tricia said, *"It was so much fun organizing this event. All the runners were so inspiring to me. I am overwhelmed at how much money they raised. The outpouring of support is humbling."*

Thank you to all of the OTA volunteers and runners who worked so hard to make this event a success.



OTA Rings in its 7th Anniversary with a bang- literally!

We celebrated seven years of serving our best and bravest with an action-packed 4th of July weekend.



On July 1, OTA was on hand with KDKA to kick off Kennywood Park's **"Celebrate America"** weekend.

OTA volunteers and Board members were interviewed on air by KDKA personalities Robert Mangino and Mike Pintek. Those tuned into KDKA during our own Staff Sergeant Matthew Claycomb's interview could hear the live fireworks going off in the background!

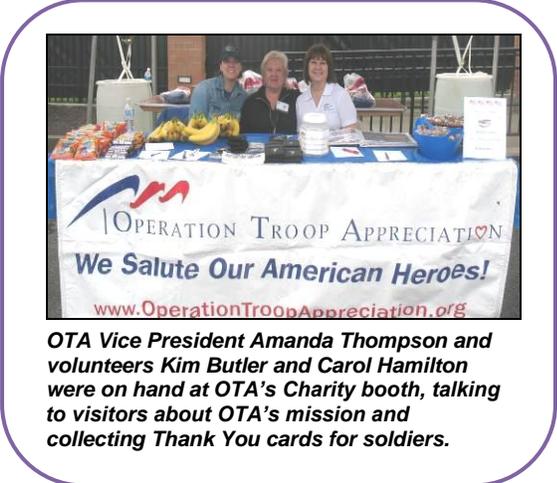
Families visited the OTA table, signing Thank You cards while kids colored pictures for OTA's care packages.



On July 2, OTA was proud to be in attendance for the **"Fearless 5K,"** a race in memory of local Pittsburgh **Marine Sergeant Joseph D. Caskey.**

Sgt. Caskey was killed on June 26, 2010 in Helmand Province, Afghanistan.

All proceeds from the event went to the **Injured Marine Semper Fi Fund**, a charity that provides immediate financial support for injured and critically ill members of the U.S. Armed Forces.



OTA Vice President Amanda Thompson and volunteers Kim Butler and Carol Hamilton were on hand at OTA's Charity booth, talking to visitors about OTA's mission and collecting Thank You cards for soldiers.

★ ★ ★ **PITTSBURGH PIRATE CHARLIE MORTON HITS A GRAND SLAM IN TROOP SUPPORT!** ★ ★ ★

Pittsburgh Pirates pitcher, Charlie Morton, and his fiancée Cindy Weil have a deep appreciation for our military.

Partnering with OTA, Charlie and the Pirates Charitable Foundation have conducted a series of events to demonstrate their support for our troops.

On the 4th of July, The Pittsburgh Pirates hosted Military Appreciation Day, giving tickets to 10,000 active military members and veterans at PNC Park for a game against the Houston Astros.

As part of the day's festivities, Charlie Morton hosted a private OTA post-game BBQ for 35 local troop members and their families at the Hall of Fame Club at PNC Park. All of the troops had been deployed overseas, some as many as three times in recent years.

The Pirates put on quite a party with activities for the 100 guests, including musical entertainment by The Delaneys, balloon artist Harold Shaver, and a buffet dinner. The players were on hand, taking pictures and signing autographs throughout the night.

Then on August 6, Charlie, Cindy and representatives from the Pirates joined OTA volunteers at our store front at Century III Mall to help pack boxes for deployed troops.

Over the course of the day, the group packed 42 cartons weighing a total of 2,000 pounds of supplies for our troops. After a tour of the facility and a brief tutorial on how to pack the boxes, the group got to work packing the "wish list" items submitted by 20 units of soldiers in Iraq and Afghanistan. Over 1000 troops will benefit from the items packed.

Charlie also autographed dozens of pictures to include in the boxes.

We were honored to work with Charlie Morton, Cindy, the Pirates staff, and the Pirates Charitable Foundation to provide our veterans and troops with these special memories.



The Pirate Parrot entertains the families while our troops take batting practice on the field of PNC Park.



Charlie Morton, fiancée Cindy (far left) and OTA Officers Monica Orluk, Kristen Querriera, and Amanda Thompson (left to right) loved celebrating the Fourth with some special military guests.



Charlie Morton (back row with blue hat) and his fiancée Cindy Weil (far right) joined the Pirates staff and OTA volunteers to pack for the troops.