



OPERATION TROOP APPRECIATION

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

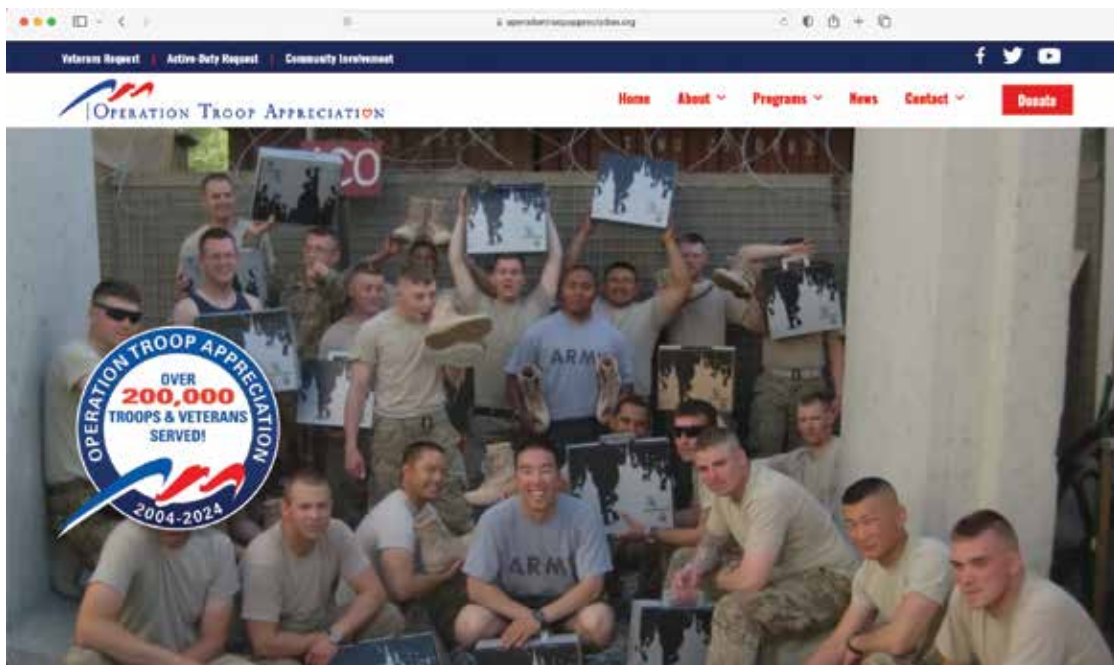
THE Eagle

Winter 2024

CHECK OUT OUR NEW WEBSITE!

A major initiative for OTA in 2023 was the launching of our new website! Our Board Member, Sharon Liotus worked with Corkboard Concepts, Inc. to design and implement our much improved website! Featuring ways you can help and Stories of Service videos from some of the troops and veterans we serve, it's intuitive and easy to navigate! Visit our website to see for yourself!

<https://operationtroopappreciation.org/>



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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.

MOMENT WITH MO

A new year is here and it is going to be a big one for OTA!



2024 marks significant milestones in our charity, including the completion of our building renovation project and our 20th anniversary!

In 2004, when we embarked on this journey, we thought we would exist as long as we were needed – but we never anticipated that our services would be needed or that the need would evolve and grow over time.

I will never forget July 4, 2004, when I met Kristen Holloway. After having read a newspaper article about Kristen and her need for volunteers for a new military support charity, I noted her phone number with a pledge to call her the next day. I then went on to attend a 4th of July event at Soldiers & Sailors hall and in a group of over 1,500 people, she was standing right next to me! I introduced myself, offered my services, and the rest is history!

As I write this article, I struggle on what to share because there has been so much that we've accomplished over the past 20 years, I could write a book! So, I'm going to highlight those that hold a very special place in my heart and for OTA:

- We are memorialized in the George W. Bush Library in Dalla Texas as the epitome of what it means to be a volunteer in America!
- We met President George W. Bush when he presented Kristen with the Volunteer Service Award – what an honor!
- I met and had a personal conversation with General David Petraeus and he thanked me for "taking care of our troopers."

OTA Veterans' Stories of Service

Be sure to check out what our vets have to say about OTA on www.operationtroopappreciation.org or link to: <https://vimeopro.com/user20144885/operation-troop-appreciation/video/528406541>



There are thousands of memories, meetings and milestones I could share, but there isn't enough space or time to do so. From sports and entertainment celebrities to military heroes, we have had the privilege to interact with some of the greatest patriots our country has to offer. And we are grateful for every experience!

One thing has remained constant throughout our 20 year history – we could not have done it without you! To the thousands of people who have donated – THANK YOU for your generosity and support! To the companies that provide pro-bono and discounted services – THANK YOU for helping us complete the administrative duties! And last, but certainly not least, to the hundreds of volunteers who have sacrificed time with family and friends to carry out our mission, your work is appreciated more than you know!

The rest of this newsletter will focus on the present and our future, but I hope you enjoyed this little step back in time as we reflect on all that we've accomplished and all we have yet to do as we remain committed to our courageous members of the U.S. Military, past and present.

– Monica



Kristen with President George W. Bush.



Kristen at the George W. Bush Library.



General David Petraeus with Mo.



BUILDING RENOVATION

2023 GRANT SUPPORT

We are up and running in our new building!

The lower level renovation of our Active-Duty & Veteran program work spaces is complete! We have also completed renovation of our conference room and maintenance space.

We are finalizing renovation plans for the remaining project that includes the lower level bathrooms and kitchen as well as the entire upper level of the building. Plans will be sent to contractors, we will complete bidding and select a contractor to begin the work. Our goal is to have the building complete within six months, at which time we'll hold a grand opening and 20th Anniversary Event.

The next phase takes us outdoors to a complete repaving of our parking lot, exterior paint and landscaping. Stay tuned for ways you can help us "put up a parking lot" later this year.

To contribute to our renovation fund simply click here to make a designated donation:

<https://operationtroopappreciation.networkforgood.com/projects/174884-ota-building-renovation>

We thank the following companies who have helped us with renovations to date:

BK Electric

Omega Mechanical, LLC

Home Depot

Sherwin Williams

Resnick Roofing & Contracting

Rob Pollit

Members of American Legion Post 712



A good portion of our funding comes to us in the form of grants from private and state foundations. Here is a summary of the support we received through grant funding in 2023:

Jefferson Regional Foundation

\$60,000 Building Renovation Grant

Drue & H.J Heinz Charitable Trust

\$50,000 Unsolicited General Grant June

Drue & H.J Heinz Charitable Trust

\$50,000 Unsolicited General Grant December

Veterans Trust Fund

\$35,000 Welcome Home Program Grant

Allegheny Foundation

\$25,000 Welcome Home Program Grant

PNC Charitable Trust

\$15,000 General Grant

Home Depot

\$14,164 Building Renovation Grant for Lower Level Materials & Labor

Military Community Support Project

\$10,000 Building Renovation Grant

DAV

\$9,500 Welcome Home Program

Pittsburgh Penguins Foundation

\$5,000 General Grant

Pittsburgh Steelers

\$5,000 General Grant

Rotary Club Upper St. Clair

\$2,500 General Grant

Highmark

\$2,000 Welcome Home Program Grant

Jack Buncher Foundation

\$1,000 General Grant

Philip & Sarah Wildenhain Family Foundation

\$500 General Grant



HOLIDAY SUPPORT FOR OUR TROOPS!

Over the holidays, we shipped over 1,500 stockings to our troops serving in Iraq, Europe, Kuwait, Syria, Jordan, Djibouti, Nigeria and The Horn of Africa.

Here is a thank you we received from one of the units and photos of them enjoying the stockings!

My team and I can't thank you enough for sending out those Christmas stockings to us that were full of awesome goodies'. It really lifted our spirits during the hard days we've had lately being separated from our families during this holiday season. We sincerely appreciate all that your organization does for those overseas. I have attached some photos of my guys holding the stockings you sent over.

Happy Holidays!



OTA REACHES TOP RATED CHARITY FOR THE 13TH YEAR IN A ROW!



OTA is honored to be the recipient of the Greatnonprofits.org "Top Rated Charity" award for 13 consecutive years! This award is very special as it is a reflection of 5-Star reviews our donors, volunteers and beneficiaries post about OTA!

You can help us keep up the streak in 2024 by posting your own 5-Star Review by visiting the Great Nonprofits web site and search for Operation Troop Appreciation and scroll down to the "Share Your Story" button.

<https://greatnonprofits.org/>



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 the Middle East, 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!

OUR VOLUNTEERS WERE VERY BUSY IN 2023!

In addition to navigating through construction chaos, they delivered exceptional service to thousands of troops and veterans!

Active-Duty Troops Helped: **5,678**

of Units Served: **47**

Veteran & Veteran Families Helped: **606**

Total # of Troops Helped: **199,003**

Total # of Veterans Helped: **8,374**

Total Troops & Veterans: **207,457**



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



SPONSOR HIGHLIGHT – GBU LIFE



For 20 years OTA has sustained operations through the generous support of our donors and sponsors. We'd like to take a moment to send a special thank you to GBU Life. We have partnered with GBU Life for five years now in Operation Reach Out, a program designed to allow GBU Life members and employees volunteer opportunities and that has provided substantial financial support to our programs.

GBU Life volunteers hold volunteer days packing 250 each of snack bags, hygiene kits and morale boosting bags for our troops throughout the year. These bags contain the most requested items from our troops overseas and have made a great impact in boosting their morale!

GBU Life also provides members the opportunity to make direct donations to OTA and members recently donated over \$8,000 to our charity!

We are proud that many GBU Life members have become ongoing volunteers working hard to support our programs and the daily work required to complete our mission.

And most recently, OTA won \$10,000 in the GBU Foundation Community Grant Award program in the Hometown Heroes category! This grant is special because it is awarded based on public voting. We are very grateful to all those who voted for OTA!

THANK YOU GBU Life for your dedication to our troops and veterans and your most generous support of OTA!



OTA GOES PLATINUM

Platinum
Transparency
2024

Candid.

You've all heard the stories of non-profits who take in a lot of money but give very little to the programs they support. OTA is NOT one of those charities and we have the ratings to prove it! In addition to our Top Rated Charity status, we have been given a Platinum Seal of Transparency by Candid (formerly Guidestar)! This rating represents the level of transparency and policies in place to protect your donation and ensure that you know exactly what we do and where your money is spent.



WAYS YOU CAN HELP

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.

If you would like to conduct a collection drive or to schedule a donation drop off, please send an e-mail to info@operationtroopappreciation.org or call 412-653-1317.

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.

Amazon Support

Did you know that you can purchase items from Amazon directly from our charity donation list? There are several items we frequently purchase to support our Active-Duty Wish List and Veteran Welcome Home programs on the list that you can choose from! Simply copy the URL below into your browser and it will take you to our donation list. Items you select will be added to your Amazon shopping cart and shipped directly to OTA!
<https://a.co/aPCAyHJ>

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
500 Regis Avenue
Pittsburgh, PA 15236



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 Chief Operating Officer, **Sherry Einhaus**, sherry@operationtroopappreciation.org 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.



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