

The OPERATION: THANK YOU NEWSLETTER

February 2008

**PO Box 59
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www.ohiooperationthankyou.org

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OPERATION: VALENTINE

This year Operation: Valentine was very successful under the direction of Jimmy Adams, Chairman of the OTY Springboro Chapter. This year we shipped about 1,400 Valentines to our soldiers. This year we were able to get additional schools and churches involved. Jimmy started this project 4 years ago and has gotten more involved every year. Jimmy is 15 years old and plans to join the US Coast Guard in a few years. This year he talked with the leaders at all the Springboro schools and got them all involved. There was one school that because of exams was not able to participate. He tells me he hopes to get them just to write notes and letters of appreciation, maybe to be used with the Jelly Beans for Easter project. Jimmy amazes me with his enthusiasm and organizational skills at such a young age. Jimmy is a very hard worker and a great asset to OTY. Back in December he and the ROTC from his school worked a booth for 3 days at the Springboro Christmas Street Fair and got 550 Christmas messages for the troops. This was done under the guidance of OTY and the ROTC leaders. Also, last year Jimmy organized and ran a very big collection of items drive with Blue Star Mom's their Dayton Chapter. This year he plans to do one for OTY. It is amazing what our youth are doing to support our HEROES. They get IT! They understand what the men and women of the military are doing for us, them, and our country. Thank You Jimmy! Keep up the good work!!!! I am VERY PROUD to have you as a very active member of OTY.

JELLY BEANS EXPRESS LOVE

The 2nd Annual Jelly Beans for the troops is underway. Again this year this project will be under the direction of 11 year old, Alexis Wiles and her younger sister Julia Ogden of Loveland. This is a project started by Alexis last year. She shipped over 900 pounds of jelly beans to 27 locations last year. The slogan for her project "There really is Love In Loveland".

Please purchase a small bag of jelly beans and attach a note securely to each bag, wishing the soldier a Happy Easter and expressing your appreciation for their service. *Operation: Thank You* helps in several ways with her project and it is our "kids" who will be receiving the love these bags bring. We need the bags to us **no later than February 29th** so they can be packed and shipped. Alexis is accepting donations to help with the postage also. You can make your checks to Operation: Thank You, memo Jelly Beans. You may drop your donations of jelly beans with the notes and cash for postage at either location of People's Building Loan and Savings – 502 W. Pike St. in Morrow or 221 Reading Rd in Mason. In Loveland at the New Hope Baptist Church or contact Carol for arrangements to pick them up. Also, for those too far away to drop off contact Carol for an address to mail directly to.

NUMBERS KEEP GROWING

I was just scanning over the list of volunteers that are so important to the operation of *Operation: Thank You* – YOU – and the total numbers really hit me. I have a list of over 400 people who participate and support OTY. This is the number I know of. Many of you have organized your churches, classrooms, schools, Eastern Stars, Masonic Bodies, and clubs and I have no idea how many are involved that way. I find this very humbling. It does show what one little simple idea can develop into. OTY all started with a Christmas card. True not all of you are packing Care Packages but you each contribute in one way or the other from writing letters to those who need support because there is none from home, to donating socks and personal items, and of course OTY can not exist without those of you who send the checks, many on a regular basis. The hands that write the Christmas cards or make the Valentines are very important as well and those who come to the packing parties to get them ready for shipping – that is no easy task. I am very grateful for those who come to the Festivals to give of their time to spread the word of our work.

The letters come in addressed to me from the troops because I am their contact but I want you to know they are all told and understand I am only the hands of this organization YOU are the heart, without YOU there would be no *Operation: Thank You*. Keep up the good work. Our troops appreciate what YOU make it possible for *OTY* to do.

Early in 2008 there will be many soldiers starting to return home. As I find out about that I try and put them in the newsletter. That part is good news to know that our friends are coming home, but then there are others going over to replace them and new names are added to our lists. Somehow we seem to add about the same as we drop which means we are holding steady at between 60 and 65 units. Some of these units are as small as 8 men but some of our units are over 100. Major Nancy Johnson, Commander of the Qatar Hospital will be returning soon but she has assured me that she will introduce me to her replacement so we can continue our support of the patients there in Qatar. I feel this is very important because these wounded soldiers have no way to have family with them and your letters and notes of appreciation and encouragement is so important to them. Recently we have acquired contact with several new pastors both in Iraq and Afghanistan. This means contact, through them, to many more located out in remote locations. We will not have direct contact to them as the pastors take supplies to them on their visits out to minister to them at their locations. The pastors tell us of the needs of these troops and as usual these needs vary.

NEWS ABOUT OUR SOLDIERS

Chaplain Scott Kennaugh that we have worked very closely with in Afghanistan for the past year first told us he was due to return home by the end of January but now that has been extended for an additional 3 months. He is disappointed but seems to be taking it in stride. *OTY* will continue to work with him as he tells us his needs for his remote locations that he carries supplies to when he goes out to visit and minister to these soldiers.

HM1 Gregory Gaines has told me he will be moving so we should not send anything after the end of January until he receives their new address. We should have it in time for the next newsletter.

CPL Jessup Burton has been told his unit will be coming home in March. However, they have been moved and packages and mail will have trouble keeping up so anyone sending him things should discontinue shipments.

Major Nancy Johnson, Commander of the Qatar Hospital is due to redeploy to the states around the first of February. However, she will be introducing me to her replacement so that our support to the hospital and its wounded will be able to continue. The address will remain the same only the name will change that we mail cards to. I will pass that on as soon as she tells me who that will be.

Chaplain Glenvil Gregory, at GTMO returned home in January as well. Before he left he put me in touch with his replacement as well as the base Commander so we will be developing a new support system for the troops there in Cuba.

SPC Dawn Kertz, the party girl of Camp Victory, will also be coming home in February. Dawn's big requests were for decorations for the holidays. I think the "Over The Hill" party for one of the officer's was the most fun to help with. His birthday was in January so she was able to pull off a surprise for him before she left. I knew when his birthday was but I did not tell everyone because I thought if he started getting cards before the big day that it would blow her surprise. Dawn was introduced to us by **SPC Jake Peck**, the real surprise king, when he came home last April. Well, that is what he told everyone so he could walk in and surprise his family the end of March— which he did. He even surprised me as he had to warn me not to put the letters from his buddies in the newsletter and mess up his surprise as his family are part of *OTY* and get the letters from the troops. What he didn't tell me was his real return date. I love this job!! Hey! Jake – Love Ya!

PV2 William Rigdon returned home from Iraq after a 15 month tour this past December much to the joy and relief of his parents, Bob and Lisa – *OTY* staffers. William is now living in Texas with his new bride.

They were married December 28th. Congratulations to the newlyweds and we send our best wishes for a long and happy life together.

This Sgt. Was on the “no support list” in February. Cards to him are being returned.

SGT YOUNG, Thomas
B-115th INF, 3BCT, 3ID

Kroger Rewards Up

For the period of 12/2 thru 12/29 the OTY cards were reloaded for a total of \$9,395.00. This was from 55 cards being reloaded. My appreciation goes to all 55 of you remembering to reload your cards. Our check was \$375.80. This is a big help in replacing the nearly \$1,000 it took to mail the 18,000 Christmas cards. Keep up the good work!! There are another 400 carrying the cards – to them I ask, **PLEASE REMEMBER TO RELOAD AND USE YOUR CARDS.** With 55 bring in \$375. What would that monthly check be if everyone remembered to reload and use their cards?

OUTREACH FROM KIRKUK & FOB WARRIOR

OTY has received a request from the Group Chaplain at Kirkuk Regional Air Base & FOB Warrior for help in their outreach project to the children of northern Iraq. Our efforts in supporting this project will build strong, positive relationships across many generations of Iraqi families and help to build a brighter future. This project is called Operation: School Supplies.

In order of greatest need, here is a list of items for the standard school packet for each child:

| | | |
|----------------------------|--------------------|----------------|
| Round-end scissors | Glue sticks | Pens |
| Pencil sharpeners | Color pencils | 24 Pks Crayons |
| Erasers | Construction paper | pencils |
| Metric rulers | 8 ½ X 11 notebooks | |
| Color marker | Coloring books | |
| OTHER USEFUL ITEMS: | | |
| Small Toys | Frisbees | |
| Kites | Sporting goods | |
| Jump ropes | | |

If you would like to help with this project you make collect some or all of these items and drop them off at either of the People’s Building Loan and Savings locations – Morrow or Mason OR contact me and make arrangements to meet somewhere. For our out of area or out of state Chapters you my mail direct to:

506 AEG/EHC

Operation School Supplies

Unit #70080

FOB WARRIOR

APO AE 09359

If you would like to participate but can’t do the shopping or would rather have someone else do the shopping you may send a check to Operation: Thank You PO Box 59, Morrow, OH 45152 please memo: Operation: School Supplies **THANK YOU ALL FOR HELPING IN THIS.**

MORE OUTREACH NEEDS

These two requests come from different groups trying to help the Iraqi people. They are working in different areas but both need help from home with helping the ones they are working with. Our soldiers do much more in Iraq and Afghanistan than fight with the insurgents. OTY will be assisting in both projects. I hope you will help us help them.

One of the aspects of involvement here is humanitarian assistance. There is an extreme need for help here in Iraq and anyone or any group can truly make a difference if they are so led...of all the countries in the Arabian Gulf region of the Middle East there is a real potential for the

Christian faith to spread as the security situation continues to improve.

Despite all that has been done in the past 4 years to re-build Iraq, there is still much suffering and poverty among the people and in particular in the more rural areas. Because of the conflict and sectarian violence it has been nearly impossible for international NGOs (aid organizations) to freely operate here and Saddam's rule was extremely repressive for so many. And of all the various population segments the ones that suffering the most are women and children.

The items that will really make a difference:

- Dry baby formula, fortified dry baby cereal, diapers, plastic baby bottles, and pacifiers.
- Children's clothing up to about age 10.

Capt. Mike Henderson
Civil Affairs

COMMAND CHANGES AT QATAR HOSPITAL

Major Jacqueline Mack has replaced Major Johnson as Commander of the hospital in Qatar. This does not mean our connection has been broke. We will continue to write to the 30 or so wounded warriors there at any one time. We also will continue to supply other needs, such as the sneakers we ship as needed. We have shipped about 100 pair so far. In with the sneakers there is always packed other items that will help out. The last shipment had such things as Avon Skin So Soft body wash and mess sponges for the women patients, shampoos, and other personal items. Remember the patients arrive with what is left of their uniform and nothing else.

Please continue to write to the soldiers to show our appreciation and support. Also, know the turnover there is rather fast so keep those cards and letter coming. The address remains the same, only the name on the top line will change:

Major Jacqueline Mack
Attn: Wounded Warrior

GIRL SCOUT COOKIES

Attention Girl Scout Leaders!

If your troops wants to sell cookies for the soldiers OTY will ship all you donate. However, if you would put a jar out with a sign on it asking for a donation to help with the postage. Each case costs about \$12 to ship so we would appreciate any help with the postage you can give us. The soldiers really do appreciate the cookies so we will be happy to send them.

I talked with Catherine Ott at the Council Headquarters and ask about having the donation jar out and she said it is fine as long as the money that is donated goes to pay postage.

One other thing about the cookies, please choose cookies for the soldiers that DO NOT have chocolate on them. It will be hot by the time the cookies reach Iraq and Afghanistan and might sit out on a runway for days before being delivered. The chocolate will melt and the chocolate mint, etc. types will melt into a large lump.

Once you have the cookies ready to send contact me and we can make arrangements to get them to me. My phone number is 513/899-3134 or you can email me.

Good Luck on your cookie drive!!

OTY STILL NEEDS A HOME

So far *OTY* has not found any one who will donate a building to us so we can move out of my house. If you know people who have property that might be standing vacant talk to them about donating the use of that building to *OTY* and getting a tax break at the same time. We are looking in the Lebanon, Morrow and Maineville areas. If the location was on a main street that would be a bonus. We could build a display and advertise what we are all about and help tell people how we serve our troops. If you see a building in these areas and it has a number to call, copy it down and pass it on to me. They can't say no if we don't ask – someone will say yes.

***Operation: Thank You One Person Joining With Many
To Serve Our Troops While They Serve Us.***

"Never believe that a few caring people cannot change the world. For, indeed, that's all who ever have." - Margaret Mead