

The OPERATION: THANK YOU NEWSLETTER

October 2007

"Know of a Deployed Soldier with Family near Cincinnati?"

We may have an opportunity for them to see and talk to their loved one at The Heroes Celebration on October 6th at the Voice of America Park in West Chester, 1:00pm - 8:30pm. We have private, video conferencing spaces open for families to speak to their loved one for free with a designated 30 minute time slot.

The five bases with this capability include: Camp Taji, Al Asad Airbase, Camp Fallujah, Camp Victory and Camp Taqaddum. Please contact Kris Brannock at krisjohn10@yahoo.com or 513.871.3331, Kim Brault at kim.brault@vertsol.com or Kathie Portman at Kathie.portman@vertsol.com both at 513.891.7997.

Spread the Word and Join Us on October 6th...

...at The Heroes Celebration for a fun-filled, family event to support our troops! Admission is free, and the foundations we're supporting include: www.FreedomCalls.org and www.TheHeroesFund.org. It is not affiliated with any political party or any particular business. And by just buying a Pepsi and a hot dog you'll be supporting the troops! Again, for more event information see: www.TheHeroesFund.org. God bless our troops!"

Below is part of an email that came from Jessup Burton to his Dad. Many of you will recognize that name as he was one of our HEROES up until April when he returned home. Jessup volunteered to return to Iraq with a special unit. In August, after 4 months of training, he returned to Iraq as Squad Leader to 13 men. This email was received about the 10th of Sept. It speaks for itself. He is asking for our help.

Dad

... We are getting worked to death out here. I had to fight a blood battle to get our chain of command to see the light on a few different things that make our life a thousand times easier.

Hey I don't want to sound like the needy little kid in the desert but I need to get the supply lines open again. We are in need of that love from home that comes in little boxes with blue and white tape. So spread the word I am looking for a few good Christians to take up arms against home sickness and keep my boys from getting so depressed they can't do their job.

We are getting worked so hard that we are seeing signs of home sickness already.

Hey on a happy note we are kicking the tails off the bad guys in our AO. -Jessup

LET'S ALL TAKE A MINUTE AND WRITE A "THINKING OF YOU" NOTE. JESSUP WILL SEE THAT THEY ARE DISTRIBUTED. HIS ADDRESS:

CPL BURTON, JESSUP C.

Attn: Members of Squad

2nd MEF TFG 1st. Plt

Unit 73920

FPO AE 09509-3920

WANTED PEN PALS Some of Jessup's men are asking for pen pals in the 20 to 25 year old range. I do not have any of their names but if you are interested or know someone who would like to write to a soldier use Jessup's address just put Attn: Pen Pal and when they answer you will have his name. No I am not turning into a match-maker, just passing on their requests. It would be nice if you do write to them if you let me know just to keep me informed. By-the-way, this is a platoon of Marines. Remember these letters only require a regular postage stamp.

This next HERO doesn't need care packages. He is at a very remote location and doesn't have access to the internet and he is BEGGING for cards and letters!!!!!!!!!!!!!! He is, literally, begging for mail to read.

BACH, Justin

A-TRP, 4-73 CAV, 4th BCT

82nd ABN

APO, AE 09354

This next young Hero can use some encouragement. He is from KY

SPC Caleb Conley
478 th ENBN 396/3rd plt.
APO-AE 09396

Birthday Coming Up

Mail card 3 to 4 weeks ahead as he is very remote

Jason Daniels
FOB Bermel, TF Eagle
Anvil Troop, 1-91 CAV
APO, AE 09354
Birthday: October 24th

Soldiers Returning Home

Lt Michael Porges will be leaving Iraq in mid-October but will not get back to his base in Germany until November.
MAJ David Reed

our honeymooners, Rachel Rosebrock and Mike Brazil.

Christmas Card Project Underway!!!

Our Goal is 16,000 plus the handmade cards from the kids

Yes, we do need cards donated – EXCEPT – take the cards you plan to donate to church, your Bridge Clubs, The Red Hat Club, to work, to your OES meetings, stop people at the grocery or on the street and ask them to **write a message, sign their name and hometown**. Watch the men; they will only sign their name if you aren't careful. If someone asks if they can include their email or address that is fine. Asking some people to do that as part of a "required" element will keep them from doing a card at all. If you go to a party or banquet place the cards on the tables and ask the hostess to explain why they are there and what to do with them. Invite your kid's teachers to plan a special project where the kids write or draw something for the troops. Ask your Sunday School teachers to do the same. The troops love to get things from the kids. Be sure to ask the teachers to include an address where the troops might write to their home address, the school or church, then put everything into a large envelope so all that class can be sent to one soldier. They are more apt to write to the kids than an adult.

We will be having packing parties in October and November to get the cards ready for mailing. **We will be mailing just after Thanksgiving. UNLESS you know for a fact that you can trust everyone in the group not to write something inappropriate do not give them the envelop. All cards are proof read!!!!** We only find a couple a year that we pull but it is worth the time and effort to know we are not sending a card that would upset a soldier. The thought – "hope you do not come home in a body-bag" – might be good but the wording was a poor choice of words. Yes, we found and pulled that card last year. If you take the time to proof your cards before getting them to me or bringing them to a packing party that would be a great help – if there is a question with any then leave them out and we will all decide.

IF you have a large number and have to mail them to me – **DON'T!** Contact me and tell me how many you have and I will supply an address or addresses for you to mail them. It will cost the same to mail them to an APO as it would to mail it to me. Of course, if you live out from the Cincinnati area and have soldiers from your area by-all-means send some to them. Please let me know how many you sent for our total count. Remember, if you buy cards, and ship the cards to a soldier OTY is tax-exempt keeping your receipts for your taxes, unless your deduction is over \$250 you do not need anything from me for your taxes. If you do mail yourself please put a letter in the box telling them the cards are coming from your area chapter of OTY. You may put my email and address in it or your own, if you use your own and receive a reply please let me know.

Unless you are sending a single Christmas card to a special soldier from you personally all cards are shipped in bulk. They are packed in boxes and we send our one contact in a unit enough cards for his/her unit and those around them and ask one contact to distribute them to their friends. We will send several hundred to the Chaplains because they go out to visit in the remote locations and hand out the

cards there. Of course, if you have been writing to someone special and want to send a personal card and message by-all-means do that.

YOU ARE INVITED TO A PARTY!

We will be having several Card Packing Parties in October and November and YOU are invited. Won't be a party without YOU. The parties will be held at the Lebanon Masonic Lodge in downtown Lebanon – across the street from the Golden Lamb. Parking is in the back off of Mechanic Street. An elevator is just inside the door in the red brick building that stands out closer to the alley than the others. Be sure to bring a sack lunch. Drinks will be provided.

SCHEDULE: 10:00am each morning October 12th, November 2nd and 30th.

Morrow VFW Hosts Military Appreciation

On September 8th the Morrow VFW opened its doors to the community for a Veteran Appreciation Party. Bob Blankenship called to tell me that the proceeds of the evening were to be donated to Operation: Thank You. Now not being bashful when I heard about a gathering of people who support our troops I invited myself to attend – with Christmas cards in hand. What a nice group of people (I didn't not expect anything else). I was made welcome with a warm embracing atmosphere. Several already knew about OTY from the newspaper and everyone told me they really appreciate what OTY does for your troops. They could not believe we send golf clubs. There were several who joined our list of volunteers.

The evening was full of nice surprises. Juanita Combs, the mother one of the first soldiers to receive a package from OTY saw the email that I sent out telling y'all I'd be there and come by and join the fun did take me up on that invitation and stopped by to say hello. When I ask parents to call with APO's for the first cards I got, she was the first mother to call and she gave me his email address and out of that OTY grew into what it is today. It was so nice to have a few minutes to visit and catch up. Girls, you should have been there with me, you'd loved it. The door opened and in walked 2 very handsome Marines – in dress blues!!! In just a very few minutes 2 more joined them!! Before the evening was over I had gotten a big hug from all of them – and recruited their Gunny. He said there are some 150 of them here in Cincinnati and he would see how they might get involved and help OTY. With their help we will have plenty of Marines to send our 16,000 Christmas messages to.

The Morrow VFW has really joined into the projects of OTY in a big way this past month. On the 27th they presented me with a check for \$300 from the fund raiser. Also, with the support of their membership when they learned of the young widow who needed help they almost single handedly gathered enough furniture to take care of all her needs, a bed, chest-of-drawers, sofa, end tables, kitchen table and chairs and even an entertainment center. At my Eastern Star meeting someone brought up this young lady and her plight and one of the members donated pretty much all needed for the kitchen. OTY picked up a couple of lamps and a few odds and ends that were missing and now this young military widow has a furnished home. She has a job so with our help and the help of others she will be able to try and move forward. Thanks to all who helped in this project. When I learn of a new problem I never know where the solution will come from but I know God is on it and things will start to happen.

Marines Get Toy for Tots Underway

SGT Mark Garey of the Cincinnati Marine Reserves has requested our help with their annual Toys For Tots project. They will be collecting new, unwrapped toys during the months of October and November. There will be several big events during that time which I will tell you more about next month as well as barrels to drop toys and any Reserve station. Please add a couple of toys to your shopping list to donate to the children of the area who might not have a Christmas were it not for our Marines.

6th Grade Football Team At St. Suzanna's Pack Box

On September I was invited by Anita Harper to come out to St. Suzanna's School and talk to the boys of the 6th Grade Football Team. What a fun time that was! They had collected items and we packed boxes. They wrote notes to the troops of Jessup Burton's platoon. I had a picture of the platoon that Jessup's grandmother had given me. The boys liked being able to see the faces of those they were writing to. The

team also made rosaries which I sent to a Chaplain in Afghanistan to pass on the Priest. There were 24 boxes filled with such items as snacks and personal items and books.

It really gives me a great feeling to see young people, like these players, take an interest in our troops and I know from past experience the troops really love to receive the love that each package has in it from these young people. In a few years, some of these boys might be on the receiving end of someone else package. Thanks, guys, for becoming part of the OTY members. Look forward to working with you on future projects.

Best Buy Hosts Party and Special Sale

On Sunday evening, September 16th the Fields-Ertle Best Buy hosted a special appreciation sale and party for the servicemen and women as well as fire and police. This was a special invitation only event and IDs were checked at the door. They closed at 7PM and reopened at 7:30 for their special guests. The store was decorated with flags and streamers, the National Anthem was beautifully sang by one of the employees as the doors were opened and their special guests were welcomed by all the employees who had lined up at the door. Operation: Thank You has long enjoyed the support of the management and they invited us to join them that evening to thank our men and women in several types of uniforms for their service to us in this community. We ask everyone attending to write messages on Christmas cards for the troops now serving on active duty. Lots of folks got some good deals, we all met some very nice people and everyone was made very welcome. Thank You Best Buy for inviting us and for your continued support of our servicemen and women. They have invited us to come back before we mail our cards and spend the day getting more messages for our troops. We will take them up on their offer.

There are other locations that have invited us to come in and get messages. If you would like to cover some of these stores or have stores in YOUR area that will join us please let me know.

OTY Moves to KY and IN

I was invited to be the guest speaker at the ladies brunch of the Grand Council of KY Grand Assembly. I was invited by the grandmother of Sgt. Jake Peck. Ruth and I had met last year and had stayed in touch since she had given me Jake's name and he became one of "our boys". Jake is the one who started the shipments of golf clubs. I had a great time getting better acquainted with Ruth and meeting new friends. On Friday when I told the ladies about what OTY is all about – One person joining with many to serve our troops while they serve us – many joined our ranks and we grew with 2 new chapters in IN and 4 or 5 in KY plus the wife of the incoming Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of KY decided to make OTY her charity for the coming year. She and I still have the details to work out on that but that is very exciting news.

More Honeymooners

Rachael and Michael will be returning from Kuwait this month. Before leaving Rachael gave us the name of a friend who is serving in Iraq and ask if we could help them as they really have a situation there. This group are MP guards at a prison and the road to is so dangerous that the supply trucks can not get through sometimes. They need everything from personal items to food, linens, dishes, just about everything. There is a small Exchange there but they have trouble keeping things stocked so items are very expensive – outragerous would be a better word. The old supply and demand seems to be the rule of pricing for the civilian contractor that runs it. Our contact in this new group is Tracey Meyer Moore. Her husband, Nick is at present in Kuwait serving with Mike and Rachael but when that groups comes home Nick has volunteer to move to Iraq and be stationed at the prison where his wife is until her tour is up. Tracey and Nick were married last May and Nick shipped out in July of last year. All 4 have served together for several years in the Indiana National Guard. Guys, I know the trip was free but really I think you could have found a better place to honeymoon. If any of you have been writing to Rachael would like to write to Tracey I know she would love to hear from you. There are a large number of troops stationed there and their supplies are very limited and primitive so anything you might want to send will be appreciated and she will distribute them. Be sure to tell them you work with OTY.

SGT MOORE, Tracey
384th MP BN HHD
Unit #60534
APO, AE 09375

Thank You From Family

These emails are from the wife and mother-in-law of David Long, the soldier in the GA VA hospital we have had a birthday card shower for. Please don't forget him this month as well. Does not have to be a special day to tell our HEROES we are thinking of them.

Carol,

Thank you so much for sending out your email for Dave. He had quite the birthday experience!! He was quite shocked, but humbled by the kind gesture of everyone. He hung them all up in his room to look at daily. Again thank you so much!

Meaghan Long

Hello Carol....just sent my card to Tim..I just wanted to thank you and everyone who so kindly sent David Long birthday and good wishes cards.. I think he has received over 100 cards, he is so amazed..the staff at the Augusta Veterans Hospital bring in a letter opener everyday to help him open each card! The nursing staff asked him, "Sergeant Long, who do you know? You must be pretty special to a LOT of folks!" The cards are still coming and I think he looks forward to seeing them everyday. Thank You again, Hugs, Peggy

I have to tell you that Dave is not a picky man, he loves anything! He loves Ohio state football of course:), chocolate, anything sweet for that matter. I also wanted to tell you that Dave was part of the Pentagon clean up crew, if you will... He was in a special unit that was search and rescue, out of Ft. Belvoir Va. He was deployed to the Pentagon for 16 days, trying to find survivors and the remains. I sit back sometimes and say WOW my husband has had quite the military career. Take care and god bless you!

Meaghan Long