



## AMERICAN FORCES PRESS SERVICE **NEWS ARTICLES**

### Nonprofits Awarded Grants for Innovative Programs

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WASHINGTON, Sept. 5, 2008 – Newsman's Own awarded a combined \$75,000 in grants to 15 nonprofit organizations for their innovative volunteer efforts to improve military quality of life during the company's ninth annual awards ceremony, held at the Pentagon here today.

Marine Gen. James E. Cartwright, Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, helped present the awards alongside executives from contest sponsors Newman's Own, Fisher House and the Military Times Media Group.

"The clever ideas, the way the ideas were brought forth, the things that were meaningful to people who had family and knew they would be meaningful to others who were family" impressed him about the entries, Cartwright said.

The vice chairman commended the innovation of the programs and said that the recipients ran the gamut from large, mature organizations to smaller, family-run groups.

Cartwright said that the various organizations' efforts were symbols that volunteerism is still alive.

"The coming together of the civilian community and the military, the finding of family, the opportunity to acknowledge service, and to acknowledge those who are willing to serve, and the sacrifices that the families make for those who are willing to serve and do so, to see that come together" shows that volunteerism is still alive and well in America's communities, Cartwright said.

The president of Newman's Own Inc., Tom Indoe, said volunteers form the "backbone" of charities.

"As you'll see, all of these charities that we recognize today start with the volunteers," Indoe said. "They are the threads that hold the fabric of these charities together. And it's the volunteers that bring so much good and goodness to our military families."

Indoe said that Newman's Own, a food company famous for its salad dressing, pasta sauces and popcorn, got involved with Fisher House Foundation about 10 years ago while looking to donate to a charity that helps military families. All profits from Newman's Own products are given to charities.

There were 120 entries for the 2008 contest. Judges evaluated the entries based on the organization's impact to the community, creativity and innovation. The emphasis of the competition was on organizations that support deployed servicemembers or their families, according to officials. The competition started in 2000 and has recognized 114 programs with awards totaling more than \$500,000.

This year, the Freedom Calls Foundation received the top \$15,000 grant award. The foundation provides videoconferencing and telephone calls free from centers in Iraq and Kuwait, connecting servicemembers to their families in the United States, England, Germany, Guam and Okinawa.

John Harlow from Morristown, New Jersey, said he started the Freedom Calls Foundation after watching a newscast in 2003 in which he saw a report of a National Guardsman who had a \$7,000 phone bill from trying to keep in touch with his family during his deployment to Iraq.

"I was shocked to hear that burden had been placed on his family," Harlow said.

After some research, Harlow said he found that it was not unusual for troops deployed to have extraordinarily high phone bills. An exclusive contract at rates of up to 44 cents per minute added up to \$100 million per year in calls to families at home, he said.

"I didn't think that was right," Harlow said.

So, Harlow formed a foundation to provide phone calls and videoconferencing services to servicemembers and their families. The operation was launched in April 2004. Now the foundation delivers more than 1 million minutes per month in telephone calls and 2,000 video conferences every month to servicemembers and families. The videoconferences are mainly for "milestone" family events such as births, graduations, anniversaries, and even weddings. Harlow works with 10,000 sites across the United States and hopes to add more sites.

"It's those families and those deployed – they're the reason we do this," Harlow said. "It's been a life-changing experience to work with these families. They're some of the most giving, most humble people that I've ever met in my life ... and they deserve everything that we can do for them."

The \$10,000 award winner was Operation Wounded Warrior sponsored by the American Legion Riders of Grants, New Mexico. Operation Wounded Warrior was started by a group of American Legion Riders after a plea three years ago for comfort and hygiene items for troops who had been wounded in Iraq. The mission expanded to include family members who were at their bedside. Each year, a truck loaded with personal and comfort items is escorted by riders to Brooke Army Medical Center in San Antonio and its four Fisher Houses.

The \$5,000 award winners include:

--Wounded Warrior Assistance Program sponsored by Operation First Response, Inc. of Culpeper, Va. The program supports wounded warriors and families with personal and financial needs. Financial aid varies from rent, utilities, vehicle payments, groceries, clothing, and travel expenses.

--Parent and Child Resource Center sponsored by Osan Parent Network on Osan Air Base, Korea. The network provides services for families at Osan Air Base. Activities include daily playgroups, arts and crafts and other events, daily stroller walk and runs, a breastfeeding support group, a parenting support group, a communication network and family advocacy.

--The SHARE Initiative sponsored by the Shepherd Center of Atlanta. The program assists the rehabilitation, recovery and community re-entry care for soldiers who have sustained a traumatic brain or spinal cord injury while serving on active duty in Afghanistan or Iraq.

--Snowball Express, based in Costa Mesa, Calif. The program provides an all-expense-paid gathering for the children of servicemembers who have died since Sept. 11, 2001. In 2007, the \$3.5 million dollar event provided more than 1,100 children a weekend of fun in Anaheim, Calif.

--Remote Warrior Care Program sponsored by the Madigan Foundation of Fort Lewis, Wash. The foundation places wounded, injured and ill warriors back into their hometowns to recuperate before being released from active military service or returned to active duty.

--Family Assistance Program sponsored by the Armed Forces Foundation of Washington, D.C. The foundation's family assistance program offers direct financial assistance to servicemembers and their families. Needs range from utility bills to mortgage payments.

--Military Family Retreats sponsored by Project New Hope of Annandale, Minn. Project New Hope hosts weekend retreats for soldiers and families struggling with reintegration after deployment. The retreats are free to recipient families and focus on concerns shared by combat veterans, spouses and children. Counseling services and sessions are available, but not mandatory.

--Free Home Repairs and Modifications for Troops sponsored by Rebuilding Together's Veterans Housing Initiative of Washington, D.C. Rebuilding Together is the nation's largest nonprofit group providing home repairs and renovation services free to those in need. The organization has responded to a growing need among retired and active-duty United States Military homeowners.

--Military Family Assistance Program sponsored by USA Cares of Radcliff, Ky. USA Cares provides military families with financial support through grants for needs such as foreclosure and eviction prevention, utility assistance and food and car payments. The program also offers counseling and mentorship through family resource coordinators with expertise in military benefits and services.

The \$2,000 award winner is:

--Good Grief Camps for Survivor Children sponsored by Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors (TAPS) of Washington, D.C. Founded in 1994, TAPS is a national nonprofit that provides peer-based emotional support services to those affected by the death of a military member. TAPS assists thousands of widows, children, parents, siblings and others. It provides casework assistance, 24-hour crisis intervention and grief and trauma resources free of charge.

The \$1,000 award winners are:

--The Happy Mail Club sponsored by United Cerebral Palsy of Palm Beach and Mid-Coast Counties, Palm Beach, Fla. Members of the Happy Mail Club assemble boxes with cards, handmade crafts, high protein foods, and personal supplies to be sent to deployed American troops. They target soldiers who are stationed in the most remote locations and have the greatest need of supplies.

--CampLIFE! A non-profit benefiting children and spouses of deceased soldiers from Afghanistan and Iraq, based in Austin, Texas. The mission of CampLIFE! is to provide free recreation, education and counseling in a camp setting to the children and spouses of recently deceased U.S. soldiers deployed in Iraq and Afghanistan.

--Kids Sending Hero Hugs, sponsored by Hero Hugs of Niceville, Fla. Hero Hugs was started by Bailey Reese, 7, of Niceville after she saw soldiers passing out aid to victims following a hurricane, and receiving no thanks. Bailey started Hero Hugs not only to thank the troops, but to teach kids to always appreciate the service and sacrifice of servicemembers. The packages are packed by kids from all over the country.

In a surprise donation at the event, Newman's Own Foundation Vice Chairman Robert Forrester donated \$150,000 to the Fisher House Foundation. The donation took the company over the \$1 million dollar mark for total donations to the Fisher House over the past 10 years.

**Biographies:**

[Marine Corps Gen. James E. Cartwright](#)

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<http://www.fisherhouse.org/>