

## Generations

# Giving back some more to our military

In keeping with last week's column honoring veterans and the current military on Veterans Day, and since it is a special time of year for giving back to those who make sacrifices to keep us all



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safe, I thought it might be a good idea to keep the ball rolling using part of an article by Kendall McCormick on [www.bestlifeonline.com](http://www.bestlifeonline.com). It featured a list of organizations that help families, especially during holiday giving time, so I've pulled out those that squarely

benefit our military.

Before contacting any, if you prefer to keep it limited to local residents, please check with Burke County Veterans Services to find out about local programs supporting the military. Reach them at 501 N. Green St., Morganton; via mail at P.O. Box 219, Morganton, NC 28680; phone 828-439-4376; or email [molly.eller@burkenc.org](mailto:molly.eller@burkenc.org).

Operation Christmas Spirit allows volunteers to "adopt" a military family for the holiday season. There are so many parts and pieces to this program that it's best to check them out directly at [www.operationhelpahero.org](http://www.operationhelpahero.org). You can choose to provide Christmas gifts for the children in the family or send a gift to benefit the entire family, such as an array of gift cards or dinner at a nationally known restaurant. There are specific locations listed on the site, but one area for all North Carolinians to consider is Camp Lejeune, which this year also helps those who have lost their homes due to Hurricane Florence.

If adopting an entire family is too much to commit to, you can make a donation online and the organization will do the shopping and delivering to the family. Some sugges-

tions were that a gift of \$10 would treat a single serviceman or servicewoman to a movie or breakfast out for a change; \$25 will allow the organization to purchase a gift (or two) for a child; \$50 can help purchase grocery and gas gift cards, which are often needed most; \$100 sponsors a child to include toys and a gift card; \$300 will help them shop for a family of three; and \$500 can "adopt" a family of four. You or they can do all the shopping and wrapping.

You can donate via PayPal and choose any amount to donate right on the website; all donations are welcome.

Another idea on the website was to host a holiday party, such as an office party, and ask guests to bring gift cards or toys for military families. Alternatively, you can designate your holiday tree at your business, place of worship or school as an "angel tree" and let the organization know you are collecting for a specific family.

There is also a section for donating to help make a single's holiday a bit merrier (gift cards, bedding sets, pillows, video games, movie tickets). Also, as families who endure deployments, having computers, iPads and phones to communicate with loved ones can make deployments easier, so this year, the organization collected the names of families in need of computers for home-based work, communicating with loved ones, and two families who could use iPads to help their children with special needs.

Another military program is the Armed Services YMCA's Operation Holiday Joy, which can be found at [www.asymca.org](http://www.asymca.org). The organization has raised \$1.5 million for military families, and has given more than 320,000 toys and 25,000 blankets to families in need.

You can also support the armed forces in their holiday celebrations by donating

to the Christmas Spirit Foundation. The organization provides free, farm-grown Christmas trees to members of the United States armed forces and their families. Contact can be made at [www.christmas-spiritfoundation.org](http://www.christmas-spiritfoundation.org).

One more deserves mention — Toys for Tots. This all began in 1947 as the brainchild of Marine Corps Reserve Maj. Bill Hendricks — or rather a prodding from his wife, Diane. She had crafted a few handmade dolls and asked him to deliver them to an agency that supports children in need, but he couldn't seem to find one. His wife gave him an order: "Start one!" Hendricks and the Marines in his reserve unit collected and distributed 5,000 toys during that year. To date, the program has distributed 548 million toys to needy children. You can also make a monetary donation at [www.toysfortots.org](http://www.toysfortots.org).

One more wasn't on McCormick's list, but comes from me personally. I've been donating to K-9s for Warriors for a couple of years. This organization is dedicated to providing service canines to veterans suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder, traumatic brain injury, and/or military sexual trauma as a result of military service post-9/11. The goal is to empower them to return to civilian life with dignity and independence.

This organization is the nation's largest provider of service dogs for disabled American veterans. As of October 2018, 488 warrior veterans have been helped by the program — and 940 dogs have been rescued and put to good work. Please check the organization out at [www.k9sforwarriors.org](http://www.k9sforwarriors.org).

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