

PUGET SOUND ON WATCH

Expansion of services to Alaska, Idaho, Oregon results in name change for USO Puget Sound

THE USO Puget Sound Area is no longer defined by the waterways of Washington State. On November 8, it became a force to be recognized.

Service members and their families in Alaska, Idaho, Oregon and throughout Washington State will now benefit from programs and services offered by the USO Northwest.

The name change was a unanimous decision by the Board of Directors and Staff in June. Ideas, plans and dreams began to formulate instantly.

“The closest USO to USO Northwest is USO Wisconsin to the east and USO San Francisco to the south,” Executive Director Don Leingang said. “My goal is for our Mobile Canteen to visit Idaho (Mountain Home AFB) at least once per year and Oregon two to three times each year or as requested. Although we physically will not be able to drive our Mobile to Alaska, we have already assisted units there through the Helping Hands Grant.”

The Helping Hands Grant provides access to funds for military events such as Homecoming parties, Pre-Deployment events, command functions and other camaraderie building events.

The announcement of the name change was made at a ribbon cutting ceremony of the USO Northwest’s remodeled Shali Center on Joint Base Lewis-McChord.

“Hearing our Chairman of the Board, Malcolm McLellan, announce to a room full of USO volunteers, local military, their families, and civilians we are now going to be helping those in Alaska, Idaho, and Oregon, was a thrilling moment,” Communications and IT Lead Meaghan Cox said. “Then showing the Shali Center to the guests really drove it home.”

More than 3,500 service members will be deploying through the center –which received \$375,000 in renovations–before the end of November.

“The Center was remodeled because features were outdated and the design didn’t provide the maximum flow to support our massive troop deployments that are inherent by being the third largest military

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USONW volunteer’s son joins the Marines

THE decision was made. Kevin Monroe would join the United States military. His parents hoped it was a fleeting interest. He was only four-years-old after all.

“I remember he had his Dad spray paint the plastic soldiers silver so he could have all different branches and bad guys,” USONW Volunteer Cathy Monroe said. “Kevin would have his Dad build forts out of wood pieces and he would spread them out all over the shop floor and play for hours.”

Kevin is now 18 and graduated from Tumwater High School. He left for the Marine Corps’ Boot Camp at the end of the summer. Although he always wanted to be in the military, it wasn’t until ninth grade he decided on the Marine Corps.

“After looking at all the branches, I liked the intensity and attitude of the Marine Corps,” Kevin said.

As a junior in high school he approached Marine Recruiter Sgt. Matthew Molina. Kevin began training with recruits who were in the Delayed Entry Program.

“I was going shopping and saw him running with a group of Marine Recruits,” Cathy said. “At the time Kevin had really long hair to his shoulders, so I knew it was him.”



Kevin Monroe with his mom, Cathy Monroe, are ready for the world of U.S. Marines.

When Kevin returned home she asked him where he’d been and he told her. It was in this moment Kevin’s parents realized him joining was not just talk, the reality was setting in.

Kevin’s parents started researching the Marines Corps. They have joined parent recruit websites, and Marines Families of Western Washington. They have met with Sgt. Matthew Molina multiple times, spending several hours going over expectations.

“It does scare us as parents, but Kevin is becoming an adult and needs to follow his dreams,” Cathy said. “We need to, and will, support that every step of the way!”

Parents want to know if there is a solid plan, the dates, timelines, will their child have a good start and career, Matthew said. There is also the concern of going to war.

“We’re Marines, we go to war,” Matthew said. “So we talk about the dangerous things. Each parent has that concern and we approach it each

time with an open door policy.”

Because Kevin was a minor at the time of signing up, his parents were needed to sign the documents giving their permission. Ultimately they knew when Kevin turned 18 he could join, but they wanted to be there every step of the way, Kevin said. His friends support his decision, too.

“Kevin has a good, strong character. He has lots of drive and motivation,” Matthew said. “He’s got the foundation of what we instill.”

Being a Marine means protecting the United States and protecting the freedoms everyone enjoys every day, Kevin said.

His outlook fits perfectly with the new slogan on the Marine Corps website, “Where chaos looms, the Few emerge. Marines move toward the sounds of tyranny, injustice and despair – with the courage and resolve to silence them.”

“I expect nothing to be easy but worth it all in the end,” Kevin said. “I will start out in Infantry and will work towards going into Recon.”

At the age of eight, Kevin’s Dad began teaching him about handling guns. They joined a private gun club for target shooting. Kevin can easily take guns apart, clean, repair and put them back together again, and

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From the cockpit of the Executive Director

THIS summer saw peak travel periods for each of our three USO Centers. At our Joint Base Lewis-McChord Shali Center, families began to PCS (Permanent Change of Station) and military units from multiple states west of the Mississippi deployed overseas through the McChord Field Air Terminal. Andrew Oczkewicz and his volunteers have vigilantly stood watch and continued to provide those last stateside comforts in the form of sandwiches, Girl Scout cookies, care packages and hugs goodbye to those leaving families behind.

At our SeaTac Center, more than 10,000 military and family members transit through each month. Additionally, thousands of Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) students arrived at SeaTac as they began or completed their local summer training. Rest assured our SeaTac Manager and our SeaTac volunteers readily provided first-class service with a cup of coffee or a place to rest their heads.

For many years, thanks to a cadre of JBLM volunteers, the USO Northwest has brought mobile canteen services to those military bases far from our permanent centers at SeaTac and JBLM. Based on feedback from many of these military families who desired to see the USO more frequently, we hired a third Center Manager, Samantha Lingad, to run our Mobile Program.

Samantha, along with our Events Support Staff Member, Tracy Mann, have taken on the task to bring our Mobile Canteen services statewide. Not only are these two staff members dedicated to the USONW mission, but they are also military spouses who understand the impact the USONW can have on military families. Thanks to a few select organizations, our Mobile is equipped with our normal canteen services plus Wi-Fi, an XBOX 360 entertainment system, and is able to provide military members with the capability to participate in our United Through Reading program.

As we have grown over the years, so has our social media outreach. Thanks to the dedicated efforts of our Communications Staff Member Meaghan Cox and volunteer Kasey Frerichs of BrainEacts, we have launched a new look for our website. I encourage our readers to go to www.usonw.org and give Meaghan your feedback. While browsing, you can read about all the programs we provide as well as upcoming events.

Additionally, I invite you to follow us via Facebook, Twitter and YouTube as we post new stories and photos daily!

As I end this newsletter, I want to thank all of you for your continued support of the USONW. Whether you are one of our volunteers, Board Members, Staff Members or thousands of supporters, I know USONW cannot do what we do without the collective efforts of our extended family.

I can see exciting times ahead for this organization and believe many of you will be thrilled to witness many of the changes we have planned in 2013-2014. There is a lot which needs to be done and together we will -until they all come home!

Cheers! - Don



Sea Gals perform for service members overseas

TEN days, 13 flights, three locations, and a whirlwind of cheer only describes the tip of the iceberg known as the Armed Forces Entertainment Tour the Sea Gals took part in earlier this year.

“I truly love meeting our soldiers overseas,” Sea Gal Stephanie R-H said. “To hear their stories, learn about their families, give them thanks and put smiles on their faces with our shows has been an unbelievable experience and one I will always carry with me.”

The first stop for the tour was Camp Bond-

steel in Kosovo. The weather with wind chill was negative 14 degrees Fahrenheit with two feet of snow barricading the temporary human container housing.

The Sea Gals greeted service members at the base hospital, met with a Medi Vac Team and visited with a K-9 Unit. They were welcomed with smiles when they joined the service members for meals in the mess hall.

The 60 minute, high energy show the Sea Gals performed always drew a crowd despite some having to



Photo courtesy of Sea Gals

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Single Soldier Barracks receive items donated from shoppers at Fred Meyer

LIGHTENING burdens is part of what the USO Northwest does daily for service members and their families. However, single soldiers are beginning to benefit more and more.

The specific outreach for single soldiers began with the espresso stand in the Single Airmen dorm at McChord Field a couple years ago. With a 2012 summer partnership with Fred Meyer, due to the Honoring Heroes campaign, the USO Northwest has been able to gather great quantities of donations at the box stores’ doors.

The donations are divided among the Centers, Mobile Canteen events and the Single Soldier Barracks.

“We are a donation based organization so our ability to provide items to the single soldiers relies heavily on donations,” USONW Events Support Tracy Mann said. “Our goal is always to lighten any burden and we were able to do exactly that with community support.”

Jaclyn VanHoy, a 1-377 Family Readiness Group Leader, reached out to the USONW for help. With 70 single soldiers belonging to Bravo 1-377 to care for, the financial burden on the spouses and families would be large.

“We want to ensure that our single soldiers feel welcomed home and have what they need,” Jaclyn said. “We did not want them to come home to an empty barracks room!”

The USONW was able to give the single soldiers of Bravo 1-377 over 70 bars of candy, razors, bars of soap, trail mix bars, 45 bottles of shaving cream, 49 deodorant sticks and other such items.

“The USO donations were a huge blessing,” Jaclyn said. “It saved our spouses and families a ton of money and time.”

Before single soldiers deploy they are required to pack all of their belongings into a Conex storage container. When they return it could be days before their items and vehicles are made available to them, Jaclyn said. Being a single soldier also means they may not have family near the base who can help them acquire the needed items.

After hours of traveling, layovers, and wearing the same clothes, one of the most valuable items could be the new, donated bar of soap for a shower.

The items for the single soldiers of Bravo 1-377 will be packaged in a small laundry basket with detergent, toothbrushes, toothpaste, toilet paper and additional snacks. When soldiers enter their rooms the baskets will be there waiting for them.

“I urge others to continue to donate to the USO,” Jaclyn said. “Your donations allow soldiers to be comfortable once home again and remove the burden off the spouses trying to scramble and make it happen. After all, [the single soldiers] deserve it.”

The second group of single soldiers who received items from USONW and Fred Meyer collections is from Charlie Company in the 296th Brigade Support Battalion. Their FRG assembled baskets in September and added additional donated items as late as November.

Items and Tasks Needed for Centers

Mobile Canteen

Items: Hot cocoa mix, individual snacks, bananas, hot dog and buns, cases of juice boxes, XBOX Games and Gift Cards for gasoline (please!)

SeaTac Center

Items: Trial size toothpaste, snack items such as granola bars, apple sauce, packets of crackers, Poptarts, individually packaged chips, etc.

Shali Center at McChord Field

Items: Large cans of tuna, sliced ham, sliced bologna, sliced turkey, paper towels, cases of bottled water, paper plates, and individually wrapped chips.

Eager to be a Marine, USONW volunteer’s son joins the Corps



Marine Virgil Monroe’s Eagle, Globe and Anchor Pin.

his knowledge of guns spanning different eras is impressive, Cathy said.

“Kevin’s naturally good at marksmanship,” Matthew said. “He was shooting just as well as some of the other Marines who’ve been shooting for years.”

Kevin’s talent will open a lot of doors and help with promotions, Matthew said.

“Kevin has worked so hard the last three years to become a Marine,” Cathy said. “I truly hope he will reach his dream of going into Recon.”

Kevin does not have hesitations about Boot Camp even with its infamous Crucible. His recruiter says the physical fitness aspects won’t challenge him too much nor the yelling drill instructors.

“Learning to work with individuals who are not of the same background as him will be a challenge,” Matthew said. “He’s going to have to

learn a new style of leadership.”

Kevin’s hesitation about Boot Camp lies in not being able to socialize with his friends and family. While Kevin is going through the 12 weeks of recruit training at the Marine Corps Recruit Depot in San Diego, his family and friends will write to him often and encourage him.

Kevin’s family decided to honor him with his grandfather’s Eagle, Globe and Anchor pin. His grandfather Virgil Monroe, on his Dad’s side, served as a Marine in Iwo Jima. Kevin’s family is proud he is choosing to serve his country.

“I am very excited to begin my career in the Marine Corps,” Kevin said. “Anyone that can attend my graduation from Boot Camp is much appreciated!”

Kevin will graduate on December 7, 2012.

A world of abbreviations, the one to know is USO

By: Tracy Mann

IT WAS March 25, a Sunday morning, as I sat in a church parking lot trying to pull myself together as the phone rang. My husband deployed to Afghanistan for the first time only four days prior, and to say I was still drifting in a lost fog was an understatement. I pulled myself out of bed for the day, but there’s a significant chance my hair was not brushed and my mascara was on my lips and lipstick on my lashes.

For those first weeks, mornings were tough. They still are. There is something disorienting about waking up and realizing you are in bed alone, and then wrestling with the fact you will now wake up alone for the next nine months. Unsettling to realize you just made enough coffee for two, when there is no one else to drink it. Regardless of how “prepared” I was, despite how many years I’d spent single and independent, the sudden absence of the love of my life turned me into a disheveled wreck. Luckily, that morning, since I made far too much coffee and consumed every last drop, I managed to bound through the phone interview.

“Mrs. Mann, I was calling in regards to your application to work for the USO of the Puget Sound, and would like to do a phone interview. Is now a good time?”

Who knew this call was about to change my life?

I applied for the Event Support position at the USO Northwest weeks before, and was thankful to hear back. Job seeking is discouraging, as any military spouse knows. Who in their right mind would quit their job, pack up, and move across the country in this terrible economy to a place without connections, without friends, and

without knowledge of the area? No one! Only a crazy person! Or, thousands of military spouses who do it each year to support the soldier they love. Indeed, we are crazy. Crazily devoted to our country and our soldier.

Eleven days and two personal interviews later, I received a job offer. Perfect timing! I needed something to focus my skills on since the tasks of being a wife suddenly dwindled to sending care packages and praying. Not that those tasks are insignificant, but I don’t think meditating on a mountain top -especially in this rainy weather here- is the most beneficial way to keep my wits about me during this deployment.

I was excited to join the USO, and thought I understood what they did. They sent concerts to soldiers overseas, right? Furnished lounges in airports for the military? Set up events for families? Wrong! The USO is so much more! I never dreamed I would find staff and volunteers just as crazy and devoted to our country and our soldiers as I am.

I am overwhelmed with the many programs the USO offers. I feel like a chubby kid in a doughnut shop when I see the resources the USO offers. It has become a passion of mine to equip FRG’s and family groups with this new knowledge.

The USO will twist themselves into pretzels to provide whatever is needed, whether it is to a spouse group at home, or a combat unit living in the cleft of a mountain. You need 600 boxes of Girl Scout cookies? We got it. There are 900 soldiers deploying at 3:00 a.m. that all need breakfast? Sign us up. There’s an infantry unit who has no phone access overseas? To the bat mobile! Lets send computers and calling cards, STAT!

The staff are superheroes, their capes billowing in the wind as they deliver barbecues to Special Forces picnics in the Mobile Canteen, 700 doughnuts to unit homecoming parties, \$500 Helping Hands grants to FRGs, and Holiday Boxes for combat teams abroad. I didn’t know all of this existed. So if you are a spouse, get online and pick up the phone and call the USO! Whatever you need, we will make it happen. Come volunteer with us! The better connected you are, the more we can help and the more you can learn.

I know life is challenging with a spouse gone. I live on post. Most of the husbands in my neighborhood are deployed. It is eerily devoid of men. We wives mow the lawn, fix the car, take care of the kids, work, assist our neighbors, walk the dog, and do every task once shared, alone. I know at night when I see the lights on in other houses, there is a wife just like me, sitting and eating all alone. When I see the neighbors’ children playing in the park, I know their invisible friend they play with is “daddy” because they haven’t seen him in seven months.

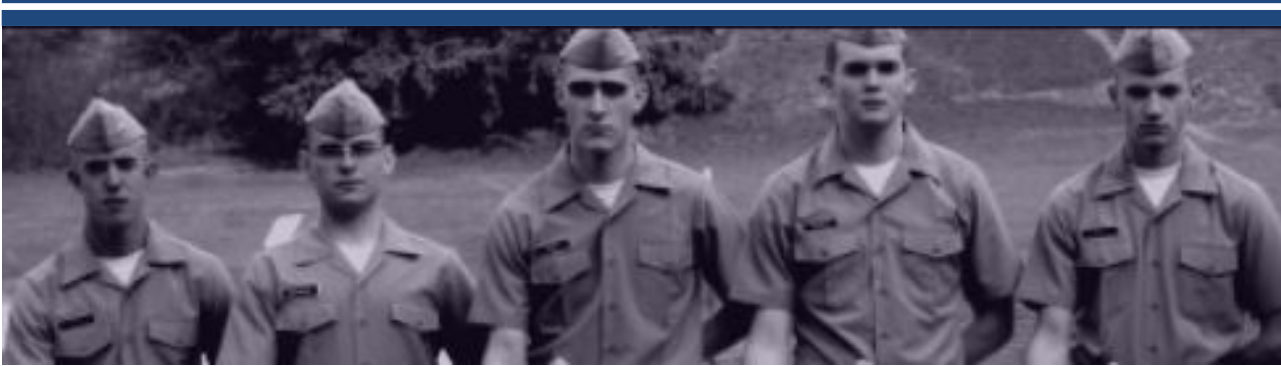
As a wife myself who now has countless heartfelt conversations with my dog because there is no one else to listen, I *know* where you are. I won’t judge you for having a date night with your cat. Neither will the USO. They want to help!

I love handling Events for the USO. I love all the ways our staff love the military. It is genuine. It is never ending. I am grateful, in this Army world of confusing abbreviations, to have my own abbreviation that is here to love and to serve; the USO.

To volunteer at events, e-mail Tracy Mann at events@usonw.org.



The Shali Center has distributed over 83,144 boxes of Girl Scout Cookies to local service members and their families at various events since the end of February.



Being XO in a sea of experience

THE University of Washington’s Naval ROTC unit hosts a significant amount of prior enlisted students. Years of fleet experience are at the ready for midshipman, an advantage most are ready to use and others ready to give.

“The knowledge they have is invaluable since it applies directly to us as future, young Naval Officers,” Midshipman Elizabeth Eiser said. “I have been told numerous stories of good and bad junior officers and have taken what they told me to heart.”

Navy Diver First Class Alex Wytaske couldn’t agree more with Midshipman Eiser.

“I feel the interaction the midshipmen get here, the advice, the mentoring they get at the NROTC unit by prior enlisted is an invaluable part of the program and makes each and every midshipman better prepared for their junior officer tour,” he said.

Enrolling in the NROTC program gave Elizabeth a crash course in military lifestyle, exposing her to challenges, mentors and joys, she said. Without the experienced personnel in the NROTC, the young midshipmen would be in for a shock, Alex said.

The Husky Battalion has 105 members, with over 20 percent being Officer Candidates –prior enlisted– and Marine Enlisted Commissioning Education Program (MECEP) students.

“Our experiences in the fleet are shared with the Mids so they realize how applicable their training is to their future careers and to help them realize how many opportunities are available as future officers,” Ensign Courtney Wright said.

UW NROTC’s MECEPs and OCs have come from various rates such as: nuclear engineering, supply, intelligence, language and crypto, special warfare, aviation, and machinist. Many have been deployed to Iraq, served aboard aircraft carriers, submarines, sub tenders and destroyers.

Prior enlisted personnel can range from E4 with possibly three years’ experience to Chiefs with over ten years, all working side by side with 18 to 22-year-old Midshipmen.

The age and experience gap between prior

enlisted and midshipmen can cause some challenges.

“[While being XO] I learned to pick my battles wisely,” Elizabeth said. “There are times when you can speak up and suggest something that might make some task easier or even bring up unit morale. But I struggled too, in knowing there are better times to keep your mouth shut and respect the experienced opinions of those around you, even when they are peers or even younger than yourself.”

The hierarchy within the NROTC unit is different than what would be found in the Fleet.

Battalion members have an avenue through both the battalion chain of command as well as Unit Staff, who are Commissioned Officers serving as academic advisors.

Midshipmen complaints, suggestions or anything else can potentially be heard by the XO from both the bottom up through the XO’s Staff or top down through the Unit Staff. This results in a unique and challenging situation for XO leadership.

After dive school Alex completed two tours. Wanting to place himself in a position where he could truly make a difference in the Explosive Ordinance Disposal/Dive community, he enrolled with the Seaman-to-Admiral 21 (STA-21) program and began July 2010. Alex is currently the XO for the Husky Battalion.

“I have definitely begun to shift from an enlisted point of view –there is an attitude, a mentality, and a responsibility slightly different between officers and enlisted,” Alex said. “Every day, every session with the Unit Staff I am learning and growing.”

The Husky Battalion gave Courtney confidence in her decision making abilities while humbling her, she said. Being XO of the unit’s Sailing Team helped her learn how to motivate others.

“The Unit Staff challenged me to take on more responsibility and make decisions on my own which taught me to think quickly and consider the whole picture,” she said. “I wasn’t always perfect at it but it has given me more experience that I can take to the fleet.”

Diving into the Navy

NAVY Diver First Class Alex Wytaske did not join the Navy because of an unquestioned, unrelenting call to service.

“My father sat me down and told me, “you suck at school,” he is a tactful man, but he was right,” Alex said.

With average grades and an acceptance to an average college in Minnesota, the next four years of his life would have been largely wasted, he said. His father, a former soldier, encouraged him to join either the Navy or Air Force.

As cliché as it may be, in front of the recruitment office was a cardboard cutout with a Navy Diver holding his hard hat under his arm. Alex told the recruiter this was what he wanted to do. Eight months later he was sent to Boot Camp.

“Upon my initial entrance into the military I may have lacked that certain call to service many feel but during my last seven years I have found distinct honor in serving my country,” he said.

After dive school, Alex completed two tours; Mobile Diving and Salvage Unit One (MDSU-1) in Hawaii and Puget Sound Naval Shipyard Det. Everett. He considers Navy divers the “Jack of all trades”.

There are four common tasks for diver. Underwater ships husbandry consists of any ship and submarine repair or maintenance under the waterline. Salvage involves locating and recovering downed aircraft or other sunken wreckage as well as harbor clearance.

Divers can serve as experimental divers at the Naval Experiment Dive Unit (NEDU), testing new equipment, new diving theories, and acting as trainers for Marine Mammal Units.

Special Warfare and Special Operations commands are utilizing divers to a greater extent, attaching them to Sea, Air, Land (SEAL) and Explosives Ordinance Disposal (EOD) commands to serve in many capacities. Divers can be attached to deploying teams to serve as the dive expert and technician; training members, maintaining equipment, as well as serving as an augmented person for team operations.

During his time as an enlisted diver at MDSU-1 he worked extensively with EOD.

“I developed a deep interest and respect for what they did,” Alex said.

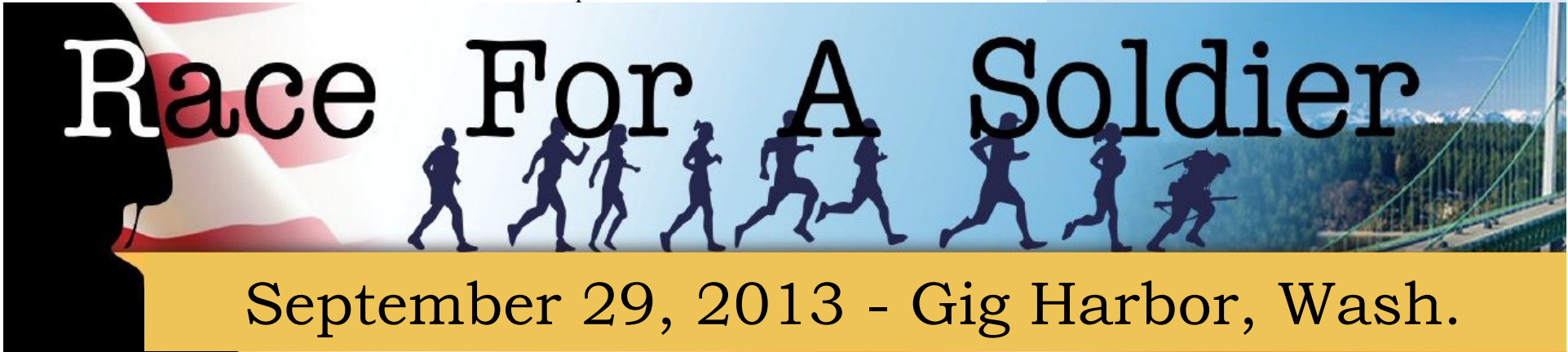
While in Hawaii he applied for the Seaman-to-Admiral 21 program (STA-21) with the hope he will be able to make a difference in the EOD community as an officer. Alex was accepted and is attending school, along with the Naval Reserve Officer Training Corps, at the University of Washington.

“I really want to give back to the community that gave me so much and I think this is the best way I can do that,” he said.

Alex hopes to make the transition from an enlisted mindset, come away wiser and better apt to take on the responsibilities of being a commissioned officer, he said. His goals are to be selected for the EOD officer community and his short term goal is to become a platoon leader at a mobile unit.

Quick Facts about University of Washington’s NROTC

- University of Washington was the first university selected to start the Naval Reserve Officer Training Corps (NROTC).
- In 1951 Clark Hall, on UW’s Seattle campus, became the home for the NROTC unit.
- Husky Battalion owns two 44ft Navy Sailboats called Lively and Vigilant. No other unit has two sailboats.
- The Battalion competes internationally and nationally in sailing, athletic and academic competitions.



Sea Gals bring 12 Man Spirit to service members overseas

hike 20 minutes in the snow.

“I have wanted to reach out to some of these more remote locations for the past couple of years,” Sea Gal Director Sherri Thompson said. “It was such an honor to meet with all of these men and women who work out there every day, hour after hour.”

From frozen Kosovo the show moved to warm Bahrain. This time four of the Sea Gals took part in the training of the canine unit –donning the padded suit. Having dogs such as one named Siro come after them was scary, Sea Gal Heidi said.

Before performing their next show, a cheer youth clinic was held with children ranging from ages five to 15.

Stephanie worked with the younger children, letting them use her official poms and teaching a simple routine. She enjoyed spending time with military dependents; many could speak multiple languages and have seen more parts of the world than most, she said.

“My favorite part of the routine is when we tell the kids to strike any pose they want at the end of the song,” Stephanie said. “The poses those kids came up with were priceless and made for a very good picture opportunity for their parents!”

Camp Lemonnaire in Djibouti, and a two hour stop aboard the amphibious assault ship USS Makin Island (LHD 8), was next on the

tour. Maintenance crews of helicopters explained the extensive work involved in keeping the planes working properly. Pilots explained their call signs to the Sea Gals and took them on a sightseeing tour from the air.

The difference in how free time was spent on the ship versus at the base was not lost on the Sea Gals.

At the bases they visited there were options of coffee shops, sports complexes, pool tables, Wifi hotspots and sometimes the ability to go into town. On the ship Wifi is limited, there is only one gym and the crew had not seen land or visitors for nine months.

The show group performance at Djibouti was one of Sherri’s favorites because the crowd energy was awesome and the house was packed, she said. Going on an AFE tour is a once in a lifetime opportunity and the ability to provide a hour of leisure time for the service members is something never to pass up, Stephanie said.

“I learned how lucky I am to have my family, my home and my freedoms every day and never to take any luxury of life in the States for granted,” Stephanie said. “When I came home I reflected on our daily activities of the trip, the people we had met, the things we had seen and I realized that I will be impacted by this trip for the rest of my life.”



Sea Gals pose with service members at Camp Lemonnaire in Djibouti.

Photo courtesy of Sea Gals

No surprise USO saved lives during Vietnam

THE USO offers many services and programs to the military. During the Vietnam War, one service was saving lives.

Lance Baze, a crew chief of a C-1A with the Naval Air Reserve, was no stranger to the Philippines. With a detachment at Subic Bay, planes were often flown there from Vietnam for repair. One day he and another aircrew member decided to visit Manila, a city people so often spoke of.

“There were hardly any cars on the street [unlike the day before], then in the distance we saw a parade, so we figured it must be some kind of holiday and started walking towards it,” Lance said.

As they were walking a car pulled up alongside them. An attractive lady asked them if they were American, which they replied maybe, Lance said. The woman identified herself as the daughter of a man who worked for the Counsel Office as an Ambassador to the Philippines.

Manila was on lock down and Americans were not allowed in the city. The parade was actually a riot. The Philippines were protesting for independence from the United States of America.

The woman’s driver drove them to her two-story house on the main road. The curtains were drawn shut and the service members were told to stay out of sight. The rioters came down the street destroying anything they could.

“She said because of the Martial Law no American Military or vehicles could be on the streets,” he said. “She called the American Embassy and the Embassy called the USO to get us out of there.”

The USO sent a vehicle to the house where it arrived hours after the sun set. The car pulled up the house’s back door and the service members snuck into the car. The USO driver told them to stay down until all was clear.

“The USO driver drove us all the way back to Subic Bay which took most of the night,” Lance said. “We were dropped off at the USO complex in Cubi Point, at which time a USO person handed us a pre-printed form letter, which started out “Dear Mom and Dad, I’m having a wonderful time in the Philippines.””

The USO volunteer who offered Lance the letter said it was a form letter because so many G.I.’s didn’t write home so the USO created this to make it easier for a G.I. to let their parents know they were still alive, he said.

“The fact the USO [came to Manila] for us was not surprising,” Lance

said. “The USO had a complex in Danang, Vitenam, at the base of Freedom Hill which was attacked every night and you could still get a hamburger the next day.”

The story of the USO rescue changed the life of Lance’s mother, he said. She became a volunteer for the USO in Phoenix, Ariz., during the rest of his time in Vietnam and she later helped out at the USO Northwest’s SeaTac Center once a week for several years.

USS America gets an impromptu show

WHEN the USO Show with Bob Hope came to Danang in 1970 tickets were impossible to get. Because Lance Baze’s C-1A rate required knowing the schedule of people and supplies flying to and from the Aircraft Carriers he knew three or four planes would be stopping at the USS America (CV-66).

“Everyone on the USS America was excited,” he said. “You could hear it in the radio communications.”

Bob Hope was flown out by helicopter resulting in him not stopping at the aircraft carrier; however some of the band members and Miss America’s entourage were still on route. Baze’s plane was the first to arrive.

The plane landed in the normal spot about 30 feet from the superstructure. The deck was hustling with normal activity. Planes were being directed, bombs were being loaded, crew were chalking wheels and so forth. The aircraft carrier was moving fast into the wind. Heat and fumes from exhaust swept across the deck.

Opening the rear door of the aircraft, Lance held his body against the door and wind to keep it open.

“The first lady stepped out of the plane and the wind caught her skirt and blew it straight up,” he said. “As she fought to hide her under garments I looked around the deck of the carrier. A deck that usually looks like a swarm of bees was now completely stopped.”

Planes were not taking off or being loaded. The woman was trying to keep her skirt down but was clearly losing the battle, he said.

“What seemed like five minutes was probably only 20 to 30 seconds before an officer came running from the superstructure with a long coat to wrap up each girl as she got off the plane,” Lance said. “The men on deck booed.”

Building a lasting remembrance in stone, community



“You believe in [the Pointe du Hoc Foundation] and you want others to believe. You are going to see [the memorial] built. You just become so passionate.”
- Taryn Yandell, PDHF Board Member and 2d Battalion 75 Ranger Regiment wife.



Left: The obelisk was surrounded by old barracks, looking out of place, tucked in a corner of the compound (2011). Center: Dog tags hang on a wall in A Company’s headquarters. Right: White spray paint marked the start of memorial construction in the parade field.



“This sense of pride comes over [the Rangers’] faces when they hear that people are willing to build them a memorial, a place for them to come everyday and honor not just what they are doing but to honor what their past brothers have done.”
- Dana Ganaden, 2d Battalion 75 Ranger Regiment wife.



Many people express they have the weight of the world on their shoulders. When Colonel Hodne was asked how much this memorial means to him the weight of the universe could be seen baring down on him. His only answer after his unsettling pause was he was in the same vehicle as two Rangers when their lives were lost.



The orange diamond, a World War II era unit insignia, and bayonet is featured in the memorial design. The backdrop is the current Ranger scroll and the obelisk is placed at the tip of the bayonet. When the 2d Rangers stand in unit formation on the parade field facing the memorial they will be including those who have perished in service.



Left: The obelisk commands attention, even in the midst of construction. Center: Behind the scenes look at unit lockers. The late NFL player Pat Tillman was a Ranger —a USO Center is named after him. Right: Boys study the obelisk at the dedication ceremony.



“This is really an opportunity for people to recognize what true volunteerism is all about. The point where you are actually willing to sacrifice a loved one in defense of our nation’s freedoms. So if you have that understanding and passion to be supportive of people who are willing to do that, it’s hard not to say how can I help in my own way and where can I contribute.”
- Col. (Ret) Michael Okita, Chairman of PDHF.

Doris Spence volunteered 21 years, says USO Northwest has progressed

MANY things get better with time –red wine, cheese, war stories, and even the USO Northwest. Doris Spence, who volunteered for the USONW for 21 years, can attest to it.

“I’ve seen such progress,” she said. “I just hope the USO keeps getting better.” Doris has worked over 11,000 hours, trained hundreds of volunteers and use to be the center manager when it was not a paid position.

“The USO didn’t have any money,” she said. “There was only the Director and her secretary who was also the bookkeeper.”

Because the USONW SeaTac Center did not have a budget to draw from, the American Legion and local Veterans of Foreign Wars office was heavily relied on to help provide food for the service members. Once a week the American Legion would take Doris shopping to make sure she was spending money only on things they approved, she said.

“We had to use the heels of the bread for sandwiches because we never had enough bread,” Doris said.

Aside from getting items for the center, Doris hired volunteers, trained them and covered shifts when no one was available. One night she covered a shift then four hours later was needed to cover a second. Because the bunk room was full she was forced to sleep on the sofa in the family room which was a wide open space.

“I tried to sleep and I just couldn’t because of all the noises –oh, it was terrible,” she said. “I worked so many additional hours I can’t even tell you.”

Having been in the USO family for 21 years, Doris has visited other USO centers. She recalls when people use to tell her St. Louis was the best USO so when she visited for a conference

she was surprised to find it very cold, she said. “Somebody sat behind the counter, asking what you wanted to eat and they would get it for



you and that’s all there was,” she said. “There was nobody around just being warm and fuzzy, you know.”

The USO SeaTac Center today has changed dramatically because of the good, active volunteers and the variety of items offered, she said.

“They are genuinely interested in anything [service members] have to say,” Doris said. “All the personnel are very active in getting supplies and doing things for the center.”

When service members and their dependents come into the USO SeaTac center many say they were told by others to make sure and stop by the USO, she said.

“They all say this is the best USO and it just really does your heart good to know you are making them happy,” Doris said.

She has volunteered long enough to see the USO SeaTac Center change locations in the airport as well. A famous feature of the current center is the wall fixtures filled with various military patches and pins.

“In the old USO we had a wall where the patches were put on with sticky tape,” she said. “People were stealing the patches. They are very important to a lot of people.”

Doris and her longtime partner Art decided the patches needed to be in something where people could not access them. Art took it upon himself to build the wood and glass display cases. Art served as a Marine during WWII and Doris was who enticed him to become a USO volunteer.

“I said ‘Gee, why don’t you come to the USO, you don’t have to stand on your feet six hours a day and you don’t have to pay taxes because you don’t get any money’,” she said.

The one thing Art looked forward to at the USO was when the Marines would come in, he would just boom, she said.

At the end of April, Doris retired from her 21 year position as a USONW volunteer. Her advice to volunteers is to keep a smile on, be friendly and there is always something to do.

“There are lots of people who know what the USO is because of Doris,” USONW volunteer Solveig Steenerson said. “Doris really loves and supports the USO and that devotion will be missed.”

Solveig and her husband Frank were trained by Doris when they came to volunteer 14 years ago.

Q & A with USONW’s Mobile Manager Samantha Lingad

Who inspired you to join the USO? My family. Both of my parents were in the Navy while I was growing up. Both of my grandfathers and my great-grandmother served during WWII. Their legacies have pushed me to want to serve others.

What did you enjoy most about your job at USO HQ? I was privileged to be a part of a fantastic team who provided support and comfort to our military all over the world.

What is the motto you live by? Semper Gumby!

What is your favorite color? Purple.

How was your first Mobile Canteen event? It was such a great event! There was a dedicated group of volunteers who braved the wind and the rain to bring snacks, coffee, candy, and support for our sailors and their families. Plus, watching families reunite after so many months apart was just so touching!

Describe the first time you drove the Mobile. I was somewhat nervous before I drove her, but it actually wasn’t bad. Just have to remember to take wide turns!

With more than 94 Mobile outings now under your belt (or should we say tires), what makes an event more successful than the rest? A successful event is one where our service members leave knowing that the USO and the public support them. So far, we haven’t had one unsuccessful event!

Favorite Girl Scout Cookie? Thin Mint, but I am also enjoying this year’s new addition Savannah Smiles.

Three words to describe you. Historian. Baker. Trekkie.

What expectations do you have for your role as Mobile Manager? I expect to meet many remarkable people, both USONW volunteers and

the military community. I also expect to come home tired but content after work!

Of all the summer trips scheduled, which one were you looking forward to most? I was really looking forward to the Sesame Street Live events. I have a soft spot for military kids!

What is your favorite program offered by the Mobile? I enjoy working directly with our troops and their families. I am really looking forward to United Through Reading, a program where deploying service members can record themselves reading a bedtime story to their child.

What is your favorite submariner movie? Down Periscope. My husband, a submariner, proposed to me after we watched this.

What is your most treasured possession? The box filled with letters my husband wrote while he was at Officer Candidate School (OCS). If the house caught on fire, that is what I would run back in to get.

What is your idea of perfect happiness? A good meal with great friends!

What historical figure do you most identify with? Abigail Adams. While she wasn’t a military spouse, she did endure long, lonely separations from her husband while raising and educating her children, helping in the war effort, and managing her family’s farm. I don’t so much identify with her as hope I could live up to her example.

Who is your favorite hero of fiction? Sherlock Holmes

Which living person do you most admire? The list is far too long!

Anything you would like to add? I consider myself lucky to have this amazing opportunity to serve our troops and families in the Northwest.



Samantha and the Mobile Canteen on the US Coast Guard pier.

2d Rangers enter Bataan Memorial Death March to honor survivor

IT IS impossible to compare an 80-mile death march through sweltering jungle to a 26.2 mile memorial march on blistering white sands. Each has their own challenges, their own story.

A group of 2d Rangers participated in the 23rd Annual Bataan Memorial Death March, hosted at White Sands Missile Range, N.M., to honor a survivor. Robert Honshul, a service member in the Army Air Force during World War II, was a Japanese prisoner of war for three and a half years.

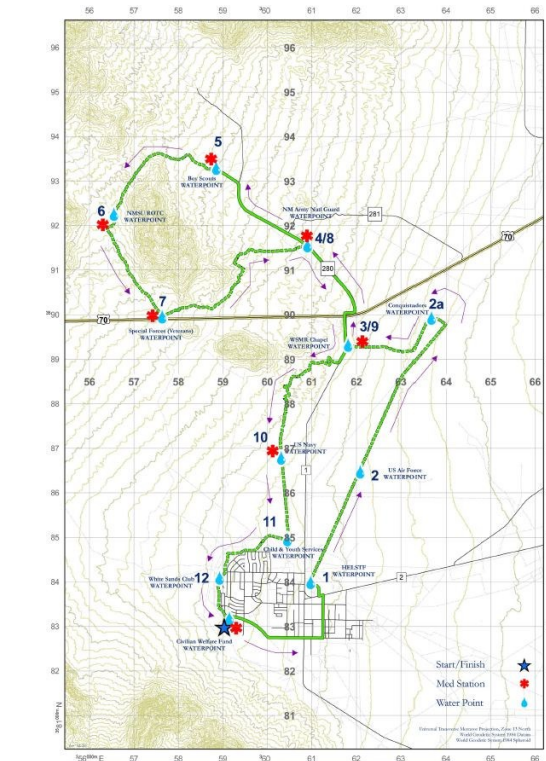
“I happened to be stationed really close to the event the first time I did

Robert was among the 75,000 American and Filipino P.O.W.s forced to march. He saw a couple of his friends killed.

“The Japanese officers would, if you fell out of this march, push you off the trail, stab you and just leave you to die,” Ryan said. During the grueling trek Robert battled malaria. Two of his friends supported him until he could walk alone.

The Rangers trained hard for their 26.2 mile march where they would participate in the Military Heavy category.

“Every week was a new jog dropper,” Jake said. “Oh, we’re going to



Left: Two routes were available to Bataan Memorial Death March participants; 26.2 miles or 14.2 miles—no awards given for shorter march.



Right: The 2d Rangers stand before their unit insignia drawn in the white sands of New Mexico.

[the memorial march], which is why I did it,” Captain Ryan Tackett said. “Now I like the event because I’m honoring Robert.”

Ryan met Robert in 2005, a year after he completed his first memorial march. He took a team in 2009 to participate in the event and the service members paid for Robert’s trip from Ohio so he could meet with other Bataan Death March survivors.

Though the five other members of the 2012 team will not have the chance to meet Robert due to his passing in 2011, each feels a connection to him and other WWII veterans.

“It’s a good opportunity for us to pay it back, to pay some respect and honor these guys,” Cpt. Jacob “Jake” Phillips said. “Honestly, Robert had it a million times harder I would say than any of us in our three, four, five and ten deployments so it’s just a good way to give support back into the community and show it too for the WWII veterans.”



do a half marathon this weekend, we’re doing 16 with the rucksack, and it just kept going. Pretty much a weekly battle.”

For Sgt. Charles “Chaz” Martinez, this would be his first race. The goal was to win and give it their all, Sgt. First Class Shaun Curry said.

The Rangers came in second with a time of 5:49:28. There were 24 all-male teams competing in the military heavy category. Shaun competed as an individual, coming in at 20th place with a time of 6:25:22. There were 434 finishers in the individual Military Heavy category.

Over 7,000 people participated in various groupings. The march took place on an unusually warm day so hydration was very important.

Even with the heat the Rangers are steadfast in saying the actual march and the memorial march are not comparable. Jake wore off-the-shelf boots from REI. The men slept in a hotel the night before and were able to carbo load.

“And no one is sitting there screaming at you with a gun,” Jake said. Or a bayonet, Ryan added.

Robert Honshul’s Prisoner Of War photo survives

AS a prisoner of war (P.O.W.) Robert Honshul was tasked with loading and unloading ships for the Japanese. He and the other P.O.W.s would dump food or anything they could find of the Japanese into the harbor. Luckily his photo did not find itself in the watery depths.

“When you go through SERE Training for the military –Survive, Evade, Resist and Escape- they teach you to do little things to try an undermine the enemy,” Cpt. Ryan Tackett said. “Small victories” or “sticking it to the man”, Sgt. First Class Shaun Curry and Cpt. Jacob Phillips said.

When the Americans began their rescue mission at the Cabanatuan Prison Camp the Japanese tried to get rid of any and all records. They went through their buildings removing paper work before they were pushed out. In their haste, a stack of photos was scattered all over an office floor of a building Robert explored during the rescue.

“He went through it and found his and about four or five other guys’ pictures so that’s how he was able to get his own P.O.W. picture,” Ryan said.

Robert showed the photo to Ryan before his passing and his cousin Sally sent Ryan a digital copy. The photo was very tattered with pen marks on it.

“I Photoshopped it, like his P.O.W. number –you could hardly read it,” Ryan said. “But he told me what it was so I used the Photoshop eraser to copy the number. [The number] was actually on the jacket, spray painted in white.”

Bronze Star Medal reunited with recipient

IN 1944, an Executive Order was passed to establish the Bronze Star Medal. The purpose of this was to boost morale of the ground troops, allowing captains to award deserving individuals serving under them.

At the beginning of March the USO Northwest was able to take part in boosting the morale of Sergeant Edward Lasinski.

While traveling, Edward lost his Bronze Star Medal coin. The coin was returned to the USONW SeaTac Center by an airlines and the hunt began to locate Edward.

“We were so eager to contact him and let him know the coin was found,” former SeaTac Manager Shirley McGann said.

Through a Facebook search contact was made with the sergeant. The coin was mailed immediately. Upon receiving the coin Edward said it made him smile.

“The coin gave inner strength to me and has given inner strength to others,” Edward said.

In 1991 Edward was awarded the Bronze Star Medal. The United States and 34 other countries

began the Persian Gulf War August 2, 1990 against Iraq in response to the country’s invasion of Kuwait. Operation Desert Storm ended February 28, 1991.

“I believe I kept motivation high and always made sure of one main goal – Mission Complete,” he said.

During the Gulf War 383 American casualties were recorded and 467 wounded. In research, the wounds are characterized only as non-mortal. Wounds can range from Traumatic Brain Injury, Post-Traumatic

Stress, to loss of a limb.

“With so many injuries to soldiers, many Americans don’t understand the pain and difficulty it is to live with the disabilities of a soldier,” Edward said.

In the mid 70’s Edward became a citizen of the U.S. He is originally from the Netherlands. Becoming an American is something he is very proud of and it gave him a purpose in life, he said.

“This is the greatest country on God’s green earth and every American should be proud to be an American,” Edward said.



Photos of the coin were taken before it was mailed to Edward Lasinski.



The USO Northwest Mobile acted as the DMZ during a water fight held for the 627 LRS Combat Dining Out on June 15.

Mark, circle, scribble. The events are here

Holiday Food and Toy Drive, Multiple Dates and Locations

Collecting new toys, gift cards and nonperishable food items for military and their families from 9:00AM - 9:00PM

November 30 - December 2, Walmart at 7001 Bridgeport Way W, Lakewood.

December 7 - 8, Walmart at 1401 Galazy Dr. NE, Lacey.

December 7 - 9, Walmart at 17100 State Route 507 SE, Yelm

Walmart at 5900 Littlerock Rd SW, Tumwater

Walmart at 8924 34th Ave NE, Tulalip

Snowball Express

November 30, Families of the Fallen will depart for Dallas-Fort Worth SixFlags.

Holiday Party

December 12, Clarion Hotel at 1:00PM - 3:00PM. The USONW Staff, Board

Members and Volunteers are invited to the Christmas Party - Santa will be there!

No Dough Dinner

January 14, Shali Center at 6:00PM. The USONW will be providing a free dinner to service members and their families. Shali Center Manager will reach out to unit receiving dinner.

“Let Me Call You Sweetheart” Dance

February 9, USO 1940s themed dance at the MOHAI. More information coming soon.

Visit USO Northwest at www.usonw.org for more information

Letter from the Editor

Dear Readers –

AFTER working at the USO Northwest for 19 months, I thought I’d heard and read every kind of sincere “Thank You” possible.

Not so. Not even close.

Traveling with the USO Northwest Mobile Canteen to the Yakima Training Center has been such a wonderful, moving experience. Each day I was there in the dry, hot, dull brown environment I was floored by the sincere “Thank You’s” we received.

After eating MRE’s (Meals Ready to Eat) for days, I’m sure anything would look good. Packaged food versus steaming, grilled hot dogs never stand a chance. Not to mention candy bars, chips, Girl Scout Cookies, juice, and bananas. But it is more than that.

When the USONW Mobile rolls into the parking lot heads turn. Whispers begin. Hard cased cell phones are pulled out from one of multiple pockets. The cautious treading is quickly replaced with relaxed, eager strides. Free food? A place to sit? A stranger genuinely concerned with my wellbeing?

When service members realize all this and more are there for them the look of gratitude they give me goes beyond words. It’s this look and the tone in their voice keeping me going as I move cases of water, get covered in grease from moving the BBQ, and work a ten hour shift on my feet only to be followed by three hours in the grocery store.

These service members are out in the Yakima hills training to go to war. Training to protect the freedoms I so enjoy and treasure.

I cannot imagine how amazing a USO located in Afghanistan, with all its comfy chairs and amenities, looks when one has been out in the field for a while.

From now on I’m going to really try hard to make sure these service members know my “Thank You” to them is sincere. I will try to put as much feeling into it as they do with a single look. It won’t be an automatic response.

It never should have become one.

The next time you interact with a service member, thanking them for protecting our freedoms, I hope you express it in such a way they know they and the services they provide are cherished. And if you ever wish to see and hear the humbling “Thank You’s” I’ve received in Yakima, I encourage you to volunteer and join the Mobile

Canteen on her next trip.

Enjoy the stories published here!

All the best,

Meaghan Cox
Communications
and IT Lead



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Top: Joan Shalikashvili hugs Col. Thomas Brittain at the Ribbon Cutting. Bottom: Service members at the new center.



Expansion of services, Shali Center shines

installation in the U.S.,” Shali Center Manager Andrew Oczkewicz said.

The Shali Center includes a commercial grade kitchen, dining room, bathrooms, five flat screen TVs, a United Through Reading room, laptops with Skype capabilities and a gaming lounge with XBOXs and Kinects. It will continue to provide free food such as hot dogs, made-to-order sandwiches, snacks, fruit and drinks.

“I have no doubt our volunteers and staff can move mountains for our local service members,” Leingang said. “Each one of them sees military personnel as family. They have a great love for what they do -why else get up at two in the morning to make sandwiches?”

The Shali Center is named after USONW Board

Member Joan Shalikashvili and her late husband, Army Gen. John Shalikashvili.

The Shalikashvili family has built their lives around service to the U.S. and enriching the lives of local military and their families.

Joan has worked tirelessly as a USONW volunteer and Board Member. She is often at USO deployments making sandwiches for the service members or helping the Mobile Canteen support military families at homecomings.

While serving as a General in the 1980’s, John became known for his political finesse. He was the first foreign-born soldier to become the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, serving under President Bill Clinton from 1993 until his retirement in 1997.

USO Trivia

- How many USO operations were in Washington in March, 1944?
- Who was Washington’s representative on the national USO Council?
- How many candy bars were given to USONW from Walgreen patrons in two months?
- How many staff members does the USONW currently have?
- On USONW’s Facebook, a photo of a service member wearing an Uncle Sam hat was posted, who is it?



Prior to the ribbon cutting ceremony on Thursday, November 8, the Shali Center hosted deployments on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday.