

PUGET SOUND ON WATCH

Medic brings aid, education to Afghanistan

WHEN there is no protection or support from society for widows and orphans acquiring food, getting an education, and maintaining a healthy lifestyle can be unattainable. Dreams seem impossible.

Army Sergeant William Seo and his team brave these flawed conditions in Afghanistan and dare to dream the impossible. Housing, Education, Medical, Employment fund (HEMEfund) is a nonprofit founded by William and Dr. Rafiullah ‘Rafi’ Mohammad Sadiq in 2008. The immediate goal of the organization, through schools, is to provide widows and orphans with the education, health care and supplies they need to better their lives.

“Afghanistan needed lots of help and I did not ignore my calling,” William said. “I simply listened to my heart.”

Seventy-six percent of Afghanistan is illiterate and the number one medical problem is hygiene.

“Widows and orphans who come to our school are jobless, unable to support their families, feed their children, buy them clothes or shoes and not to mention unable to send them to schools,” Dr. Rafi said.

William, currently an Army Nurse, was serving at Combat



Afghanistan widows and orphans pose with their school supplies given by HEMEFund.

Outpost Garcia when he met Dr. Rafi who served as an interpreter for the U.S. Coalition Forces and worked at the base’s aid station, and Asadullah ‘Asad’ Subhani who joined the U.S. Army as a linguist.

“We talked for days and nights seeking ways to help improve the lives of Afghanistan’s people,” Dr. Rafi said.

William’s effort in trying to get help for the Afghans, working during his free time and at night, is what inspired Asad to join HEMEFund, he said.

“I gave shoes, food, clothes, school supplies, medical treatment etcetera,” William said. “But these were only a temporary relief. I desperately wanted to help them with a permanent solution.”

When William returned to the U.S. he immediately registered HEMEFund as a non-profit organization. Implementing his and his team’s dreams was now underway.

For \$150 a month HEMEFund is able to rent a two or three bedroom house in Afghanistan. These houses become schools where widows and orphans

are taught how to read and write Pashto. They are also taught how to use a sewing machine which helps them earn a living when they graduate.

Because 15-year-old Molghalarah, daughter of Watanyar, can now sew, read and write, her three brothers and four sisters do not have to be on the streets selling water, they can attend school, she said. With her new skills she earns 2000-3000 Afs a month, which translates to U.S. \$44-66 a month.

“I hope that the organization achieves the increase of literacy in our target population by five percent in the next five years,” Army 1st Sergeant and HEMEFund Vice President Melvyn Lopez, said. Of the 17 students interviewed of 30 graduates, 94 percent have started working out of their houses and will be sending their family members to school.

Nadiah, of Qasabah Town in Jalalabad City, said she will not let her husband beg in the streets anymore and sends her children to school because she earns U.S. \$55-77 a month with the sewing machine and education she received from HEMEFund.

“The biggest reward is to see the smiles on faces and witness the improvement of people’s lives who we helped,” Dr. Rafi said.

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From the cockpit of the Executive Director

ARE you kidding me? It is already 2012 and once again time to thank those involved with the USO Puget Sound Area in 2011. Unselfishly, everyone answered the call of countless military and family members to provide “5-Star” Service expected by all of us associated with the USOPSA name.

There were numerous events in 2011 I am very proud to have been associated with, such as the Tsunami Relief. USOPSA concluded a busy year sending over 30,000 military members to overseas duty stations from Joint Base Lewis-McChord. Quite a staggering number –especially when you think of those numbers in context of Girl Scout cookies, sandwiches, hot dogs and hugs goodbye and then consider many of those deployments occurred in what I would call “nonstandard working hours”! The JBLM Volunteers met all those late night or early morning deployments and stand ready to be tested again in 2012. A big “thank you” to Center Manager Andrew Oczkewicz and his

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4,695 troops deploy, USOPSA tends to needs with less than a week’s notice

WHEN it comes to visitors, USO Puget Sound Area Shali Center often experiences two extremes. The center, located at Joint Base Lewis-McChord, may see a couple of visitors during lunch hours and the atmosphere will be slow and relaxed. Or it will host hundreds of service members during a single day deployment ramping up the quiet center to a buzz of activity.

On October 29, there were 4,659 service members served by the USO in 72 hours.

“When I first saw the list of flights and the fact they were going to be overlapping, which is not normal, I thought we are going to need a lot of food and people,” USOPSA Volunteer Jane Hughes said.

Obtaining the needed volunteers for the shifts was Center Manager Andrew Oczkewicz’s first concern.

“Over 90 percent of these deployments were not during our regular service hours,” he said. “Many of the volunteers will work through the night and then go to their regular jobs in the morning.”

USOPSA Volunteer Debbie Zeller worked from 8:20 p.m. to 2:40 a.m. Jane also worked the middle of the night into early morning hours, she said.

With less than a week to prepare, Andrew organized volunteers and secured enough food to distribute - 9,100 hot dogs and 5,000 bottles of water were consumed.

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From the cockpit

volunteers for making this happen.

Further north, our SeaTac Center has been just as busy, not only with weekly overseas flights to Japan and Korea but with high traffic holiday numbers in and out of our Center as well. Shirley McGann and her volunteers need to be commended.

As we gather “end of the year numbers”, USOPSA as an organization can be proud to say we surpassed previous numbers with those we helped this year.

In September, we celebrated our Volunteer Lunch at the JBLM McChord Field. Our volunteers we were able to tour an Air Force plane, enjoy a great lunch (catered by partner Famous Dave’s) and be entertained by JBLM’s professional aircrew as they explained their nuclear mission and flights to the Antarctic. A special thanks to Board Member Joan Shalikashvili for chairing this memorable event.

USO Headquarters conducted our Charter Renewal, inspecting all of our programs and services we provide. Based on the findings of the review, the USOPSA earned our second 5-Star rating and Charter Renewal through December 2014. Receiving our second 5-Star rating in two attempts is outstanding and can only be attributed to the great people within this organization. From Staff working countless hours ensuring all the “I’s were dotted and the T’s were crossed”, to our Volunteers greeting visitors at all hours of the day to Board Members supporting the many programs we have in place –earning the 5-Star rating is something this entire team accomplished and should be proud of.

The Gala at the Museum of Flight included a pre-dinner VIP event, auction, amazing testimonials by Jamie and Karen Moyer of the Moyer Foundation and Mary Humphries for United Through Reading. Under the stellar leadership of Board Members and Gala Co-Chairs Stan Harrelson and Margaret Talbot it was determined USOPSA received enough in donations to take care of our many programs this year. Once again we will partner with the Moyer Foundation to support another Camp Erin bereavement camp for military children in the summer of 2012. We also announced SeaTac Volunteer Dave Tennent is the USOPSA Volunteer of the Year. A special thanks to Program Coordinator Chris Coté, Office Manager Shannon McManus, Procurement Chair Misty Leingang, Mary Harrelson and numerous volunteers who worked before and during the event.

December was a busy month for us with food drives from 11 various Walmart and Navy Exchange locations throughout the Puget Sound Area. We proudly raised over \$14 thousand and provided enough food and toy donations to assist 10,000 families. As if this was not enough, 15 volunteers were at SeaTac at 0400 on Dec. 9 to chap-erone 50 children whom have lost a parent during the War on Terror. This wonderful event is called Snowball Express and is a partnership with American Airlines.

Although 2012 is just days old, I am counting on Shirley at SeaTac, Andrew at JBLM, as well as the rest of the staff of Chris, Shannon and Meaghan to overcome any challenges lying in our path. There is a lot which needs to be done and together; the Board, Staff and Volunteers will keep the lights on...until they all come home!

Cheers... Don



Volunteers work late to support large deployment

“I made over 15 trips to Cash-n-Carry and solicited local friends and groups,” Andrew said. “I was constantly thinking if we could ever find a water sponsor that would bring the water to the USO the job would be much easier and free up my time to better serve the troops.”

Because of the volume of flights, many of them overlapping, the volunteers understood the magnitude of the upcoming job. They knew they were going to have their hands full.

Debbie said her first thoughts when she heard how



USOPSA Volunteer Dottie Cole gives a service member a plate of food.

many service members were deploying was the Center would keep busy and she hoped Andrew bought enough hot dogs and buns.

To prepare for the deployment, volunteers cleaned the Center and prepared the various services to be used such as Troop Holding and the Center kitchen.

The bread cabinets were stocked, fresh donuts placed in the pastry case, Starbucks coffee brewed, water chilled and hot dogs cooked.

“During the large deployment we would pre-cook the hot dogs on the grill and then put them in large pots with lids,” Debbie said. “We had 100 plus done before anyone came in.”

Service members file through the Center enjoying the food, places to sit and watch TV, play XBOX and do last minute Facebook updates on the computers offered.

“Once the troops arrive it is very fast paced,” Jane said. “We need to constantly refill everything.”

When service members move to Troop Holding, a building just next door to the USO Center,

volunteers pass out Girl Scout cookies and water.

“This deployment was to a training center in California,” Andrew said. “No care packages were given out and the United Through Reading program was not utilized.”

However, when service members leave for down range volunteers hand out care packages and wear an extra bright smile because they know they are the last people these service members will see on U.S. soil for a while, Jane said.

“Deployments to training are usually a bit more light hearted,” Debbie said. “They know they will not have to be gone for months on end, so the troops are more at ease.”

During the large deployment volunteers coming off their shift were stuck in the parking lot because troop buses blocked the road.

“Lesson learned; don’t park in the USO parking area during large deployments!” Debbie laughed. “Otherwise, be prepared to stay or four-wheel your way out!”

McChord Field Center receives new name

SERVICE members honored by the USO Puget Sound Area came to the stage one by one. Applause was given to each then USOPSA Board Member Joan Shalikashvili was escorted on stage to join the five branches. A black drape was withdrawn from an object on stage, showing a large plaque with her family’s name on it.

The USOPSA Center at McChord Field is now proudly known as the Shali Center. It has been named after Joan and her late husband U.S. Army Gen. John Shalikashvili.

“The Shalikashvili family Service Members of the Year present center plaque. has built their lives around service to this great nation and enriching the lives of our local military,” USOPSA Executive Director Don Leingang said. “It is fitting this USOPSA center bear the name of one of this nation’s greatest patriotic families.”

Gen. Shalikashvili was the first foreign-born soldier to become the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff in 1993 under President Bill Clinton. Born in Poland he became a U.S. citizen in 1958 and was drafted two months later. He was stationed in Germany, Vietnam, and Korea. While serving as a general in the 1980s he became known for his political and military finesse.

When he retired in 1997 he worked as a visiting professor at Stanford’s Center for International Security and Cooperation. He lived near Fort Lewis, Wash., the home of the Ninth Infantry Division he once commanded.

Gen. John Shalikashvili died of complications after a stroke. He was 75. He is survived by his wife Joan, and son, Brant.

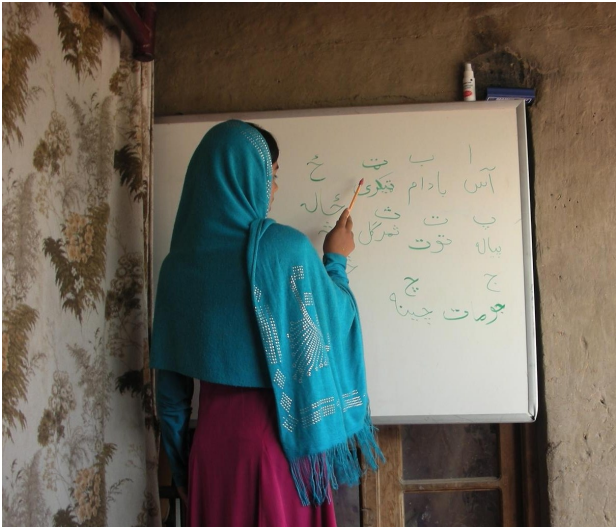
The plaque announcing the center name as Shali Center will remain on permanent display at the USOPSA Center.



Items and Tasks Needed for Centers

- SeaTac Center**
Items: All beef hot dogs, individually wrapped chips, and small hair combs
- 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.

Widows, orphans receive support from HEMEfund



Left to right: A student goes over her written Pashto. Widows and orphans use HEMEfund sewing machines. Molghalarah, an orphan, smiles in front of her classroom work.

People are surprised U.S. \$441 and a few months of education can help these individuals become economically independent, Melvyn said. Service members tend to be thrilled to listen to stories of those being helped by HEMEfund, William said.

“Many of them have also been deployed and can relate to what I share with them,” he said. “There are many enlistees who volunteer to support small projects in different areas.”

William emigrated from Korea to the U.S. when he was 16 years old and relates Afghanistan to the time after the Korean War in the 1950s.

“Right after the war, Korea was a very poor country,” he said. “Without the support from the outside, we would have struggled so much.”

HEMEfund solicits to other organizations for help as well as individuals. USO Puget Sound Area entertainer and actor Gary Sinise sent HEMEfund U.S. \$1,000 as well as visited the Daman Elementary School in Afghanistan.

Gary flew to the remote village and with William delivered 130 pairs of new shoes and

school supplies to the children.

“We packaged them together with many other gifts such as toys, candies, clothes, gloves, and school backpacks donated by the U.S. Army, churches and individuals,” William said. “Gary Sinise shook hands and gave them warm hugs too.”

“Afghanistan women in particular pray for HEMEfund hard.” - Dr.Rafi

Asad, HEMEfund Administrator, left Afghanistan at a young age with his family and moved to Pakistan because of the fighting occurring in his country. He went to school where he learned Microsoft Office, Photo Shop and the English language. Upon returning to Afghanistan he joined the U.S. Army as a linguist.

“The majority of people in Afghanistan are uneducated and think bad about the U.S. Army,” Asad said. “Showing the positive side of the US Army while people are talking about the wrong information or rumors makes my job challenging.”

Having William, Melvyn and other service

members help the community makes a positive impact on the false information spread around the uneducated.

“When I told my family about HEMEfund they were happy about it,” Asad said. “My friends like that I am trying to help my people.”

Melvyn said HEMEfund could be helped primarily by economic support, technical support and the Board is always welcome to suggestions on how to make the organization better.

“If a 43-year-old immigrant sergeant, who dropped out of med school and miserably failed in running his own business, can dream to help the world, then any one can certainly dream the impossible too,” William said. “I believe it with my heart.”

HEMEfund’s long term goal is to implement 10 schools in Jalalabad City, Kunar province, Laghman province, Kabul province and Baghlan province giving a grand total of 50 schools in Afghanistan, Dr. Rafi said.

For more information about the nonprofit organization HEMEfund Worldwide or how to volunteer and donate visit www.hemefund.org.

Service member’s cat gets purr-fect care with USOPSA Volunteer

PROVIDING support to service members is what United Services Organization volunteers do on a daily basis. When a military family departing to Okinawa, Japan was unexpectedly forced to leave a loved one behind, Lynn Nelson offered to help house the family member. In this case, the loved one was a cat.

“The [Air Mobility Command] staff informed us we could only bring two pets even though we confirmed with them several times prior to traveling,” Suezel Cummings said.

With no solutions offered to the family of four with three cats, Suezel’s husband Petty Officer 1st Travis Cummings sought assistance at the USO Puget Sound Area’s SeaTac Center. USOPSA volunteer Lynn Nelson, who rescues cats, offered to take care of Cleokatra until the family could make arrangements for her to join them in Japan.

“We had to figure out which cat to leave behind and how we were going to explain the situation to our kids,” Suezel said.

The family looked into taking a commercial flight to Japan but realized they did not have all of the needed pet documentation. Flying on AMC flights allows pet owners to bypass notifying the Port of entry Animal Quarantine Ser-

vice, have a health certificate no older than 10 days and a rabies certificate endorsed with raised seals by a Federal United States Department of Agriculture veterinarian (USDA).

“We knew that Lynn was a genuine and kind person who was willing to do what she could to help our family out,” Suezel said. The family left Cleokatra in Lynn’s care.

For three and a half months Lynn looked after Cleokatra.

“We kept in touch at least three times a week,” Lynn said. Cleokatra made herself at home and loved to play fetch, she said.

With only one income, the family needed to wait on reuniting with their pet until there was enough money for a ticket to Japan. When it came time to send Cleokatra to her family, Lynn needed to schedule an appointment with a veterinarian to complete an international health certificate required by the Japanese Animal Quarantine Service.

“[Suezel] sent me all the original paper work, the quarantine paper work and all of that had to be stamped by the USDA office,” Lynn said. She found herself making multiple trips to Olympia. The USDA would not stamp the papers until Cleokatra’s flight to Japan was



Cleokatra poses for the camera at Lynn Nelson’s house.

booked.

“I finally got the cat on a flight a couple days after Thanksgiving,” Lynn said. “The USO and I made their family complete once again.”

The Cummings’ family is grateful for Lynn’s above and beyond care provided to Cleokatra and now consider Lynn part of the family, Suezel said.

“These men and women serve our country and they go through a lot,” Lynn said. “The least I can do is to make it a little easier on them. I served six years in the Army, I know how it is.”

Best decision of high school career, join JROTC

THE Prisoner of War/Missing in Action Ceremony is a stark reminder for Todd Beamer High School Air Force Junior Reserve Officers' Training Corps (AFJROTC) cadets of how serious their future commitment to the U.S. military can be.

"We should always remember those men and women who were unable to reach home," Cadet Kehaku James, 17, said. "There are people out there who suffer from not knowing their own loved one's fate."

At the USO Puget Sound Area Gala the AFJROTC presented the POW/MIA ceremony to a room full of veterans, active duty service members, community leaders and civilians. Each cadet felt it was an honor to present.

"The faces of the veterans say all that needs to be said without words," Cadet Tyler Snyder said. "You can see the appreciation on the tear they shed for brothers in arms that we just honored in our ceremony."

The decision on why to join the AFJROTC varies in a wide range from being the only interesting high school elective left to family tradition.

"When I joined AFJROTC my mom hated it,

she wouldn't let me do anything for a full semester of school because of it," Cadet Devinn West, 17, said. "The way I have changed is I have more respect now. I have leadership abilities and a right mind through life, and its down turns."

Devinn was encouraged to join by his friends

cally, and emotionally," Tyler said. "A JROTC cadet is an individual who cares for their nation and community, commits to core values and is capable of setting the example to others."

Teens in the AFJROTC program can participate in community projects, drill teams, color guard, the POW/MIA ceremony, field trips and

assist each other with any challenge life places before them.

"[AFJROTC] has inspired me to push myself in not only this program and sports but in everything I do whether it be professionally or socially," Cadet Marcus

Frakes, 17, said. Cadets are re-

quired to wear a uniform to school and are inspected weekly. Friends of the cadets take their friend's commitment in strides. Some friends encourage, others think the program to be weird.

"My friends weren't too happy," Cadet Nikki Hohner, 16, said. "They don't like it when I wear the uniform."

Despite the pushback from friends, Nikki hopes to receive a scholarship through the Air Force and become an officer. She said since she was a little kid she has wanted to be in the military.

Each day the cadets begin school with drill class at 0600. It is a practice period for all drill teams and color guard and to strengthen the team. Grade point averages must be kept at a 2.6 or above in order to compete.

The mission of the Todd Beamer AFJROTC is developing the cadets into citizens of character dedicated to serving the nation and community. Instilling values of citizenship, personal responsibility and inspire a sense of accomplishment are the goals.

Air Force Major Barry Jones (Retired) said he is very proud of his cadets.

His cadets know with their training and involvement in the AFJROTC program they will achieve their after high school goals. Daniel, Nikki, and Tyler hope to become officers in the Air Force. Marcus and Devinn want to join the Marine Corps. Kehaku plans to go Syracuse University to study languages.

"I also want to go to Ranger school and be a linguist in the Airborne Rangers," he said.



Left to right: Cadets Marcus Frakes, Daniel Schrader, Tyler Snyder, Kehaku James, Devinn West and Nikki Hohner. Cadet Kehaku James takes part in the POW/MIA ceremony with his fellow cadets at the USOPSA 5-Star Gala dinner



and inspired by his cousin Marine Lance Cpl. Randy Newman who was killed in action in Iraq, 2005.

Cadet Daniel A. Schrader, 15, said belonging to the AFJROTC means to be above oneself, to lead, to experience the world through other people's point of view, overcoming challenges, and leading others into what might be the biggest success of their lives.

"To me, being a JRTOC cadet means challenging yourself at every level; mentally, physi-



Orange is the new color of love, admiration and support. For Valentine's Day make a donation or purchase a stone to show you care about the 2D Battalion Rangers, their service and sacrifice.

For more information about the memorial being built by the Pointe Du Hoc Foundation and to make a donation visit the Web site www.pointeduhocfoundation.com



Food and Toy drive helps 10,000 local military families

THE Food and Toy proved to be a giant success for the USO Puget Sound Area. The drive held the first weekend of December brought in over \$12 thousand in cash donations, tons of toys and food. Ten thousand local military families benefited from the community wishing them a happier holiday season.

“I was shocked when we exceeded \$10 thousand and ecstatic when we went over \$12 thousand,” USOPSA Programs Coordinator Chris Côté said. “[2011’s] drive was a huge success and we dramatically improved our numbers across the region.”

The USOPSA set up collection locations at ten various Walmart stores.

“People would come out of the stores with a full cart for donations and people were thanking us for what we were doing,” Navy Personnel Specialist 1st Class Mark Anthony C. Martin said.

Tables were manned by volunteers from the USOPSA and the military. Smaller collection

sites such as the Microsoft Stores did not require the presence of volunteers.

“Most, if not all, the folks that volunteered enjoyed very much being there and being part of the effort,” Coast Guard Electrician’s Mate Master Chief Curtis Podhora said.

Military units supplied volunteers at the tables

“Our military families sacrifice quite a bit, and not just during the holidays.” – Chris Cote

in exchange for the toys and food collected. By having specific sites collect for specific bases it allowed the minimizing of travel between the store and delivery point, Chris said.

Food and beverages were coordinated for volunteers at the collection sites. Starbucks took care of energy levels and warmth by providing five gallon jugs of coffee. Restaurants like Famous Dave’s, Applebee’s, and Bob’s Burgers and Brew provided meals throughout the day.

“[USOPSA Volunteer] Samantha Hagan-Lingad coordinated all food and drinks at each location,” Chris said. “We had to ensure volunteers were well taken care of during their shifts so they will most likely volunteer for us in the future.”

Walmart stores provided tables, chairs, and tents for both days of the drive. Some stores’ staff were very helpful while others, due to lack of communication, were not aware the USOPSA’s Food and Toy Drive was happening.

“I think if we have more, huge banners, advertisement and information posted a few weeks prior at the site we will have more donations,” Mark said. “A lot of people asked what the USO is and why does it exist.”

For the 2012 Food and Toy Drive USOPSA staff hope to have coverage on television and radio weeks prior and during. Increasing coverage will bring more donations allowing for even more help for local military families, Chris said.

Snowball Express, USOPSA bring joy during holidays

A CASTLE cannot be built in a day nor by one person. There is a foundation, support beams, a roof and strong walls offering protection to be built. It is constructed by many people. The castle built at Gate A9 in the SeaTac Airport during the holidays is symbolic of the support military children have from members of the Puget Sound Area community.

Snowball Express, sponsored by American Airlines and Snowball Express.org, is a program where military children who have lost a parent during active duty are treated to an all-expense paid trip to Six Flags Amusement Park in Dallas, Texas. The USO Puget Sound offers assistance each year.

At Gate A9, American Airlines employees constructed a castle and decorated Christmas Trees. This was the fourth year for the American Airlines Snowball Express flight which departed on December 9, 2011.

“We were thrilled that we once again were able to count on the support of the USO to assist

us with our Snowball Express families,” said Susan Payne-Rao, Seattle Snowball Express Coordinator/American Airlines.

Children began arriving at 4:30 a.m. They were greeted by USO Puget Sound Area volunteers, Nutcracker Ballerina Oliva Rao, Santa Claus, and special elves Jamie and Karen

teers offered to help escort the children to and from Airport Security.

“More than 20 volunteers offered to help with this event but we could only chose 12,” said Shirley McGann, USO SeaTac Center Manager. “Having so many wanting to participate shows how committed and caring the USOPSA community is.”

The military children range in ages and experiences. The USO Puget Sound Area Santa Claus, played by USOPSA Executive Director Don Leingang, and elves met with each child to make sure they knew they are supported by their local community. They also escorted the chil-



Left to right: Santa hugs a military child . USOPSA Volunteers pose with Santa and Mrs. Claus as dawn begins to break.

Moyer of The Moyer Foundation.

“We were honored to be elves for these kids. Anything to make them smile and feel special during the holiday season,” Karen Moyer said. “USOPSA does a lot for these families and teaming up with them was extra special for me and Jamie.”

Despite the early hour many USOPSA volun-

dren through the castle and on to the plane. “USO Puget Sound Area is all about supporting military families,” said Don Leingang, USOPSA Executive Director. “If sending children over to Six Flags helps them escape the pain the holidays may cause because their parent is not around, then we are honored to do our part.”

Mark, circle, scribble. The events are here

Seattle Mariners Salute to the Armed Forces

April 21, At Safeco Field the Mariners will take on the White Sox at 1:05 p.m. The USO PSA will have booths set up and military will be honored at the game.

Red, White and Blue Golf Classic

May 22, Golf Club at Newcastle. Register as a sponsor or volunteer at www.usopsa.org/golf

Good Karma 5K Race

May 27, 9:30 a.m. at Seattle Seward’s Park, USOPSA will receive some proceeds.

Air Show at JBLM

July 21 - 22, See the USAF Thunderbirds and Army Golden Knights perform. Don’t forget to stop by the USOPSA Mobile for a hot dog and beverage.

Sesame Street Visits Northwest

July 23 - 27, NAS Whidbey, Naval Base Kitsap and JBLM will have shows for families

Fleet Week and Seafair

August 1 - 5, The USOPSA Mobile will be firing up the barbeque. Come join us!

September 11 Anniversary Coins
Available till January 31



Visit www.usopsa.org
Under tab “Get Involved” to purchase a coin
for yourself or others for \$10.

Proceeds go toward the USO Puget Sound Area
Brought to you by Coinforce.com

5-Star Gala allows continuation of unbeatable programs, services offered

USO Puget Sound Area’s 45 Anniversary celebration raised \$300,000 at their annual 5-Star Gala. These funds will allow for continued free programs and services offered to over 500,000 local military personnel.

“With less attendees then the previous years due to venue layout, grossing \$300 thousand is very good,” USOPSA Programs Coordinator Chris Coté said.

Services like providing free internet, free food and money for unit or squadron gatherings will all be recipients of the funds raised at Gala. Partnering with The Moyer Foundation and TAPS, the USOPSA will offer children who lost a parent serving in the military the opportunity to go to bereavement summer camps called Camp Erin.

United Through Reading opportunities will expand since the USOPSA will now be able to buy more video equipment needed to make the recordings of service members reading to their children.

“The USOPSA is here to take care of all the service members and families who come to Washington,” Communications and IT Lead Meaghan Cox said. “None of that is possible without the support of caring individuals and companies.”

Over 10 companies sponsored the 5-Star Gala. An Army spouse was moved by The Moyer Foundation presentation and donated \$2 thousand as her contri-

bution for the local Camp Erin program in 2012. Attendees made further donations at the live and silent auctions held during the evening.

“My first priority was to honor those that served – we accomplished that,” Executive Director Don Leingang said. “Priority two was to raise enough money to continue all our programs and although we fell a little short of our goal, we still did well.”

USOPSA Board Member Stan Harrelson said his favorite memory of the evening was the tribute to General John Shalikashvili. The late U.S. Army general was former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff during President Bill Clinton’s term in 1993. He was also USOPSA Board Member Joan Shalikashvili’s husband. A large plaque announcing the new name of the USOPSA JBLM center as Shali Center, was presented to Joan and the audience.

Malcolm McLellan, USOPSA Board Chairman, made an announcement during the evening further validating the programs and services provided by the USOPSA.

The highest recognition, a five-star rating, from USO Headquarters in Arlington, Virginia, was awarded to the USO Puget Sound Area for unbeatable service, outreach and enthusiasm. When the ratings began in 2008, the USOPSA was recognized as a five-star chartered center. It is the first chartered center to hold this title for the last three years.



New look! “The Mobile will be a great symbol of USOPSA’s support of service members,” Executive Director Don Leingang said.

Acknowledgments from Center Managers

Shirley McGann, manager of the Sea-Tac Center, says Thank You to the following:

- ◆ CFC events: Alice Caravias, Darcy Greenleaf, Judy Leu, Doug Hoople, Vic Kaufman, Jan Burke, Ann Schneider, Mike Mellen, Sharon Hagen, Joan Fehlings, Kathy Fehlings, Nels Enquist
- ◆ Thanksgiving Day: Lonny Thompson who single handedly prepared dinners for 30 USO guests.
- ◆ GALA: A huge thanks to all who worked so hard to make our Gala an elegant evening enjoyed by all: Kathie Brown, Lonnie Stevenson, Alice Caravias, Darcy Greenleaf, Joelle Machia, Tanya Neilsen, Gabriele Swe, Eric Chow
- ◆ Veteran's Day Parade: David Hill, Jean Hill, Kathie Brown, Lonnie Stevenson, Karen Ott, Gabriele Swe, Den-ny Hamilton, Mike Larson, Ross Othus, Val Othus, Vicki Lockwood.

Thank you to all SeaTac volunteers who devoted their time during the holiday season. You make a huge difference in the lives of our military especially during the holidays. On Christmas Eve when there was a delayed AMC flight you jumped in to make room for folks who were left stranded without a flight out of Seattle.

Andrew Oczkewicz, manager of the Shali Center, says Thank You to the following :

- ◆ Dick Corby, re-worked the check-in system and added a second check-in terminal!
- ◆ Sharon Coward, she manually input the thousands of entries from our guests after the new system was operational
- ◆ Eric Chow, staffed the Airmen Dorm espresso stand on Saturdays, working 10 hours shifts - wow.
- ◆ Debbie Zeller, deployment fairs, deployments, espresso stand, etc... etc... etc :)
- ◆ Gina Luplow, working Lead on so many deployments at all hours, then going to work in the morning!
- ◆ June Hershey, the troops love the Sunday activities at the Airmen Dorm Espresso Stand
- ◆ Herb Schmeling, took the late afternoon phone call and helped me manually unload an entire semi-truck of Trevor Romain kits. Thanks to Mary Findlay for the hand-truck!
- ◆ Elizabeth Abbott, worked Lead on many late night deployments and takes early morning shifts before work!
- ◆ Jane Hughes, my new second set of eyes, she previews all deployment needs so all goes smoothly.

Visit USOPSA at www.usopsa.org and like our facebook page

Letter from the Editor

Dear Readers,

Change is upon us. Challenging goals have been placed before the USO staff. And now I am asking for your help.

The USO Puget Sound Area is striving to become a household name like we were during World War II and Vietnam. With the closing of the Iraq War many service members will be coming home. Many will be going to Afghanistan as the U.S. seeks to end this decade long war. There are also countless locations around the world where our troops are representing U.S. interests, far from home.

We can’t forget this. We can’t ease up on our support of service members and their families.

Did you know the USOPSA’s slogan is ‘to provide all the comforts of home’? As we extend our reach in providing support and comforts to those at Yakima, Everett, and Whidbey, we will need your help.

I encourage you to inspire others to volunteer. We need every age –many of those we serve and support are as young as 18 and as old as, well let’s say before there was such a thing as a computer.

The USO functions solely on volunteers and donations. We need to have new blood. We need to be out in the community instilling our love of supporting service members within every new generation.

Reach out to your neighbors at your next block party. Encourage your niece, daughter or granddaughter to speak to her sorority about volunteering once a month. Challenge your son, nephew or grandson to play a sports game with our Wounded Warriors. Bring your company team to a USOPSA event or schedule a tour at one of our Centers to see what current USOPSA volunteers do.

It means the world to our service members and their families to see community support. They treasure the little things, like a smile and hug before they deploy or a cup of coffee on a Sunday afternoon. They are always astounded at our USOPSA Gala and Golf Classic when they see how many people turn out to support them through the USOPSA.

Let’s keep it that way. As you read this newsletter and the others to follow I hope you will spread the news of the good the USOPSA and service members do. I ask for your help in generating new volunteers, new supporters – our life long fans and family members.



All the best,

Meaghan Cox

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From the USOPSA Guest Book

Oct., 2011 “Wonderful place! I can’t tell you the last time I had an egg salad sandwich, it was great! With cold milk too. It tasted like home. God bless you all.” -US Army Chaplain

Nov. 4, 2011 “Sandwiches here are awesome! And the Staff is nice too!” -A.L. Nicoletti

Dec. 30, 2011 “Awesome USO Seattle! I’ve been to different USO’s, I can’t replace the experience I have here in Seattle –especially Ms. Tish. She is very kind and accommodating. Thank you so much.” -PS1 Torio, PSD Misawa Japan

Jan. 3, 2012 “A great facility, a haven for all in a hectic place. Thank you.” -S.C. Ames, CDR USN (Ret.)

USO Trivia

1. How many computers does each USOPSA center have?
2. Where was Meaghan Cox an intern before working at USOPSA?
3. How many USOPSA Volunteers are there?
4. Where was the first USO Club established in Washington State?
5. Name the Seattle P-I journalist who was Vice-chair of the Seattle USO Council.

USOPSA Volunteers’ Birthdays

January	
1. Diane Belanger & Don Fehlings	17. Colene Kravits
3. Joan Jennings	18. Linda Hagen
5. Jerry Morris	19. Margaret Bishop, Dottie Cole, John Downs & Steve Grissom
6. CJ Williams	20. Dan Juvik
7. Tammy Fredrickson	23. Margie Chissus
8. Ryan Carpenter & Sam Martin	24. Don Leingang
10. Phyllis Engstrom	25. AJ Bilderback & Tanya Neilsen
11. Margie Lindberg	26. Anna Gray and GG Waldburger
13. Theresa Nieffenegger	30. Eleanor Skinner
15. Freddie Ellis & Choang Lai	

February	
2. Anna Cote-Laciste	12. Don Booth & Laura Elliott
3. Jim Hagen	16. Phyllis Friedman
4. Dagmar O’Brien	19. Judy Verhaalen-lam
7. Ayako Campbell & Don Cowan	20. Mary Anderson
9. Stacy Schiltz	26. Jan Laird
10. Frank Steenerson	27. Carol Nyseth
11. Patti Brown	28. Katherine Marzolf & Anna Shetlin

March	
3. Lee Galt, Birgit Hunter, Linda Landerdahl	17. Mary Fredrikson
5. Venessa Cunningham	19. Deborah Jette, Gina Luplow & Lynn Nelson
7. Wendy Flores	21. Laura Bioren
8. David Hill & Steve Meadows	25. Sandy Aquino, Sharon Coward & Sherrod Hitch
12. Doug Hoople & Donna Parker	27. Dee Carlo & Greg Knight
14. Priscilla Huber, Eliu Moreno, Jean Pescar & Joan Peterson	30. Bruce Carroll



Trivia Answers: 1. There are four 2. Communications Dept. at USO Headquarters 3. 300 Volunteers 4. Oak Harbor 1941 5. Royal Brougham