

## **The Origin of the Adopt-a-Soldier Platoon**

**By Alan Krutchkoff, President**

**October 2, 2006**

I was at the office in the IT department at Unilever Bestfoods in Englewood Cliffs, NJ, one day in April 2003, when my wife, Mary-Edna called me.

“My car has been in an accident,” she said.

“Are you okay?” I asked.

“I’m fine. But there’s about \$500 worth of damage to the car. One of the women at the school backed into my parked car in the parking lot.”

“In the parking lot. Couldn’t she see your car?” Now I’m really annoyed.

“She had a lot on her mind,” she said.

“What she could possibly have on her mind that she didn’t see your car?” I asked.

“Her son-in-law is going to Iraq.”

“Oh.”

I felt very bad for this woman and then an idea struck me. I went to see a colleague of mine, Holmes Brady. Holmes had been a reservist with the Special Forces.

“Hey, you want to adopt this guy?” I asked Holmes.

“Definitely,” he answered. He readily agreed it was something we should do.

Our first “adoptee” was Jamey Hermanns, a Sergeant in the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division. Not only does the 82<sup>nd</sup> have a storied and historic past, but Holmes’s Dad was in the 82<sup>nd</sup> during WWII. So it was particularly nice for him to participate in this venture.

We planned our first shipment. We went shopping together and bought a bunch of things we thought he’d like. We asked our mail room crew for an empty carton and packed up a nice-sized care package and mailed it to him.

That’s how it all started.

A few people heard about what we did and it wasn’t long before we learned that some of our colleagues had friends and relatives in the Middle East.

Bob’s son was a Marine in Afghanistan. Frank’s cousin was in the Sunni triangle. John’s nephew was in Fallujah. Chris’s nephew was working in psychological operations. Stephanie’s son was on an air crew near Syria. Dorothy’s daughter was in an engineering group near Kirkuk. Dianna’s brother was guarding the main supply road into Baghdad. Monica’s cousin was training Iraqi policemen. The word spread.

Nearly three-and-a-half years later, we have more adoptees and our team is a lot bigger. Roughly 150 people get the email updates each week. And we engage in larger projects – from sending a custom-built giant screen for a Super Bowl party to providing wireless Internet to soldiers in the largest military hospital to softball equipment for the largest base to personal care items for female soldiers to 25,000 blank DVDs so the troops can make videos to send home for the holidays.

At the Adopt-a-Soldier Platoon, we do more than put magnets on our cars. We really support our troops!

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