



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Joseph A. Griffo

Griffo and CNY Veterans Outreach Center announce results for Cell Phones For Soldiers collection drive

JOSEPH A. GRIFFO December 12, 2024

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New York State Sen. Joseph Griffo, R-C-Rome, and the Central New York Veterans Outreach Center proudly announced today that **approximately 600** gently-used mobile devices have been collected over the past month and will be donated to [Cell Phones For Soldiers](#).

This year's collection drive ran from Nov. 4 to Dec. 6 and spanned Sen. Griffo's district. The public was able to drop off any used mobile devices at 11 collection bins throughout the senator's district, which includes all of Oneida and Madison counties and parts of Chenango and Herkimer counties.

For every donated phone valued at \$5, Cell Phones for Soldiers is able to provide 2 ½ hours of free talk time to deployed troops via calling cards. All proceeds from the recycled devices will be used to buy long distance calling cards for troops at home and abroad. Some of the phones collected also will go directly into the hands of veterans in need. The phones will come with unlimited talk and text.

As a result of this tremendous community support, **approximately 90,000 minutes** of free calls will be provided to men and women serving in the military.

This is the ninth year that the drive has taken place. Residents throughout Sen. Griffo's district have donated approximately 7,400 devices and have provided troops with approximately 740,000 minutes of free calls.

“Once again, our compassionate and caring community stepped up and showed how much they appreciate the men and women serving in the military, their families and our veterans,” **said Sen. Griffo**. “By donating these phones and devices, we will make the holidays brighter for our troops and give them the chance to talk with their friends and loved ones. I thank the Central New York Veterans Outreach Center for partnering with me and all the businesses, libraries and organizations that graciously served as drop-off locations for this year’s effort.”

“I am never surprised by the generosity of this community and region,” **said Vincent Scalise, Central New York Veterans Outreach Center executive director**. “Once again, so many people decided to donate devices for this year’s Cell Phones For Soldiers collection drive. This compassionate effort will help our troops stay in touch with their loved ones, families and friends during the holiday season and support veterans in need. I thank Sen. Griffo for again spearheading this important initiative and appreciate all those who participated.”

Cell Phones For Soldiers was founded in 2004 by teenagers Robbie and Brittany Bergquist at the ages of 12 and 13. The charity has since provided more than 300 million minutes of free talk time to servicemen and women stationed around the world through its calling card program, Minutes That Matter. Funds raised from the recycling of cellular phones are used to purchase prepaid international calling cards.

On average, Cell Phones For Soldiers distributes 1,500 calling cards each week to bases around the world, care package programs, deployment ceremonies and VA hospitals. Since 2004, the charity has provided U.S. troops with more than 400 million “Minutes That Matter” and distributed more than 5 million prepaid international calling cards and have recycled more than 25 million mobile devices, reducing the impact on landfills.

A donation of a mobile device to this community collection drive doesn’t just help connect active military and veterans with loved ones, it also helps protect the environment by properly and safely recycling them so not to cause electronic waste, which can be extremely harmful to the environment if it ends up in a landfill. Electronics such as mobile devices do not last a lifetime, yet they are made with products that are non-disposable, such as cadmium, mercury, and lead as well

as lithium batteries and rare-earth minerals, and commonly cased in plastic—all things that can cause damage to water supplies and ecosystems. Cell Phones For Soldiers works with a recycling partner which dismantles the device securely, identifying which components may be resold for reuse - which helps cut the demand for mining in vulnerable locations, and providing funding for the organization to help service members communicate with home and support veterans in need.

For more information on Cell Phones For Soldiers, please visit www.cellphonesforsoldiers.com.