



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

John A. DeFrancisco

SENATOR DEFRANCISCO KICKS OFF HIS SIXTH ANNUAL COLLECTION DRIVE FOR CELL PHONES FOR SOLDIERS

JOHN A. DEFRANCISCO November 25, 2013

| ISSUE: **MILITARY, TROOPS, VETERANS**



State Senator John A. DeFrancisco, a United States Air Force veteran, has kicked off his sixth annual collection drive for *Cell Phones for Soldiers*. At a press conference on November 25th, Senator DeFrancisco was joined by Syracuse Army Recruiting Battalion Commander Lieutenant Col. Hugh Darville and Staff Sgt. Alex Joy to discuss the importance of helping our military families stay connected. Also pictured in the photograph is Command Sgt. Major David Inglis. Senator DeFrancisco is holding a framed certificate that the founders of *Cell Phones for Soldiers* recently awarded him in recognition of his continued support of the program and the U.S. military.

“I am always proud to support the brave men and women in uniform, who continue to make tremendous sacrifices to serve and protect our country,” said Senator DeFrancisco.

Cell Phones for Soldiers, a non-profit organization founded in 2004 by teenagers Robbie and Brittany Bergquist of Massachusetts, provides pre-paid calling cards to deployed soldiers, by selling used donated cell phones to a recycling company. All phones are accepted, and each average recycled phone is worth enough to purchase at least two, 60-minute international calling cards. Every year since 2008, Senator DeFrancisco has partnered with *Cell Phones for Soldiers*, setting up collection boxes at various public libraries, schools and shopping centers in Central New York.

“Thanks to the outstanding generosity and support of the Central New York community, last season we collected more than 1,500 cell phones to provide soldiers with about 3,000 hours of free talk time,” continued Senator DeFrancisco. “I know we can keep this momentum going!” Overall, Senator DeFrancisco’s collection drive has generated more than 12,000 hours of free talk time for our troops.

“Cost-free communication tools are a phenomenal way to support our deployed service members,” added Lieutenant Colonel Darville. “Morale increases when soldiers are better able to stay in touch with their loved ones back home, especially during the holidays.”

Since its inception, *Cell Phones for Soldiers* has produced nearly 200 million minutes of prepaid calling card time for soldiers serving overseas. In 2012, the charity launched a new initiative, Helping Heroes Home, to expand its assistance to veterans who have returned home from active duty. This program within *Cell Phones for Soldiers* provides emergency funding for returning veterans to help them overcome certain communication challenges, as well as physical and emotional hardships.

Senator DeFrancisco’s 2013-2014 collection drive for *Cell Phones for Soldiers* will run through January 6, 2014. Central New Yorkers can drop off their gently-used mobile phones at Senator DeFrancisco’s district office:

800 State Office Building

333 East Washington Street

Syracuse, New York 13202

Additional drop-off sites include: Baldwinsville Library, Great Northern Mall (Guest Services), Fairmount Library, Fayetteville Library, Fingerlakes Mall (Guest Services), Le Moyne College, Liverpool Library, Manlius Library, Northern Onondaga Public Library at North Syracuse, Onondaga County Public Library at the Galleries, Onondaga Community College (Student Central), Seymour Library in Auburn, ShoppingTown Mall (Guest Services), Skaneateles Library, Solvay Library, Syracuse University's ROTC Office, U.S. Army Recruiting Stations in Syracuse, Mattydale and Auburn, and Clear Path for Veterans.

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