



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Robert G. Ortt

## Senator Robert Ortt, AT&T and Niagara County Veterans Service Agency Partner With Cell Phones For Soldiers to Provide Troops With Free Calls Home

ANTOINETTE DELBEL (ORTT) / BEN ROBERTS (AT&T) November 6, 2015

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NORTH TONAWANDA, NY – November 6, 2015 – In honor of Veterans Day on November 11, Senator Robert Ortt, AT&T and Niagara County Veterans Service Agency have teamed up with the nonprofit [Cell Phones For Soldiers](#) asking the community to help troops call home by donating cellular phones and tablets. Proceeds from the recycled devices are used to buy long distance calling cards for troops at home and abroad. Although the military landscape is

ever changing, as many as 200,000 troops are serving in the United States military overseas. By donating to Cell Phones For Soldiers, local residents and businesses can provide a lifeline for America's bravest.

Beginning today and lasting until December 7, on the anniversary of Pearl Harbor, area residents and businesses can donate their unwanted cell phones and/or tablets at the following locations:

- **Senator Ortt's District Office: 175 Walnut St., Suite 6, Lockport**
- **Hoag Library: 134 S. Main St., Albion**
- **Lockport DMV Office: 111 Main St., Suite G1, Lockport**
- **Niagara County Veterans Service Agency: 111 Main St., Suite 200, Lockport**
- **Niagara Falls Housing Authority: 744 10th Street, Niagara Falls**
- **North Tonawanda DMV Office: 500 Wheatfield St., North Tonawanda**
- **Seymour Public Library: 161 East Ave., Brockport**
- **All AT&T Stores in WNY including: 5724 S. Transit Rd., Lockport / 8292 Niagara Falls Blvd., Niagara Falls / Niagara Falls Blvd., Tonawanda / 1741 Sheridan Dr., Tonawanda / 8200 Transit Rd., Amherst / Galleria Mall, 1 Walden Galleria Dr., 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, Cheektowaga / 4900 Transit Rd., Depew / 3505 Amelia Dr., Orchard Park**

Cell Phones For Soldiers was founded in 2004 by teenagers [Robbie and Brittany Bergquist](#) at the ages of 12 and 13, respectively. The charity has since provided more than 216 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 military bases worldwide, and supports care package programs, deployment ceremonies and VA hospitals.

“Each year we have been humbled by the number of people and organizations like AT&T and New York State Senator Ortt that take part in this important initiative to support our military members,” said **co-founder Robbie Bergquist**. “The communication gap between those serving and their families is a crucial need that Cell Phones For Soldiers is committed to addressing for years to come.”

**Senator Rob Ortt (R,C,I – North Tonawanda)** said, “As we approach the upcoming holiday, it’s important to remember and honor the men and women in the U.S. Armed Forces who have served and continue to serve our great nation. Cell Phones For Soldiers is one small way we can do that while making a big difference in their lives. I know from personal experience that staying connected to your loved ones while serving in the military helps the day pass, and makes time away from home a little bit easier. I’m privileged to be a part of this initiative in support of our troops to help keep our heroes connected.”

Senator Ortt enlisted in NY Army National Guard in October 2001 in direct response to the attacks on September 11th. He is a veteran of Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan, where he served from March 2008 until December of the same year. His mission was to serve as a combat mentor/advisor to the Afghan National Police in Kandahar City in Afghanistan. Ortt’s other responsibilities included ensuring that all the logistical needs of the company were met to facilitate operational readiness, coordinating and running all company meetings, and acting as the commander in his absence. He successfully moved \$10 million worth of equipment to Afghanistan and back to the United States.

He is the recipient of the Bronze Star, the Army Commendation Medal, the Afghan Campaign Medal and the Combat Infantryman’s Badge in recognition of his service.

“AT&T has a long and proud history of supporting both veterans, active military personnel and their families through various company initiatives and by establishing external partnerships with organizations that provide necessary services, such as Cell Phones For Soldiers,” according to **Marissa Shorestein, president of AT&T New York**. “We are privileged to partner with Senator Ortt, Cell Phones For Soldiers and the Niagara County Veterans Service Agency to encourage the community to join us and donate their unused cell phones and tablets to honor and thank all of the brave men and women that protect and serve our country by helping them keep connected with their friends, family and loved ones at home.”

**Niagara County Veterans Service Agency Director Nina Cabrera** said, “We’re proud to be partnering with Cell Phones For Soldiers, Senator Ortt and AT&T for this worthy cause. We value the importance of supporting our troops and veterans, and this initiative to keep them connected with family members and loved ones is another way to show that we care. It’s an honor to be able to give back to our military men and women who have sacrificed so much for us.”

For every donated device worth at least \$5, Cell Phones For Soldiers is able to provide two and a half hours of free talk time to deployed troops via calling cards.

Since 2004, more than 11.7 million phones have been recycled or repurposed. Approximately half of the phones processed are reconditioned and reused. Phones and components that cannot be refurbished are dismantled and responsibly recycled to reclaim materials, including:

- Gold, silver and platinum from circuit boards
- Copper wiring from phone chargers
- Nickel, iron, cadmium and lead from battery packs

AT&T's partnership with Cell Phones For Soldiers stems from the company's longstanding mission to connect members of the nation's military with their loved ones back home. Founded in 2004, and expanded through financial support from AT&T, Cell Phones For Soldiers is a non-profit that uses funds from recycled cell phones to buy prepaid phone cards for our service men and women, helping them connect with their families. Over the past two years, AT&T has proudly supported Cell Phones For Soldiers' "Helping Heroes Home" initiative, a program designed to provide emergency funds for returning veterans to alleviate communication challenges as well as physical, emotional and assimilation hardships. Additionally, AT&T and its customers have donated more than \$4.6 million and distributed more than 600,000 AT&T prepaid calling cards to service men and women overseas since 2007.

For nearly 100 years, AT&T has remained dedicated to supporting active military personnel, veterans and their families. AT&T is a founding member of the 100,000 Jobs Mission, launched in 2011 with 10 other companies to commit to hiring 100,000 veterans by 2020. The coalition has grown to more than 180 corporate members and has tripled its commitment to hiring at least 300,000 veterans by 2020. In November 2013 AT&T increased its veteran recruiting efforts with the goal of hiring 10,000 veterans and their family members into career opportunities over the next five years. Currently, AT&T has hired more than 7,000 veterans and their family members, and is well on its way of achieving the goal by 2018.

To prepare your mobile phone for donation, here are some tips on how to erase all personal information that may be stored on it to protect your privacy:

- Remove your phone's SIM card. Erase your address book, photos, messages and other stored information

- Restore the device factory settings on your device
- For instructions on how to do this, go to owner's manual or to the manufacturer's web site

For more information on Cell Phones For Soldiers, please visit

[www.cellphonesforsoldiers.com](http://www.cellphonesforsoldiers.com).