



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Joseph A. Griffo

## Senator Griffo and AT&T far exceed goal in helping troops call home for holidays

JOSEPH A. GRIFFO December 14, 2016

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**UTICA, NY** – Just in time for the holidays, State Senator Joseph Griffo and AT&T are proud to announce that the community has helped collect **933 gently-used cell phones and mobile devices** over the past month, more than doubling the amount collected last year.

Several hundred more devices than last year will now be donated to [Cell Phones For Soldiers](#). This year's charitable campaign far exceeded the goal set forth at the launch of the collection

drive to surpass the number of mobile devices collected last year – 450.

By donating these cell phones and mobile devices to Cell Phones For Soldiers, this joint effort by Senator Griffo, AT&T and the community will now be able to provide our troops and injured veterans with **an estimated 41,985 minutes of free calls to their loved ones back home.** Proceeds from the recycled devices will be used to buy long distance calling cards for troops abroad and veterans at home.

The collection drive – which began Nov. 11 and lasted until Dec. 12 – spanned Senator Griffo's district, where the public was able to drop off any used mobile devices at collection bins in AT&T stores throughout the region, as well as 12 public locations throughout Senator Griffo's district.

For every donated phone valued at just \$5, Cell Phones For Soldiers is able to provide 2 ½ hours of free talk time to deployed troops through calling cards.

**State Senator Joseph Griffo, R-Rome, said:** “I already knew that we live in a very thoughtful and giving community, but I am in awe by how much the public stepped up once again to help us far surpass our goal by recycling so many more cell phones than last year. All of the hundreds of phones collected this past month mean that so many more of our troops will be able to call home to speak with their loved ones for the holidays, and I am proud of the patriotism that this reflects in our community. It is always an honor to help our brave service men and women any chance I can, and I once again thank AT&T, Cell Phones for Soldiers and our very compassionate community for joining me in bringing some comfort to our troops abroad.”

Cell Phones For Soldiers was founded in 2004 by teenagers **Robbie and Brittany Bergquist** at the ages of 12 and 13 after they heard the story of a local soldier with a cell phone bill that

totaled nearly \$8,000. They decided to help this one man with just \$21 of their own money and Cell Phones For Soldiers was born from there.

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 **2,500 calling cards** calling cards each and **3.2 million prepaid international calling cards** since 2004 to military bases around the world, care package programs, deployment ceremonies and VA hospitals. Cell Phones For Soldiers recycled more than **15 million cell phones** since its inception.

**Marissa Shorenstein, New York president, AT&T, said:** “As an industry leader in communications, there is nothing that brings AT&T more pride than being able to connect our active military and veterans with their loved ones, especially during the holidays. I applaud Senator Griffo for collaborating with AT&T to lead this successful community collection drive again this year. Working together, we significantly surpassed our goal of collecting more mobile devices this year than last year for the charity. We appreciate this community’s continued generosity to help make the holidays more enjoyable for some of America’s bravest by connecting them with their families and friends back home.”

Here is the breakdown of where 933 cell phones and mobile devices were collected from various locations across the area:

- **Jervis Public Library (Rome) 370**
- **Chanatry’s Hometown Market (South Utica) 98**
- **Turning Stone Resort Casino (Verona) 70**

- **Herb Philipson’s (New Hartford)** **69**
- **Vernon Downs Casino Hotel** **41**
- **Herb Philipson’s (Rome)** **25**
- **Erwin Library (Boonville)** **19**
- **Carpenter’s Paint & Hardware (Camden)** **12**
- **Utica Public Library** **11**
- **CNY Veteran’s Outreach Center (Utica)** **11**
- **Utica State Office Building** **10**
- **Waterville Public Library** **10**

#### **AT&T Stores**

- **Commercial Drive, New Hartford** **69**
- **Erie Blvd, Rome & Genesee Street, Oneida** **51**
- **N. Genesee Street, Utica** **67**

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 ongoing support of Cell Phones For Soldiers](#) stems from the company’s longstanding mission to connect members of the nation's military and veterans with their loved ones back

home. 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 more information, please visit [www.cellphonesforsoldiers.com](http://www.cellphonesforsoldiers.com).

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