



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Joseph A. Griffo

Griffo, AT&T and CNY Veterans Outreach Center announce results for Cell Phones for Soldiers Collection Drive

JOSEPH A. GRIFFO December 16, 2019



UTICA – New York State Senate Deputy Minority Leader Joseph Griffo, R-I-C-Rome, AT&T and the Central New York Veterans Outreach Center proudly announced on Monday that, with the help of the community, approximately 1,086 gently-used mobile devices have been collected over the past month and are being donated to Cell Phones for Soldiers.

As a result of this tremendous community effort, now in its fifth year, approximately 162,900 minutes of free calls will be provided to men and women serving in the military. With this

year's donations, residents throughout Deputy Minority Leader Griffo's district have donated approximately 4,892 devices and provided troops with approximately 733,800 minutes over the last five years.

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. As many as 200,000 troops are serving in the U.S. military around the world and by donating to Cell Phones For Soldiers, local residents and businesses can provide a valuable lifeline for America's bravest men and women to connect with loved ones back home.

This year's collection drive began Nov. 8 and lasted until Sunday, Dec. 8, and spanned Deputy Minority Leader Griffo's district. The public was able to drop off any used mobile devices at 17 collection bins and AT&T stores throughout the district, which includes parts of Oneida and St. Lawrence counties and all of Lewis County.

"I am appreciative of the generosity of those who donated these phones and devices so that our troops can talk to their friends and loved ones this holiday season," said Deputy Minority Leader Griffo. "I would like to thank AT&T, Cell Phones for Soldiers, the Central New York Veterans Outreach Center, the local businesses and organizations that graciously provided space for residents to drop off their devices and the caring and compassionate community who took part in this year's collection drive. Through this collective effort, we showed the men and women in our military that we value their service and the sacrifices they make to protect us from harm."

"I want to thank Deputy Minority Leader Griffo for spearheading another wonderful community Cell Phones for Soldiers drive with AT&T" said Amy Kramer, AT&T New York President. "I am very appreciative of everyone that donated an old mobile device and am

always astonished by the generosity of this community and their commitment to helping make the holidays more enjoyable for America's bravest men and women and their families. We connect the world at AT&T, but nothing brings us more pride and joy than being able to connect our active military and veterans with their loved ones, especially during the holiday season."

"The results of this year's collection drive again demonstrate the generosity of community members and how much they care and appreciate the men and women who serve our nation," said Vincent Scalise, Central New York Veterans Outreach Center executive director. "I thank Deputy Minority Leader Griffo and AT&T for helping to spearhead this important initiative and am appreciative of everyone who donated a cell phone or device to help our troops domestically and abroad stay in touch with their loved ones, families and friends during the holidays."

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, Cell Phones for Soldiers has provided U.S. troops with more than 300 million "Minutes That Matter" and distributed more than 5 million prepaid international calling cards and have recycled more than 15 million mobile devices, reducing the impact on landfills. Approximately half of the phones processed are reconditioned and reused, while the those that can't be are dismantled for to reclaim materials and the funds raised from this process are used to purchase calling cards.

“Cell Phones for Soldiers would like to express our sincere appreciation of Deputy Minority Leader Griffo, AT&T, the Central New York Veterans Outreach Center and the entire community for once again taking on our mission to connect military members serving around the world with their loved ones back home, especially during the holidays,” said Cell Phones for Soldiers co-founder Robbie Bergquist

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

Here is the breakdown of where the cell phones and mobile devices were collected from various locations throughout Deputy Minority Leader Griffo’s district:

Jervis Public Library (Rome): 95

Central New York Veterans Outreach Center (Utica): 91

Utica Public Library (Utica): 4

Utica State Office Building (Utica): 33

Chanatry’s Hometown Market (Utica): 197

Turning Stone Resort Casino (Verona): 23

Adirondack Bank Center at Utica Memorial Auditorium (Utica): 15

Peter’s Cornucopia (New Hartford): 8

New Hartford Library (New Hartford): 46

Lloyds of Lowville (Lowville): 34

Lowville Free Library (Lowville): 26

Beaver River Memorial Post 1663 (Croghan): 25

Sergi’s Italian Restaurant (Potsdam): 43

Town of Potsdam Offices (Potsdam): 7

Massena Public Library (Massena): 45

First Source Federal Credit Union

4451 Commercial Drive (New Hartford); 1634 Genesee St. (Utica); and 1822 Black River Boulevard (Rome): 44

AT&T Stores

4777 Commercial Drive (New Hartford); 1319 Erie Boulevard W (Rome); and 224 N Genesee St. (Utica): 350

For more than a century, AT&T has been proudly supporting veterans, active military personnel and their families through numerous company initiatives. The company seeks to support military members and veterans at home as well as abroad. Multiple company initiatives focus on helping military members transition to the civilian workforce. AT&T is committed to hiring 20,000 veterans by the end of 2020, with more than 1,600 already hired across the country since 2013.

Over the past 5 years, AT&T and the AT&T Foundation contributed or directed more than \$21 million to organizations and projects that support military, veterans and their families through corporate, social investment and AT&T Foundation giving programs. As part of the company's Thank Our Heroes campaign, AT&T has teamed up with 16 organizations across the U.S. to recognize our nation's heroes and serve active duty military personnel, veterans and their families. This was part of a \$500,000 total contribution. In addition to making a monetary contribution, last year alone, AT&T has contributed over 40,000 volunteer hours to hundreds of veteran-focused events and programs. Since 2007, AT&T and its customers have donated more than \$64.5 million and distributed more than 600,000 pre-paid calling cards to servicemen and women.