



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Joseph A. Griffo

## Griffo, AT&T, CNY Veterans Outreach Center, Utica Comets kickoff annual Cell Phones For Soldiers Collection Drive

JOSEPH A. GRIFFO November 9, 2021

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**UTICA** – In honor of Veterans Day and Military Family Appreciation Month, state Sen. Joseph Griffo, R-I-C-Rome, was joined by AT&T, Army National Guard SSG. Charles Haas, the Central New York Veterans Outreach Center and the Utica Comets today to kick off this year's **Cell Phones For Soldiers** collection drive.

**For every donated phone, mobile device or tablet valued at \$5, Cell Phones For Soldiers is able to provide 2.5 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 and other communication services 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.

**The collection drive starts on Veterans Day (Nov. 11) and runs through Saturday, Dec. 11.** The public and businesses can drop off gently used and unwanted cell phones and/or tablets at collection bins in AT&T stores throughout the region and at several public locations throughout the senator's district. Those locations include:

- **Jervis Public Library: 613 N. Washington St., Rome**
- **Adirondack Bank Center: 400 Oriskany St. W., Utica**
- **Central New York Veterans Outreach Center: 726 Washington St., Utica**
- **Slocum Dickson Medical Group: 1729 Burrstone Road, New Hartford**
- **Utica Public Library: 303 Genesee St., Utica**
- **Chanatry's Hometown Market: 485 French Road, Utica**
- **Utica State Office Building: 207 Genesee St., Utica**
- **Turning Stone Resort Casino: 5218 Patrick Road, Verona**
- **New Hartford Public Library: 2 Library Lane, New Hartford**
- **Lloyds of Lowville: 7405 S. State St., Lowville**
- **Lowville Free Library: 5387 Dayan St., Lowville**
- **The Cottage Inn: 97 94 NY-12, Copenhagen**
- **Massena Public Library: 41 Glenn St., Massena**
- **Potsdam Public Library: 2 Park St., Potsdam**

## AT&T Stores

- **4777 Commercial Drive, New Hartford**
- **1319 Erie Boulevard W., Rome**
- **224 N. Genesee St., Utica**
- **220 Genesee St., Oneida**

This is the sixth year that the drive has taken place. Residents throughout Sen. Griffo's district have donated approximately 4,891 devices and have provided troops with approximately 334,125 minutes.

"The holidays can be a difficult time for our military because they are often so far away from their families," **Sen. Griffo said**. "The simple sound of a loved one's voice can go a long way to lift up their spirits. These brave men and women have stepped up to serve our nation, and I am proud to be teaming up with AT&T, the Central New York Veterans Outreach Center, the Utica Comets and Cell Phones for Soldiers to help connect these troops to their families back home."

"For more than century, AT&T has proudly supported veterans, active military personnel and their families through various company initiatives and has collaborated with organizations that provide these brave Americans with the vital services they need," **said Amy Kramer, President, AT&T New York**. "We are honored to join forces again with Senator Griffo, Cell Phones For Soldiers, the Veterans Outreach Center and the Utica Comets to encourage this community to join us by donating their unused and old or unused mobile devices to honor and thank all of the courageous men and women that protect and serve our country. With the holiday season upon us, we want those serving our country to stay connected with their

friends, family and loved ones at home.”

“We are honored to have the support of AT&T and Sen. Griffo for another Cell Phones For Soldiers collection drive, and we are so grateful for the generosity and thoughtfulness of Sen. Griffo’s constituents in the Mohawk Valley and the North County of New York,” **said Rob Bergquist, founder and CEO of Cell Phones For Soldiers.** “Every donation of a cell phone, smartphone, or mobile device helps our organization serve our nation’s heroes and protect the environment.”

"The holiday season can be a difficult and trying time for many families, especially for those who have a loved one serving in the military and away from home," **said Vincent Scalise, Central New York Veterans Outreach Center executive director.** "I thank Sen. Griffo for again spearheading this collection drive and for his continued support of our armed forces and their families."

“Communicating with their family while deployed overseas is very important to service members and to their families back home,” **said Rick Redmond, senior vice president of facility operations at the Adirondack Bank Center, veteran and Purple Heart recipient.** “Sen. Griffo’s campaign provides additional means for service members to make those calls and remain in contact with their loved ones.”

Cell Phones For Soldiers was founded in 2004 by teenagers **Robbie and Brittany Bergquist** at the ages of 12 and 13 and is dedicated to providing cost-free communication services, devices, and emergency funding to active-duty military members and veterans. The charity has provided more than 400 million minutes of free talk time to servicemen and women stationed around the world through its calling card and communications services program, Minutes That Matter. Funds raised from the recycling of unwanted, outdated, or broken cellular and smartphones, mp3 players, tablets, digital cameras, and accessories

including chargers, cases, and cables 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 **400 million** “Minutes That Matter” and distributed more than 5 million prepaid international calling cards and have recycled more than **20 million** mobile devices, reducing the impact on landfills, where e-waste can cause significant environmental harm. AT&T has been a longtime partner with the organization to connect service members to their families while deployed.

For more information on Cell Phones For Soldiers, please visit [www.cellphonesforsoldiers.com](http://www.cellphonesforsoldiers.com).

***\*\*\*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 manufacturers' web site.*

For more than 100 years, 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. The company also has multiple initiatives focused on helping military members transition to the civilian workforce. Despite the challenges caused by the pandemic, AT&T surpassed its commitment to hiring

20,000 veterans by 2020. AT&T's continued support of active military, veterans and their families closely align with the company's undying commitment to FirstNet built with AT&T, America's safety communications platform providing first responders with a reliable, highly secure, interoperable, and innovative wireless communications and broadband network dedicated to public safety.

Since 2007, AT&T and its customers have donated more than \$65 million and distributed more than 800,000 pre-paid calling cards and other communications services to servicemen and women.