



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Joseph A. Griffo

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

JOSEPH A. GRIFFO December 15, 2022

| ISSUE: **CELL PHONES FOR SOLDIERS; MILITARY; CALLING CARDS**

**UTICA** – Just in time for the holidays, New York State Sen. Joseph Griffo, R-I-C-Rome, AT&T and the Central New York Veterans Outreach Center proudly announced today that more than **600** gently-used mobile devices have been collected and donated to **Cell Phones for Soldiers** to help connect deployed military and veterans with their families and loved ones.

This year's collection drive ran from Nov. 11 to Dec 11 and spanned Sen. Griffo's district. The public was able to drop off any used mobile devices at 13 collection bins and AT&T stores throughout the district.

As a result of this tremendous community support, **approximately 90,000 minutes** of free calls will be provided to men and women serving in the military and veterans in need.

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.

This is the seventh year that the drive has taken place. Residents throughout Sen. Griffo's district have now **donated approximately 6,400 devices and have provided troops with more than**

**590,000 minutes (more than 9,800 hours) of free calls.**

“Year after year, I am always impressed by everyone who steps up to help those in need of assistance,” **said Sen. Griffo.** “This year was no different. Through the donations of these phones and devices, we will help to make the holidays brighter for our troops by giving them the chance to talk with their friends and loved ones. I would like to thank AT&T, Cell Phones For Soldiers, the Central New York Veterans Outreach Center and our caring and compassionate community for once again taking part in this collection drive and helping those who protect us and keep us safe from harm.”

“As an industry leader in communications, there is nothing that brings AT&T and its employees more pride and joy than being able to connect our active military and veterans with their loved ones, especially during the holidays,” **said Greeley Ford, Senior Network Engineer, AT&T.** “AT&T has been privileged to collaborate with Senator Griffo to lead this successful community charity collection drive again this year. I am once again overwhelmed by 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.”

“Once again, our community showed 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.** “Thank you to Sen. Griffo and AT&T for again spearheading in this important initiative and to everyone who helped our troops stay in touch with their loved ones, families and friends during the holiday season.”

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, the charity 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 **25 million** mobile devices, reducing the impact on landfills. 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.

"Cell Phones for Soldiers would like to congratulate and thank Senator Griffo, AT&T and the entire Central New York community on another successful cell phone collection campaign," **said Rob Bergquist, founder and president of Cell Phones For Soldiers.** "The phones collected this year will have a direct impact connecting deployed military and help veterans receive resources they need to get back on their feet and stay on their feet."

For more than a century, AT&T has proudly supported active military personnel, their families and veterans, including helping veterans and active military transition into the workforce. AT&T recognizes how valuable veterans' leadership, critical thinking, and diverse perspectives can be, and the company has invested in programs focused on the transition from military service to a civilian corporate setting, with more than 12,000 active employees self-identifying as a veteran as of June 2021. Since 2007, AT&T and its customers have donated more than \$65 million and distributed more than 800,000 pre-paid calling cards to servicemen and women and Military Friendly magazine has recognized AT&T as a top 10 brand in 2022. AT&T's continued support of active military, veterans and their families closely align with the company's 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.

The donations of the mobile device to this community collection drive will help connect active military and veterans with loved ones during the holidays and beyond, it also helps protect the environment by properly and safely recycling them so not to cause electronic waste, which can be extremely harmful to the environment if it ends up in a landfill.

Electronics such as mobile devices do not last a lifetime, yet they are made with products that are non-disposable, such as cadmium, mercury, and lead as well as lithium batteries and rare-earth minerals, and commonly cased in plastic—all things that can cause damage to water supplies and ecosystems. Cell Phones For Soldiers works with a recycling partner which dismantles the device securely, identifying which components may be resold for reuse - which helps cut the demand for mining in vulnerable locations, and providing funding for the organization to help service members communicate with home and support veterans in need.

For more information on Cell Phones for Soldiers, please visit

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

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