

Village of Orland Park Media Relations

# NEWSRelease

Frederick T. Owens Village Hall  
14700 South Ravinia Avenue - Orland Park, IL 60462

Media Contact: Margie Owens-Klotz  
708/403-6277

Program Contact: Gail Blummer  
708/403-6203

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## **Orland Park Vets Collecting for Operation Support Our Troops-Illinois** *OSOT Shares Wish List of Care Package Items for Overseas Military*

ORLAND PARK, IL – The Village of Orland Park Veterans Commission is on a mission to help re-stock the warehouse shelves of Operation Support Our Troops-Illinois.

“Our Veterans Commission has received word that the inventory at Operation Support Our Troops - Illinois is running low,” said Orland Park Mayor Dan McLaughlin. “This is why the village is letting everyone know that we accept care package items at our Village Hall and at our Sportsplex,” he said.

Based in Naperville, Operation Support Our Troops Illinois maintains a database of military personnel from throughout the country, sending care packages on a rotating basis. The group, founded by Deb Rickert of Naperville, has shipped more than 17,000 care packages since its creation in 2003. OSOT-IL continues to be one of the largest volunteer based military support efforts in the country and is funded solely by donations. The group is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization.

“Family members of those serving in Iraq or Afghanistan are able to submit their loved ones’ names, military addresses and expected return dates on OSOT’s website,” explained Orland Park Veterans Commission Secretary Gail Blummer. Military personnel need not live in Illinois to receive care packages from OSOT-IL.

Former Orland Park resident Army Captain Adam Wojcik was deployed to Iraq twice. Home in Tinley Park since September, Wojcik said, “OSOT-IL crams their packages full of treats for deployed troops! Their distinctive cubes covered in OSOT-IL stickers cause a lot of excitement when mail arrives and units are flooded with generous reminders of home and people thinking about and praying for American service members.”

The top ten items currently needed include cold drink mix packets for bottled water, including Propel, Gatorade and Crystal Lite To Go; adult wipes; bags of beef jerky; breakfast bars, pop tarts, cereal in plastic cups and individual packets of oatmeal; foot powder in canisters 20 ounces or less; tall canisters of Pringles potato chips; granola bars, power bars, canned meat in foil, i.e., tuna, chicken or turkey; individual sized mayonnaise packets and lunch to go kits; microwave popcorn and shower bag items, including shaving cream, disposable razors and hand lotion, 16 ounces or smaller. Donors are reminded to not send anything in glass and to check expiration dates before donating.

Of the organization's efforts, OSOT-IL's founder, Deb Rickert, said, "We can never know what it means to be so far away from home, loved ones and everything familiar and dear to us, but we can reach out to our troops and try to provide them a little reminder that we have not forgotten them."

Army Second Lieutenant Eileen White, of Orland Park, is stationed at LSA Adder in Southern Iraq.

"I've been here for five months and have ten months left. My husband, Christopher, my sister, Mary Cassidy, and my brother, Scott Cassidy, are all deployed as well in different parts of Iraq," White explained via email.

Of the impact care packages have on the troops, White wrote, "It may seem very insignificant to those in the US, but receiving mail, including packages and letters from home, is the highlight of a soldier's day. You can see the difference between a soldier who does not have the support from home and the soldier who constantly receives care packages."

Wojcik added, "There are a lot of organizations taking the time to support our nation's troops, but Operation Support Our Troops-Illinois was founded to ensure that every trooper might enjoy a brighter day during a tough deployment because of the donated snacks, sundries and notes from home. On the tough days in Iraq, there was nothing like tearing open a care package and enjoying a short break."

The Village of Orland Park maintains two collection points for Operation Support Our Troops-Illinois, the Frederick T. Owens Village Hall at 14700 South Ravinia Avenue and the Orland Park Sportsplex at 11351 West 159<sup>th</sup> Street.

Operation Support Our Troops-Illinois also accepts monetary donations to help pay the \$25.00 it costs to ship each care package. Tax deductible donations may be mailed to OSOT-IL; 1807 South Washington Street, Suite 110; #359; Naperville, IL 60565.

“Orland Park is committed to its veterans and to the brave men and women currently serving our country,” McLaughlin said. “We will definitely do our part to show our service personnel that we haven’t forgotten about them and we’re grateful for their commitment,” the mayor added.

“We’re calling on all families, churches, scout groups and individuals to take the wish list with them when they go shopping and buy a few extra items that can make these care packages complete,” Blummer added, noting that the village’s collection is ongoing; however, those wishing to send Christmas items should bring them to the Orland Park collection points before the end of November.

Rickert added, “In these difficult times, there is one constant that remains. Regardless of market fluctuations, economic turbulence or political upheaval, our troops continue to serve as they are called. And we must continue to serve them as long as they need us.

“Every item that a soldier receives brings them that much closer to home and slowly eliminates the feeling that they are oceans away from their safe and secure world with family and friends,” White wrote, “It keeps us connected to our loved ones,” adding, “One should never underestimate the power that a letter or care package has on the life of a soldier overseas.”

Further information about Orland Park’s collection efforts is available by calling Blummer at 708/403-6203. Details about Operation Support Our Troops – Illinois can be found on the organization’s website at [www.osotil.org](http://www.osotil.org) or by calling 630/971-1150.

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**PHOTO CAPTION - WOJCIK**

Former Orland Park resident Army Captain Adam Wojcik served two tours of Iraq. Of the OSOT-IL care packages he received, Wojcik said, “Their distinctive cubes covered in OSOT-IL stickers cause a lot of excitement when mail arrives and units are flooded with generous reminders of home.”



**PHOTO CAPTION - WHITE**

Army Second Lieutenant Eileen White (right) of Orland Park, is has been in Iraq for five months with ten more months to serve. Her husband, Christopher (left), is stationed in another part of Iraq as are her brother and sister. Of the OSOT-IL care packages, Eileen White said via email, "One should never underestimate the power that a letter or care package has on the life of a soldier overseas."