



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Joseph A. Griffo

Griffo and Central New York Veterans Outreach Center announce results for Cell Phones for Soldiers Collection Drive

JOSEPH A. GRIFFO December 19, 2023

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Just in time for the holidays, New York State Sen. Joseph Griffo, R-C-Rome and the Central New York Veterans Outreach Center proudly announced today that more than **400** 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.

As a result of this tremendous community support, **approximately 60,000 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. Some of the phones collected also will go directly into the hands of veterans in need as a part of a new initiative started by the organization this year. The phones will come with unlimited talk and text.

This year's collection drive ran from Nov. 9 to Dec 9 and spanned Sen. Griffo's district. The public was able to drop off any used mobile devices at 16 collection bins throughout the district.

This is the eighth year that the drive has taken place. Residents throughout Sen. Griffo's district have donated approximately 6,800 devices and have provided troops with approximately 650,000 minutes of free calls.

"Once again, our caring and compassionate community has stepped up in a big way to make the holidays brighter for our troops," **Sen. Griffo said.** "I would like to thank the Central New York Veterans Outreach Center for once again partnering with me for this year's collection drive and all the local businesses, libraries and organizations that graciously provided space for residents to drop off their devices. This effort shows how much residents in the 53rd Senate District value the service of and the sacrifices made by the men and women in our nation's military and their families."

"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 Sen. Griffo 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, 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.

A donation of a mobile device to this community collection drive doesn’t just help connect active military and veterans with loved ones, 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.

“We are so grateful to Sen. Griffo and his constituents for their ongoing support of our mission to connect America’s bravest,” **said Rob Bergquist, founder and president of Cell Phones For Soldiers.** “We now have the capacity to put donated mobile devices—collected through events like Sen. Griffo’s drive—in the hands of low-income and at-risk veterans. These devices will be lifelines to help veterans in need connect with critical resources.”

For more information on Cell Phones For Soldiers, please visit

www.cellphonesforsoldiers.com.

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