



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Joseph A. Griffo

Sen. Griffo Kicks Off Cell Phone Recycling Program To Help Deployed Soldiers Call Loved Ones

[Joseph A. Griffo](#)

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UTICA – As we prepare to celebrate Veterans Day on Nov. 11, State Senator Joseph Griffo and AT&T have teamed up with nonprofit [Cell Phones For Soldiers](#) to encourage the community to help troops call home by donating cellular phones and tablets.

Proceeds from the recycled devices will be used to buy long distance calling cards for troops at home and abroad. Although the military landscape is ever changing, as many as 200,000 troops are serving in the U.S. military around the world. By donating to Cell Phones For Soldiers, local residents and businesses can provide a valuable lifeline for America's bravest men and women.

Beginning today and lasting until Dec. 7, residents and businesses can donate their unwanted cell phones and/or tablets at the following locations:

- **Herb Philipson's in New Hartford Shopping Center - 120 Genesee St., New Hartford**
- **Chanatry's Hometown Market - 485 French Rd., Utica**
- **Jervis Public Library - 613 North Washington St., Rome**
- **Vernon Downs Casino Hotel - 4229 Stuhlman Rd., Vernon**
- **New York State Office Building, 2nd floor lobby - 207 Genesee St., Utica**
- **AT&T Stores at 4777 Commercial Dr., New Hartford / 224 N. Genesee St., Utica / 1319 Erie Blvd, Rome / 220 Genesee St., Oneida**

Cell Phones For Soldiers was founded in 2004 by teenagers [Robbie and Brittany Bergquist](#) at the ages of 12 and 13, respectively. The charity has since provided more than 216 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 military bases around the world, care package programs, deployment ceremonies and VA hospitals.

Cell Phones For Soldiers co-founder Robbie Bergquist: “Each year we have been humbled by the number of people and organizations like AT&T and New York State Senator Griffo that take part in this important initiative to support our military members. The communication gap between those serving and their families is a crucial need that Cell Phones For Soldiers is committed to addressing for years to come.”

Senator Joseph Griffo, R-Rome: “The courageous members of our military who serve overseas have already proven that they are willing to do whatever it takes to protect our nation’s values and interests. Yet when our servicemen and women are so far away, often under very unpredictable circumstances, it can’t be easy to go day to day without knowing if and when they’ll be able to see or hear their loved ones again. By partnering with AT&T and Cell Phones For Soldiers, I am proud to help our troops connect with their families at a time when the sound of a familiar voice can offer reassuring comfort.”

Marissa Shorenstein, president of AT&T New York: “AT&T has a long and proud history of supporting both veterans, active military personnel and their families through various company initiatives, and by establishing external partnerships with organizations that provide necessary services, such as Cell Phones For Soldiers. We are privileged to partner with Senator Griffo and Cell Phones For Soldiers to encourage the community to join us and donate their unused cell phones and tablets to honor and thank all of the brave men and women that protect and serve our country by helping them keep connected with their friends, family and loved ones at home.”

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.

Greg Niles, a five-year Air Force veteran who served in Korea and case manager at the Central New York Veteran's Outreach Center in Utica: "We at the Central New York Veteran's Outreach Center would like to say how much we appreciate and support Senator Griffo in his effort to aid and assist our active service members and veterans. As a veteran who has served overseas, I personally know how important communication with loved ones is while you are away. This initiative will be a huge morale booster for our service members who are serving our country overseas."

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

Since 2004, more than 11.7 million phones have been recycled or repurposed. Approximately half of the phones processed are reconditioned and reused. Phones and components that cannot be refurbished are dismantled and responsibly recycled to reclaim materials, including:

- Gold, silver and platinum from circuit boards
- Copper wiring from phone chargers
- Nickel, iron, cadmium and lead from battery packs

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