



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

OPERATION: SEND CHRISTMAS CHEER

[Patty Ritchie](#)

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It's often said that in giving, we actually receive. That couldn't be truer during the holiday season, a time when we have so many opportunities to go out of our way to do something special for someone else.

Just recently, people from across Central and Northern New York joined with me to share the spirit of the season with our active duty troops and veterans. Through the "Christmas Cards for Our Troops" program, students, families, businesses and other organizations donated holiday greetings to be sent to current and former members

of our military at veterans' hospitals, Army installations and other locations to let them know they are remembered and appreciated throughout the holidays.

Locally, we were able to collect a record 10,000 cards. These greetings joined more than 130,000 that were collected through the Albany-based Veterans Miracle Center, which organizes the program and distributes the cards. 2015 marked the fourth year I've collected cards for Christmas Cards for Our Troops. Since 2012—with the help of many of you—our region has contributed roughly 30,000 holiday cards to veterans and active duty soldiers.

If you missed out on Christmas Cards for Our Troops, there are still ways you can let members of our military and their families know that the tremendous sacrifices they make on behalf of our country have not gone unnoticed. As of last month, there were approximately 1.1 million American troops deployed worldwide, including thousands of 10th Mountain Division soldiers. For so many people, being with loved ones is the best part of the holidays season—that's why making sure we remember the service of men and women in uniform who spend Christmas away from home is so important.

Whether it's inviting a family that has a member who is deployed join you for your holiday celebrations or taking part in a program that sends care packages overseas, there's no shortage of ways you can show your gratitude to members of our military. As Christmas approaches, I encourage you to take a break from the hustle and bustle of the season to brighten the lives of our troops and their families.