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## U.S. & WORLD

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## President Bush to Hold 10 a.m. News Conference

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## Fast Facts: Helping Soldiers and Veterans

Tuesday, March 08, 2005

**FOX NEWS**

To help American heroes serving in Iraq and Afghanistan as well as to aid their families at home, a number of organizations have set up Web sites to allow people to contribute money, material or just their thoughts and prayers.

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each group's site for more information. FOX News does not endorse any of the groups but is providing the information as a public resource.

### Helping Returning Soldiers and Their Families

### Readjustment Counseling Service

The Department of Veterans Affairs offers the Readjustment Counseling Service to returning soldiers and their families who want assistance in adapting to life after fighting overseas. The Web site provides soldiers with information on eligibility and how to contact Vet Centers where counseling is available. The site also offers information about Bereavement Counseling for families of soldiers who died serving their country. (<http://www.va.gov/racs>)

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#### The Handover of Power

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### Veterans for Common Sense

Founded by veterans for veterans in 2002, this Web site is devoted to

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### SOLDIER'S DIARY

#### War Isn't Sexy



**Soldier's Diary:** Army Capt. Daniel P. Sukman responds to reader mail

ONLY ON FOX

easing soldiers' transitions back to American life after returning from military conflicts. The site provides a "constantly" updated series of links to resources available to veterans.

(<http://www.veteransforcommonsense.org/files/vcs/guide.cfm>)

*(Story continues below)*

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**Adopt a Soldier**

**Any Soldier**

Founded by the father of a soldier who served in Iraq, Any Soldier stresses that supportive words are more important than material goods. It will direct letters to troops who do not receive much mail. Care package items such as hygiene kits, sunscreen and military gear can also be purchased for a discount and sent to soldiers through the Web site. (<http://www.anysoldier.us/index.cfm>)

**Soldier's Angels**

With its Adopt-a-Soldier program, Soldier's Angels sends a card or letter a week and at least two care packages a month to a designated soldier. You can also direct cards and treats like CDs and handheld games to wounded soldiers, whether they are recovering in Iraq, Landstuhl Regional Medical Center or Walter Reed Army Medical Center. (<http://soldiersangels.homestead.com/>)

**Operation HomeFront Hugs**

Service members who are single or don't have family are encouraged by the site to sign up to be adopted. It also provides a helpful list of soldiers' most requested items — which include baby wipes, bug repellent and candy — as well as a list of prohibited items, which include pornography and pork products. (<http://homefronthugs.com/index.html>)

**Adopt a Platoon**

Unlike most other "soldier adoption" programs, Adopt a Platoon was started by soldiers: A-Company, 1st Platoon, 4/5 Air Defense Artillery, 1st Cavalry. Adopt a Platoon was awarded a \$2,000 grant from the Department of Defense's Fisher House Foundation for its innovative approach to improving "military quality of life." (<http://www.adoptaplatoon.org/>)

**Alliance Tested in Afghanistan**



NATO, formed to combat the spread of Communism, is being retooled to fight terrorism, and as it prepares to take more control in Afghanistan, some question its readiness

**VIDEO**

**Spiritual Change**



Praying on campus becomes part of college life

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Sexual predators invade popular Web Site among teens

**Green Light**



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**Nanotechnology Update**



Could movie theaters soon be able to silence your cell phone?

**Mission From God?**



## Operation Sandbox

This organization is the brainchild of 13-year-old Brittany Thompson and Kacy Schneeberger, both cousins. The girls formed the organization "to flood the desert with mail full of encouragement and support." (<http://www.operationsandbox.com/>)

## Supporting Families in Need

### America Supports You

For perhaps the most comprehensive site on how to help troops and their families at home, check out the Defense Department's program. There you can find information on how to donate frequent flier miles, phone cards and even video conferencing sessions. (<http://www.americasupportsyoudmil/>)

### Bluegrass Military Affairs Coalition

If you're interested in donating your time, this coalition, which serves military bases and surrounding communities in Kentucky and Ohio, specializes in military community outreach and offers volunteer opportunities. BMAC supplements support already extended by the military by helping put families in touch with nearby services providing everything from emotional support groups to medical resources. Volunteers help families with household upkeep — shoveling snow, raking leaves, mowing lawns — as well as transportation and activities for children. ([http://www.bmaconline.org/index.cfm/bmacfan\\_home.html](http://www.bmaconline.org/index.cfm/bmacfan_home.html))

## Reaching Out to Survivors

### Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors

This nationwide organization has a 1-800 number that provides information on grief counseling, case worker assistance and crisis information 24 hours a day. TAPS also holds an annual Memorial Day weekend seminar that brings together military personnel and families of survivors. A youth camp for children of fallen soldiers is also held that weekend. TAPS accepts donations online or through the mail. (<http://www.taps.org/>)

### Operation Family Fund

This private, nonprofit, all-volunteer organization's mission is to give "help & hope to the families of fallen heroes." OFF provides grants for fallen soldiers' families to help them pay for food rent, utilities, funeral expenses, legal expenses and assistance with purchasing or leasing a car. (<http://www.oeffamilyfund.org/>)



L.A. archdiocese gives priests permission to help illegals

### Road to Recovery



Burned Iraqi girl gets free treatment in the U.S.



## Fallen Heroes Last Wish Fund

This organization operates under the assumption that if asked for a final wish, every fallen soldier who is also a parent would want their children provided for. Founded by Dan O'Dowd, CEO of California-based Green Hills Software, Fallen Heroes uses its funds to support and help educate the children of troops killed in the field. O'Dowd reaches out to corporations for donations, but also encourages individual donations. (<http://www.lastwishfoundation.org/index.html> )

## Military-Affiliated Aid

### Army Emergency Relief

A private nonprofit organization, Army Emergency Relief provides funds for active and retired Army soldiers and their families through commanders. AER has received a four-star rating from philanthropy guide **Charity Navigator**. (<http://www.aerhq.org/>)

### Navy Marine Corps Relief Society

Sponsored by the Department of the Navy, this private nonprofit provides financial and education assistance to active and retired members of the Naval Services and their families. It also operates food lockers and thrift shops in various cities. (<http://www.nmcrs.org/>)

### The Air Force Aid Society

The official charity of the U.S. Air Force provides financial assistance to past and present service members and their families as well as special-needs aid. AFAS has helped families with disabled children as well as drug dependency problems. According to its Web site, it helped more than 30,000 Air Force members and their families with \$22.6 million in assistance in 2003. (<http://www.afas.org/>)

### Coast Guard Mutual Assistance

The group provides interest-free loans and emergency aid to active and retired Coast Guard members and their families. According to its Web site, it received \$2.2 million in contributions and provided \$6.2 million in assistance in 2003. (<http://www.cgmahq.org/>)

## Honoring the Fallen

Many high schools have established scholarship funds in the names of alumni who died while on military duty.

### **Flintridge Preparatory School**

This La Cañada Flintridge, Calif., school established a scholarship fund for J. P. Blecksmith, a 1999 graduate and former standout quarterback. Blecksmith, a 2nd lieutenant in the Marine Corps, was killed during a military operation in Fallujah last Veterans Day at the age of 24. (<http://www.flintridgeprep.org/home/default.aspx>)

### **South High School**

Shane Kielion, 23, made headlines on Nov. 15 when he was killed in Fallujah the same day his wife gave birth to their first child. The school in Omaha, Neb., established a scholarship for the former student. **Wells Fargo** also set up the "Shane Kielion Benefit Account," which comprises an account to benefit Shane's family as well as a trust fund for his infant son, Shane Kielion, Jr. (<http://www.ops.org/south/>; <http://www.wellsfargo.com/>)

### **Dr. Phillips High School**

To remember Antoine Smith, a viola player who joined the Marines shortly after graduation, this Orlando school established an award to be given to a graduating senior from the school orchestra who shows "dedication, perseverance and great love of music." Smith also died in Fallujah on Nov. 15, at the age of 22. (<http://www.dphs.ocps.net/>)

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