

# ALTRUSA SOS (SUPPORT OUR SOLDIERS)

## Introducing the SOS Service Projects History

Originally the SOS Project which stands for Support Our Soldiers Project was presented to all clubs in District Three by Governor Beverly Hardy during the biennium of 2011 - 2013. This service project was to provide support to the active duty military service men and women who are deployed overseas with packages to bring a sample of home to them while so far away. Packages were assembled with a list of items especially helpful to the service men and women with specific instructions to follow. Packages were shipped by the USPS and the military mailing system.

The second phase was to be supportive Altrusans to service men and women returning home, who have found upon returning to their families, a helping hand of caring and support. This included looking in to assisting local community organizations who are already helping veterans and their families who are struggling due to medical setbacks and or just need a bit of assistance.

Now the Altrusa International SOS Project will support soldiers and their families, of the United States, New Zealand, and Canada.

This Service Project is reaching out in Three Ways.

- Care Packages to Active Duty deployed Military.
- Returning Military in need of assistance.
- Supporting homeless Veterans.

## **Category 1 is Care Packages to Deployed Service Men and Women**

Being deployed overseas has its ups and downs, but receiving packages from home makes the time less stressful. In fact, packages can be a morale booster for service personnel. Keep in mind some things are particularly useful and some can't be sent at all.

The Category 1 flyer lists

- Packages shipped overseas for US Military - documents and instructions via USPS.
- New Zealand Care packages are sent by the RSA (Returned and Service Association) which has a special list and green custom labels to identify the packages.
- For Canadian Armed Forces deployed troops, the CFMWS (Canadian Forces Morale and Welfare Services) is responsible for coordinating all donations.
- US Military packages
  - Suggested Wish List for Packages to service men and women of the US Military
  - Items prohibited in packages to send overseas
  - The USPS has Priority Boxes available specific for Military Mailing.
  - Specific Shipping Label to send overseas when handling military mail
- New Zealand Care packages are sent by the RSA
- Mailing for military member in Canada has specific shipping labels
  - An International Customs Form (CP72) available at local Canada Post.
  - Items strictly prohibited.

## **Category 2 is Assistance to Wounded Troops returning home.**

Disabled Veterans deserve our utmost respect and assistance. Altrusans can perform random acts of kindness in various ways.

There are many organizations and foundations helping soldiers who are in need of assistance adapting to living with seen and unseen wounds. Locating and assisting local chapters can be most rewarding for Altrusa Clubs in various levels of volunteering and support as suggested in the Category 2 flyer.

### **How Altrusans can help veterans in need:**

#### **Honorable Ways You Can Help Veterans as a random act of kindness**

See suggestions listed the Category 2 flyer.

**In the U.S:** National organizations available are Warrior Family Support, Operation Giving Back, Project Lifting Spirits, Homes for Our Troops (HFOT), Fisher House, and Operation Homefront.

**In New Zealand:** The Returned and Service Association (RSA) is one of the largest voluntary welfare organizations in **New Zealand** and one of the oldest ex-service organizations in the world.

**In Canada:** Military Family Resource Centers (MFRCs) and the Royal Canadian Legion

## **Category 3 is How Altrusans can help Homeless Veterans**

Veterans are more likely than civilians to experience homelessness. Veterans face the same shortage of affordable housing options and living wage jobs in countries internationally.

### **Organizations helping our Homeless Veterans in the U.S. include:**

- **Disabled American Veterans (DAV)** helps veterans "lead high-quality lives with respect and dignity"
- **The National Coalition for Homeless Veterans' (NCHV)** whose mission is to end homelessness among veterans.
- Since 1993, **U.S.VETS** has empowered homeless and at-risk veterans to attain their highest level of independence, with specialized assistance to post-9/11 veterans, female veterans and veteran families.
- At **Volunteers of America**, we are committed to ending homelessness for those veterans on the street and preventing others from becoming homeless by providing a wide array of well-designed and managed services to meet the specific needs of homeless veterans.

### **Organizations in Canada with assistance to the Homeless**

The **Royal Canadian Legion, Veterans Affairs Canada, VETS Canada** and **Soldiers helping Soldiers** are committed to helping Veterans and their families in need to find homes.

This workshop is to be shared with every Altrusan within each Club.

Each Club appoints a Service Project SOS Committee Chair

The Clubs' Service Project SOS Committee Chairs submit reports to the District Service Project SOS Liaison or District Service Chair.

The District Service Project SOS Liaisons or District Service Chairs will submit all reports to the International Service Development Committee member Carol Thomas.

*Thank you for making this a Service Project that will reach so many internationally over the next biennium.*