



UNITED WE STAND

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"Soldiers Day Out"

Ft. Sill Soldiers get a day out on the town with OK8

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Standing at attention in their ACU's and with the DS standing with them, 151 Soldiers belted out "Jingle Bells" in unison.

They followed their rendition of the Christmas tune by reciting the "Soldiers Creed," wearing red Santa

hats or reindeer ears atop their heads. "I am an American Soldier...I am a warrior and a member of a team..."

Blue Star Mothers of America OK8 coordinated a day full of fun and food on 21 Dec 2012 for the Fort Sill

Soldiers who couldn't go home for the holidays. Their morning started with breakfast at the Renaissance Hotel downtown, followed by a stroll through the Myriad Gardens and a trip to the 45th Infantry Division Museum. They departed and the troops headed to Gattitown where they were fed, played games and surprised children with the tickets from their game winnings. They played laser tag at Heyday Family Fun Center before ending the day at the Four Points where Earl's Rib Palace catered dinner. Community businesses help by donating funds and or items to help fill a gift bag for each one.

Submitted by: Carol Farmer



Special points of interest:

- *LIKE US ON FACEBOOK*
- *Letter from our National President*

“Honoring Our Heroes during the Holidays” BSM Massachusetts Chapter 1

As part of the holiday celebration, BSM MA CH 1 participated in the “Festival of Trees” held at Leominster City Hall. The auditorium was lined with decorated Christmas trees and viewers voted for their favorite one by placing a quarter in a gift box located next to their tree. We are proud to announce the Blue Star Mothers won first place for the most money collected. The proceeds benefit the Mayor’s Fuel Assistance program and the Columbia Fire Relief Fund, both of which some local veterans will benefit from. This was a great opportunity to remember our military, promote patriotism and also spread the word about the BSM and our mission. Our rotating tree was decorated with reused plastic water bottles that we painted, glittered and cut. We used dog tags for the tinsel and adorned the top with American Flags. On a ta-

ble next to our tree we provided an email address on slips of paper for those who desired to send an e-card and message to our troops along with blue foiled chocolate treats. A fun time was had by all while using materials that were preserving our resources! We would like to thank BSM Deb Phillips, our Community Liaison, for her innovative leadership and enthusiasm of this project!

Members of our chapter also participated in “Wreaths Across America” and helped place 1,147 wreaths on the graves of our veterans at the Winchendon Veterans’ Cemetery.

Submitted by:: Sharon Bouchard



Challenge Coins

Submitted by: Past National President
Jean Burlingame

National Patriotic Instructor

I could not find any patriotic dates for January so I thought you might like to read about Challenge Coins.

Challenge coins are revered by all branches of the military as an important aspect of their tradition and are a source of pride for the bearers.

The military challenge coin is generally a bronze medal that identifies a military unit or squad in the U.S. Military. A challenge

coin is a coin minted specifically for a particular group that identifies the bearer as a legitimate member. The owner of the coin carries it on his or her person and if challenged by another member of the military, it must be produced. If they are unable to, they must buy a round of drinks for everyone who displays his or her military challenge coin. Military tradition states that a "coin check" can be conducted anywhere at any time.

The coins identify who they are, their units and where they have been. The military also uses them as rewards or awards. Challenge coins were particularly popular dur-

ing World War II and the Korean War and were often informally awarded to military personnel upon graduation from training exercises.

Each group's challenge coin is unique, but they are usually small coins or medallions, from simple to ornate and usually feature mottos and symbols that reflect the heritage and identity of the group.

They are not legal tender and while their use began in the military, today they are also used by police officers, firefighters and other organizations.

CHECK US OUT ON FACEBOOK

Our fan base is growing steadily on the only official BSMA Facebook page. We'd love to include you in our updates! Join us at <https://www.facebook.com/BlueStarMothersOfAmericaInc>. We'd especially like to have you post a picture occasionally from your chapter events, or perhaps a link when your chapter makes the local news!

Please note that all comments are

moderated and objectionable content will be removed promptly. For this reason, don't be surprised if your posts aren't visible right away, but we'll try to post things quickly!



Have you "liked" us on Facebook yet?

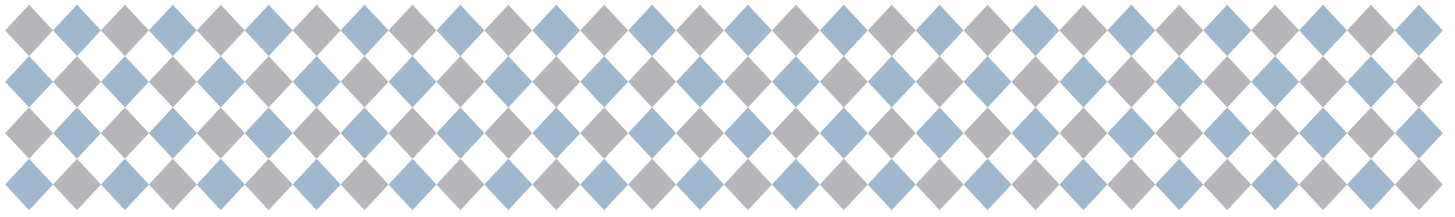
IT'S TIME TO PUT ON YOUR BIG GIRL PANTIES

The Marine Moms on Long Island have a tradition of giving the Mom of a deployed Marine a pair of big girl panties. It's a tradition that after their child returns, the panties are passed on to the next deployed Mom after they have signed and dated and placed their child's name on them. It's an opportunity for the Moms to laugh and talk about their child, their fears, and the how very proud they are. Mostly to just laugh and enjoy the commodity they share. NY6 has a total of 7 deployed children, some Moms experiencing their very first deployments, while others dealing with their child's 3rd or 4th. Our chapter President

Cyndi Ventura (2 star Marine Mom) has brought it to all our Moms. She made up several pairs and at our last meeting, asked all the deployed Moms to stand and receive their panties. It gave these Moms a chance to laugh and talk, after all isn't that what sisters are for. To lift you up when you're down, put a smile on your face when there is a frown. NY6 has 7 Moms, Army, Navy, Air Force and Marines with a new tradition to pass on to our next deployed Moms. It's hard ladies, but put on your Big Girl Panties and we are here to help you deal with it.

Submitted by: Nancy Neenan NY6 Treasurer





Citizen of the Year: Blue Star Mom Paula Fleming always looking out for troops

When her son, Joshua Tash, joined the Army in 2004, Paula Fleming of Sparks went into service as well. She didn't don a uniform, but joined the military support organization Blue Star Mothers and, a year later, formed a local chapter of the group. "I never asked her to do it," Tash said. "She just took it upon herself to do it, and not just for me. She did it for all the soldiers." For her efforts, Fleming has been named the Reno Gazette-Journal's Citizen of the Year for 2012. Today, the local chapter of Blue Star Mothers has grown from 20 to more than 70, and its outreach to troops deployed and at home has grown exponentially. From care packages to Christmas cards, from welcoming troops home at the airport to raising the walls on a wounded vet's home, Fleming and the Blue Star Mothers are there. "My son decided he needed to do more for his country," she said. "Off he went to basic training in October of '04. Once he was in basic training, I knew exactly what that meant — that he was going to be deployed. At that time, everybody was being deployed." When George W. Bush was re-elected in 2004, Fleming attended an inaugural ball. "A couple of the ladies standing there were offering membership in Blue Star Mothers of America," she said. "I joined that night." At the time, the closest chapter to Reno and Sparks was in Carson City, and Fleming and another mother from Reno would carpool to the meetings. In May 2005, she and a group of Reno-Sparks mothers started Blue Star Mothers Truckee Meadows #3. "We met at my house here

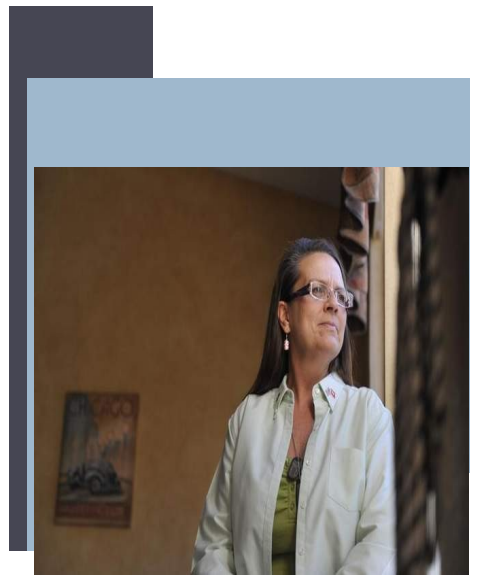


in Sparks," she said. "We had about 20 moms who were interested. At that point, I became the first president." Those first four years of the chapter were interesting and challenging because the group wasn't well-known. "We met at my house once a month," Fleming said. "We packed care packages out of my house. Basically, everything came from us moms. The moms would pay to ship them. We didn't have any communication with the community. We didn't know anything about fundraising." Eventually, the group started reaching out to schools and businesses and attending various activities. "I started beating the pavement," Fleming said. "I did cold calls at businesses and basically asked for assistance." The efforts paid off. Schoolchildren started making Christmas cards for the troops. In the first year, 1,000 were sent. This year, the number grew to 10,000. Businesses and individuals responded as well. "We have people that send us donations monthly," she said. "We've got a couple of businesses where I know the people. If I call them and say we need a little help, a check comes in the mail the next day." Fleming also reached out to the troops, her son included. "A lot of what she does is for the guys that weren't getting a care package from home," Tash said. "If we saw someone, anyone, in need, we'd get the address and a box would go out immediately to those guys." Robin Jones, a fellow Blue Star Mother who nominated Fleming for the RGJ Citizen of the Year Award, said it's Fleming's tireless advocacy of the troops that makes her special. "There are not too many people in our community who work with the military that haven't met Paula at some point," Jones said. "She's a great, patriotic citizen who supports our military in the Truckee Meadows." Perry Di Loreto, president of the Nevada Military Support Alliance, said he became acquainted with Fleming during Operation Javelin Thrust — a support operation for thousands of Marines passing through Reno-Tahoe International Airport on their way to training exercises. "The Blue Star Mothers were just phenomenal the way they turned out, serving food and just doing what they could for these guys," Di Loreto said. "The Marines were blown away. But that's what these Blue Star Mothers do. They are treating these sons and daughters the way they hope their sons and daughters are being treated. It's not a flash-in-the-pan kind of thing. This goes on every day."

Fleming said it's not the goal of the Blue

Star Mothers to make grand gestures, but to do the little things that add up in support of the troops. It might be 25 to 50 people waiting at the airport to greet troops returning home. It might be attending a military funeral — Fleming attends all the funerals of Nevada troops killed in Afghanistan and Iraq. It might be working with Homes for Our Troops, which builds homes for service members wounded in action. Or it might be mailing Christmas cards or care packages filled with granola bars, beef jerky and other touches of home. "The personal part of it is my love and desire that all of these kids come home safe," she said. Her son said that while he didn't ask his mom to join Blue Star Mothers, the fact she did and what she has done since doesn't surprise him a bit. "My mom has been supportive of just about everything I've ever done," he said. "My mom has supported me, supported my sister. I was in Boy Scouts, my sister in Girl Scouts. She made sure we got where we needed to go and had what we needed when we got there. She's still doing the same thing."

Written by Guy Clifton



A LETTER FROM OUR NATIONAL PRESIDENT

We all joined Blue Star Mothers for differing reasons. Some of us had sons and daughters just entering the military. Some had deployment looming on the horizon. Others had reached the point where our children had reached veteran status.

Some of us joined for the sense of sisterhood, of camaraderie. We wanted to feel that we were among women who knew what we were going through, had walked more than a mile in our shoes. We needed someone to talk to, to cry with, and to give us the mom hug when we desperately needed it.

I have made lifelong friends from all over the country through Blue Star Mothers. Some I see a few times a year, some I met at a national convention and keep up with via email and Facebook. Some of the closest bonds I have formed are with the women in my local chapter.

When we meet each month, we share our stories about our military and veteran kids. But even more important at times, we share our stories about us. What we are going through in our own day to day lives. We also share things that have nothing to do with the military or training or deployment. We share the joys of grandchildren being born, of employment found, of buying a new house. We share the sad things also. We share divorce, we share illness and unfortunately we share death.

"With thanks to Anita Wagner for so beautifully expressing these words and allowing me to use them, Pat Soler"



Yours in service,

Pat Soler
National President
Blue Star Mothers of America, Inc.

Iraq & Afghanistan Burn Pit Exposure

As early as 2002, U.S. military installations in Afghanistan and Iraq began to rely on open-air burn pits to dispose of waste materials. The U.S. Department of Defense and numerous contractors made frequent use of burn pits at a number of bases in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The Department of the Army, Department of the Air Force and the American Lung Association have confirmed the dangers posed by burn pits, and veterans and their families have reached out to Congress for action.

WASHINGTON - U.S. Sens. Tom Udall (D-N.M.) and Bob Corker (R-Tenn.) announced that today President Obama signed their bill to establish a registry of service members and veterans who were exposed to toxic chemicals and fumes from open-air burn pits in Iraq and Afghanistan into law.

"Today we celebrate the conclusion of our bipartisan effort to improve the health and well-being of our veterans," Udall said, "This is a victory for our men and women in uniform across the globe, and I am proud to say it was

made possible by the strong advocacy of Master Sergeant Jessey and Maria Baca of New Mexico," Udall said. "Just as our veterans have answered the call of duty for our country, we have answered their call for better information and today brings us closer to insuring this special population receives the care and treatment they deserve.

Udall and Corker's Burn Pits Registry Act was included as part of a larger veterans package, S. 3202, the "Dignified Burial and Veterans' Benefits Improvement Act of 2012," which passed the Senate and House in late December 2012.

The bill will create a registry similar to the Agent Orange and Gulf War registries to help patients, doctors and the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) determine to what extent air pollution caused by open air burn pits has led to medical diseases among service members. To Read more see: By Michael Coleman / Journal Washington Bureau on Thu, Dec 20, 2012

***This is a victory
for our men and
women in
uniform across
the globe***



Fire takes the home of a Blue Star Mother. On 15th of January 2013 Cathy and Tony O'Shields were able to get out of their home with their lives, but the home was a total loss. Cathy and Tony have been married over 30 years. Cathy has been active in the BSM org. for many years, her husband is a Veteran. Please keep them in your prayers.

Submitted by: Carol Farmer



BLUE STAR MOTHERS of AMERICA, INC.



SISTERS TILL THE END

I HAVE MADE LIFELONG FRIENDS FROM ALL OVER THE COUNTRY THROUGH BLUE STAR MOTHERS. SOME I SEE A FEW TIMES A YEAR, SOME I MET AT A NATIONAL CONVENTION AND KEEP UP WITH VIA EMAIL AND FACEBOOK. SOME OF THE CLOSEST BONDS I HAVE FORMED ARE WITH THE WOMEN IN MY LOCAL CHAPTER.

ON DECEMBER 22, SPIRIT OF FREEDOM CHAPTER OF BLUE STAR MOTHERS LOST ANOTHER CHARTER MEMBER. BEV HENDERSON LOST HER COURAGEOUS BATTLE WITH CANCER. SHE WAS A TIRELESS ADVOCATE FOR THE MILITARY AND VETERANS. EVEN WHEN HER HEALTH TOOK SEVERAL TURNS FOR THE WORSE, KEEPING HER HOME INSTEAD OF BEING ABLE TO JOIN IN MEETINGS, ICE CREAM SOCIALS AND VA VISITS, SHE STILL KEPT IN TOUCH WITH US, AND HELPED IN GETTING DONATIONS FOR OUR SUPPORT PACKAGES.

SHE WAS A PROUD BLUE STAR MOTHER AND EVEN WANTED THAT FACT PUBLISHED IN HER OBITUARY. ALL OF THE MEMBERS OF OUR CHAPTER WERE SADDENED AT HER PASSING.

BEV WAS THE FOURTH MEMBER OF OUR CHAPTER TO PASS AWAY. ALONG WITH BEV WE HAVE LOST TWO OTHER CHARTER MEMBERS - LINDA GRENER T AND DEB WICK, AND A GOLD STAR MOTHER - DOLORES LOVE. ALL OF THESE WOMEN WERE PROUD OF THE SERVICE THAT THEIR SONS GAVE TO OUR COUNTRY. THEY WERE ALL PROUD TO WEAR THE BLUE STAR MOTHER PIN WHERE EVER THEY WENT, AND PROUDLY DISPLAYED THE SERVICE BANNER. SISTERS TO THE END. THEY WILL ALL BE MISSED.
SUBMITTED BY- ANITA WAGNER



Anyone with New ideas to make our Newsletter better please send them to

bsm2ndvp@gmail.com.....

***Starting next month a Memorial page to our Fallen Hero's.....**