

Thank you for your school's participation in our third annual Operation Troop Appreciation Veterans Day 5K Race and Essay Contest.

Operation Troop Appreciation is a non-partisan private organization which works to fulfill the wish list request of our active duty troops serving in Iraq and Afghanistan. Since our inception four years ago, we have filled the requests of 40,000 American Troops. Many of these troops are far from home for the first time. They are of varying ages, some fresh from high school, some married with children. They are away from their families, tired from long days of nervewracking work, and are often afraid. Yet they persevere; this all-volunteer force has given their time and their safety so that we here at home can be protected from the forces who wish us harm.

Yet, for all they have given up, they ask for the simplest of items: granola bars, pocket hand warmers, foot powder. Their requests are humbling, and they reinforce the truth about how much they have given up for the privilege of defending us.

So we work to provide them with some precious items of comfort. In the care packages, they receive a touch of home, a small treat, the solace of knowing that their sacrifices are appreciated.

Our work is funded solely by fundraising activities. One such fundraiser will be held this Sunday, November 9th at 8:30 a.m. in the Hampton Community Park. The third annual Operation Troop Appreciation Veterans Day 5K Race will give hundreds of runners, walkers and stroller pushers an opportunity to support our troops while enhancing their fitness. The race will feature many entertaining embellishments, including the famed Barber-shop Quartet: 3 Rivers 4, a traditionally garbed Bagpiper, a children's choir, Miss Meg, the patriotic clown and more. The race will cover a nicely decorated course winding through the grounds of the beautiful Hampton Community Park. There will also be a complimentary All American Buffet, which will of course feature hot dogs and apple pie! There will also be coffee, cocoa, bagels, fruit and other treats for our participants. After the race there will be many prizes, awards for the top male and female finishers in each of 13 age groups.

But the biggest winners will be our troops who will receive many care packages because of the funds raised at this race.

One item in each care package that we send will be an Essay written by a local school child. These essays were submitted on the topic, "How American Troops Make Our World Better." A team of Naval Officers judged these essays on three criteria: Content, Grammatical Correctness and Readability. Every essay is a winner in the eyes of the American Troop who receives it. But the field of several hundred essays were narrowed down to the top 5 finishers. Two of these finishers were from St. Ursula School, and their writers finished in second and third place. They are eighth grader Jane P. and seventh grader Ryan W. For their contributions, a gift certificate from Running Wild will be presented to them at the Race Award Ceremony.

Thank you for your interest in Operation Troop Appreciation. And thank you for your school's involvement in our Essay Contest. Your school's essays will brighten the day for many of our active duty troops.

God Bless you in the work that you do with our children.

Sincerely,

Alice McLaughlin

Operation Troop Appreciation

Veterans Day 5K Race Director