

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 Altrusan's to returning home service men and women who have found upon returning to their families a helping hand of caring and support. Looking in the local community organizations who are helping veterans and their families who are struggling due to medical setbacks and or just need a bit of assistance.

Now the International SOS Project is to Support our Soldiers not only within the United States but to those service men and women and their families in Canada and New Zealand as well.

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 One 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, they can be a real 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 has 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 to coordinate 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 system.
- 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 Two is Assistance to Wounded Troops returning home.

Disabled Veterans deserve our utmost respect and assistance and as Altrusans, we can individually choose a random act of kindness in various ways.

There are many organizations and foundations who are helping soldiers who are in need of assistance adapting to living with seen and unseen wounds and locating such local chapters can be most rewarding for Altrusan Clubs in various levels of volunteering and support as described in the Category II flyer suggests.

How Altrusans can help veterans in need

Honorable Ways You Can Help Veterans as a random act of kindness Suggested ways are listed on 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, Operation Home front.

In New Zealand: 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 Centres (MFRCs). And the Royal Canadian Legion

Category Three is How Altrusans can help our 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.

- **Disabled American Veterans** (DAV) helps veterans "lead high-quality lives with respect and dignity"
- **The National Coalition for Homeless Veterans'** (NCHV) 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 find homes.

This workshop is to be shared by each Altrusan within each Club.

Each Club appoints a Service Project SOS Committee Chair

The Clubs Service Project SOS Committee Chair submits reports to the District Service Project SOS Liaison.

The District Service Project SOS Service Liaison will submit all reports to the International Service Project Committee member Carol Thomas.

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