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June 9, 2014

Naperville resident Deborah Rickert, President, Founder and CEO, Operation Support Our Troops - America (OSOT - America) will be honored as a Woman of the Year by the Rotary Club of Chicago at a luncheon to be held Tuesday, June 17, 2014 at the Union League Club of Chicago. This is the second year Rotary, Chicago's oldest service organization, has honored outstanding women for their commitment to community.

Lisa Russ, former President of the Rotary Club of Chicago, comments, "Deborah Rickert is being honored for her long-standing commitment to supporting the morale and well-being of troops serving in harm's way, their families and returning veterans. What began as a grassroots effort has blossomed into one of the largest volunteer-based military support organizations in the country! Ms. Rickert is an example of an unsung hero who deserves to be recognized for her volunteerism toward the betterment of our community".

Deborah Rickert started Operation Support Our Troops- America in 2003 after her oldest son, Dan, made a decision to attend The United States Military Academy at West Point in the wake of the attacks of 9/11. She established the 501(c) 3 non-profit as a way for average citizens to connect with the military and show their support for troops and families. OSOT - America (<http://www.osotamerica.org/>) has grown into one of the largest volunteer-based military support

organizations in the country, raising millions of dollars over the past 11 years in support of America's military community. Rickert has worked to establish lasting partnerships with other military support organizations, companies and individuals to "force multiply" efforts. One of these partnerships with actor Gary Sinise led to "Rockin' for the Troops TM," an annual day of support/concert for military families and supporters.

OSOT America's original program, The Care and Comfort package, has now sent over 1.5 million pounds of items to troops serving in harm's way. In addition, OSOT America has developed programs for families of deployed military, as well as families of fallen service members. The "Leap of Faith" seminar for example, is a program Deb designed in 2011 for families of fallen service members, in partnership with the US Army Golden Knights parachute team. The three-day seminar helps families to learn to live beyond grief and loss, and encourages them to seek ways to honor the sacrifice of their loved one. The seminar includes a literal "leap of faith" in the form of a tandem skydive with an Army parachutist.

Comments Deborah Rickert "I am grateful to be honored by Rotary. It has always been my belief that while not every American is called to serve in the military, every American is, in fact, called to serve their country, and that is one of the things that makes us uniquely America. That call became evident - and personal - to me as I watched so many young men and women, including my own sons, respond in the days after the attacks of 9/11. It has been a privilege to be able to provide support through the programs of Operation Support our Troops - America, but also to receive support from other military family members and veterans."

The world's oldest service club and founded right here in Chicago in 1905, ROTARY/ONE, is made up of professional men and women who meet weekly to collaborate on business and to use collective talents and resources to make a difference in the world. There are over 34,000 clubs around the world, with 1.2 million members

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