

# Local Family Prepares Magazines for Hospitalized Warriors

By Cheryl Conway@ News View Media Group 6:45 p.m. April 12, 2015 edited

**NEW JERSEY** – Collecting and preparing magazines to give to hospitalized veterans has become a family affair for a local family. Kavita Sajja of Mt. Olive, her two sisters, their husband and five children between them have been getting together once a week for 90 minutes or more to volunteer time for the All Veterans Memorial's outreach program called Magazine to Magazines. The program began four years ago, and is now being spearheaded by this family team.

“The Magazines to Magazines Campaign is now going to be run by an amazing family from Guiana”, says Charlie Uhrmann, Originator of the AVM. Their help will allow me to focus on other areas of need. They are genuinely grateful for their freedom and are using the opportunity to teach their young children to be kind and mindful, similar to how I raised mine. This terrific family that's been an incredible support to our organization” says Uhrmann about the Sajjas.

Terry Sajja says, “Our kids are four years old now, we want to give the kids a sense of community.” He and his wife thought “it would be great for our kids to be involved in the community especially to those who have given us our liberties.” Sajja says, “My wife's sister felt the program would be good for the kids; said ‘hey let's all get together and do this.’” So every Saturday or Sunday the group has been meeting to peel labels off the magazines and place an AVM label on instead. “We strip off all personal information, shred it for privacy and label them with the AVM”, explained Sajja. They work in a ‘nice little assembly line”, one peels off the label, one shreds and another puts a new AVM label on, and then they rotate their jobs.

According to the AVM website, it is estimated that one in three veterans returning from Iraq and Afghanistan will experience combat-stress also known as (PTSD) or Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI). “The invisible wounds” of these wars are complex and many of the symptoms are the same.” The AVM, with the donation of magazines from FL Aviation located in Morristown have been providing reading material to those who are either hospitalized or being evaluated for possible PTSD for more than five years now. FL Aviation donates hundreds of new magazines each month to the AVM to be used as they see fit. Upon receipt, the AVM secures the information on the magazines, then delivers them to Lyons VA Hospital.

Uhrmann had noticed several years back the lack of magazine in the waiting room of a hospital. “The first thing that always seems to get cut are things that directly affect the soldiers” says Uhrmann. “So we decided to change that.” Sajja says providing the magazines to the soldiers and veterans, “provides some level of distraction from whatever experience they are going through. It's have that sense of normalcy. I'm going to read; I'm going to relax.” Reading provides a “kind of decompressing from the environment of a combat persona to some kind of normalcy.”

Although the family will take “whatever” magazine are donated to them, Sajja says the group prefers more recent magazines so the soldier or veterans can stay current. This will allow them to have timely conversations with family and friends who come to visit them, he says. “There's a complete variety of magazines that appeal to everyone's taste”, says Sajja. Some of these magazines can cost \$15 to \$20 and vary from “People” to financial magazines.



*Volunteers preparing magazines for AVM's Magazine to Magazine Campaign, from left, are Kaylee DeZart of Budd Lake; Preston and Aydan Salim of Randolph; and Tyler and Kylija Sajja of Hackensettown.*

The project has been a great learning experience for his family. “We talk to our kids; they enjoy doing it and they are grasping who they are helping”, says Sajja. He was looking forward to taking the kids to Lyons Hospital for their delivery. “It’ll be great to see the fruition of their work and to meet the veterans as well,” says Sajja. “We’ve always been a supporter of men and women in the armed forces even before our kids were born,” says Sajja.

Although, “there’s a lot of things” to get involved in, “this is a great stepping stone for them”, “our freedoms are provided by the sacrifices of others.” Sajja says, “Our kids are still a little bit young; this is a great opportunity for them to interact with other community members and help them to be better contributors with other charities.” He concludes, “It’s a fantastic opportunity. We are honored. We are very humble to be able to do something for our veterans; to make our small sacrifices for the bigger sacrifices.”

Donations are being accepted from “everybody” says Sajja. Go to [www.allveteransmemorial.org](http://www.allveteransmemorial.org) to donate or send magazines to 13 Jennies Lane, Hackettstown, NJ 07840.