

Inspiring support for community and country

By **KATHY DAVIS**

SPECIAL TO DAILY RECORD

How does the patriotism and determination of one individual inspire and motivate a community? Charlie Uhrmann of Mount Olive, New Jersey found the answer firsthand.

When her teenage son began work on his Eagle Scout project building a flag-retirement vault to solve the problem of what to do with retired American flags in storage in the township, Uhrmann took it a step further, spearheading the creation of a multi-purpose veteran's memorial called the All Veterans Memorial aka AVM at Turkey Brook Park.

"The AVM provides veteran organizations a place to honor, pay respect and host ceremonies," Uhrmann said. "It is also meant to act as a reminder to all who visit Turkey Brook Park that the freedom we enjoy is certainly not free."

"Prior to construction of the AVM, we held our annual Memorial Day Parade and Ceremony at the old municipal building on Rt. 46. The police had to close two lanes on the west-bound section of the highway, which posed a safety hazard to those who

participated," said Mayor David Scapicchio. "The AVM is a nice finishing touch to the park. People visit the AVM every day."

One of several goals set by Uhrmann was to build a memorial complex that was not only functional and educational, but to fund the entire project using private donations only.

Uhrmann's efforts raising money and overseeing the development of the memorial required long hours and dedication. "I can't think of another individual who could have overcome the obstacles that arose during the planning and construction phase of the project," Scapicchio said.

As the first phase of the memorial neared completion, Uhrmann became involved in another project: the creation of another non-profit organization Morris County Cares (MCC), which aimed to show support for the men and women actively serving in the Middle East.

Morris County Cares is an extension of the All Veterans Memorial and has two missions; the "AV-Military Support" initiative and "Imagine World Peace" campaign.

While both outreach efforts embraced community education and involvement, the military support campaign was designed to fulfill individual requests from deployed service members, while the Imagine World Peace campaign provided humanitarian relief items requested by leaders.

Lt. Gen. William Phillips, a three-star general at the Pentagon in charge of acquisitions, expressed his gratitude for what Uhrmann is doing through Morris County Cares.

"There is no greater patriot who cares more about soldiers and families than Charlie Uhrmann," Phillips said. "The support that Charlie provided our warriors on the front lines of freedom in Iraq was absolutely unbelievable. Most importantly, the gifts she provided to the Iraqi children help build a stronger bond between the Iraqi and American people."

Through her efforts area residents – including students, churches and organizations – supported Morris County Cares in sending more than 1,100 requested care packages to troops. They sent 700 blankets to the troops in Afghanistan, 1,200 pounds of candy and 300 phone cards deployed soldiers in Iraq.



Charlie Uhrmann delivering one of twenty seven carts of requested items being sent directly to the troops.

When Phillips asked for medical supplies for the IBN Hospital's Pediatric Unit, Morris County Cares responded. Included with those supplies were hundreds of stuffed animals which the general said young Iraqi children held onto "for dear life... once they are given doll/stuff animal, it becomes their entire world."

Uhrmann's outreach efforts also included a letter-writing campaign. More than 8,000 letters were written and sent to soldiers serving in Iraq and Afghanistan. Many of those letters were written by students and area schools, giving them a

better understanding of the world while lifting the spirits of U.S. Troops. Inspiring letters and messages were also delivered to Lyon's VA Hospital where many of the wounded warriors were recuperating.

"During my deployment," Phillips noted, "I repeatedly saw the direct impact that Charlie's selfless efforts had on the moral of our soldiers, sailors, airmen, marines, our civilians and especially the children of Iraq. Charlie is the most gracious dedicated servant to our nation. I am forever indebted for her support and especially her friendship".