

*“God has sent you down from heaven to protect our nation
and may God bless you and I thank you for being here.”*

A letter from a sixth grader to veterans like you

Dear Brother,

I'd like to share with you a true story that recently happened at the Wisconsin American Legion.

A few nights ago, I received a phone call from a veteran who had recently received a hardship discharge from his tour of duty in Iraq to return home immediately to take care of his two young children.

I'll call him “John Smith” to protect his identity.

John called the Wisconsin American Legion from a local airport when he landed in the U.S. He had very little money, no transportation, and no place to live.

All he wanted was a ride from the airport to the town where his children were staying.

I picked him up at the airport, and during the ride, John told me that he'd be facing life as a single father. He also had to find a job and an apartment, and fix a broken-down car.

It was clear to us at headquarters that without some immediate assistance John and his children were going to be living on the streets.

All of us at the Wisconsin American Legion sprang into action.

Because he couldn't immediately stay with his children, we took John to a nearby hotel. He broke into a big smile when I told him that the Wisconsin American Legion

would pay the bill for the next few days.

Then we took him out to dinner and told him to get a good night's rest. We called a tow truck to have his car taken to a gas station, paid for the repairs, and filled the tank with gas.

A few days later, a group of Legionnaires showed up in the hotel lobby where John was staying. He was distraught because he still didn't have enough money to rent an apartment for himself and his children.

We gave him a check for \$1,500 to pay for first and last month's rent, and told him to keep in touch.

Then John broke down and said, "I can't believe that a bunch of strangers would help me so much."

And I replied,

"This is why we are members of the Wisconsin American Legion."

I didn't tell you this story to sing my own praises. And I didn't tell you this so you'd think more highly of your fellow Legionnaires who came to John's assistance.

I told you this for one reason:

We Legionnaires save lives.

John has a long, tough road ahead of him, but I can tell you this: he wouldn't be able to take the first step of this journey if it wasn't for the support of caring Legionnaires like you.

When you first opened up this envelope, you probably noticed a special

commemorative pin. The image is of one hand reaching out to help another – an appropriate picture considering my story about John and us Legionnaires.

Wear the pin to show the world that you served your country honorably. Wear the pin to show the world that you care about the welfare of your fellow veterans.

The commemorative pin marks the start of a new fundraiser to help friends like John...and we're deeply hoping that you'll want to join your comrades in arms by making a contribution.

In addition to funding critical programs that help veterans in dire straits, your gift will support two new initiatives: Operation Hospital Cares and Project Airtime.

Operation Hospital Cares gives soldiers facing long hospital stays a gift box filled with basic necessities and a few items to pass the time – pajamas, flip-flops, a phone card, a deck of cards, a CD player, and more.

We've handed out dozens of Operation Hospital Cares gift boxes to severely injured soldiers, and we can assure you that our injured friends are overjoyed that someone remembers them...and that they have something to help speed the long days in the hospital.

And with so many young men and women being injured in Iraq and Afghanistan, your help is desperately needed.

Your support will allow us to expand Operation Hospital Cares!

Your donation will also help fund Project Airtime – an initiative that gives satellite phones to troops in remote locations who have no other way of talking with their loved ones back home.

We have provided more than 130,000 minutes of phone time for the men and

women so bravely serving in Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom.

Your donation will bring a smile to a soldier's face!

Now that you know what our plans are, we're hoping you'll want to be a part of them.

Giving to our fundraiser takes only a minute, but will change someone's future. Just fill out the enclosed reply card.

You can even use a Visa or MasterCard and become a sustaining donor by filling out the back of the reply card. This way we'll have the resources on hand when emergencies arise.

As you get ready to go back to your day, I ask you to remember this.

Every few days we get a call from another "John Smith" – a veteran in real trouble with no place else to turn. And we instantly mobilize all appropriate resources and rush to his or her assistance.

We pray that you'll stand with us so that we can honor our commitments to our friends in need.

Thank you for caring and God bless America,

Joe Smith
Department Commander

P.S. I hope you enjoy wearing the commemorative pin that I gave you...and I hope you'll make a donation to our fundraiser!