



## Supporting the Troops

By U.S. Sen. John Cornyn

My father spent 31 proud years in the U.S. Air Force. That included four long months interred in a prisoner of war camp after the bomber he piloted was shot down over Germany near the end of World War II.

Like many veterans, my dad didn't talk a great deal about his war experiences. But when he did, it was often to mention how much he and other servicemen appreciated the support they received from people at home. It was a great comfort to him, particularly in the hard days when he was a prisoner.

I was reminded of that recently when I heard a story about another young Texan who listened to her grandfather talk about World War II, and the backing he and his fellow Army troops felt from their fellow Americans. The grandfather told his granddaughter that during their train ride to the Army's First Special Service Force training camp in Montana, local citizens turned out at rail stops with food and coffee to make sure the soldiers never got too hungry.

Those stories stayed with her. And when Ms. Blevins returned home to Texas from a tour in Operation Iraqi Freedom, she started an organization to help ensure that today's soldiers know they are held in the same esteem her grandfather was.

Her organization is called "Support a Soldier," and it's based at Ft. Hood in Central Texas. Support a Soldier has already sent more than 2,000 care packages to U.S. service men and women abroad. Vavette has recruited Texans to "adopt" more than 200 Texan soldiers deployed in Iraq, Afghanistan, Kosovo and Bahrain.

Across the state, I know countless of our fellow citizens like Vavette Blevins are helping Texas service men and women know we appreciate their sacrifices more than they can ever imagine.

We all know that freedom is not free. It usually has to be fought for, and then defended vigorously. Sometimes, force or the threat of force is the only way to achieve a lasting peace. Texans have known this, from the very beginnings of the state's history.

It's often been said that "Texas defends America." One in every 10 men and women in uniform call Texas home. We're accustomed to having soldiers in our families, like my dad, or down the street and military installations in our communities.

We're proud of our role in fighting for and defending liberty

When you stand outside the Alamo in my hometown of San Antonio, or visit the memorial in Goliad, you can't help but marvel at the sacrifices of the brave men who helped achieve the freedom we now enjoy, through sacrifice that we can only imagine now.

Across the country, more than 100 formal organizations are showing support for our military families in creative and meaningful ways. We can all do something – from donating frequent flyer miles and phone cards to providing scholarships for military children and care packages for our troops abroad. Or, we can simply write a letter of encouragement. It means a great deal.

Whether the signals we send are big or small, I guarantee that they are noticed – and they're appreciated. I hope everyone will consider doing their part to show our fellow Texans deployed abroad that we all support and appreciate their sacrifices.

Vavette Blevins told us she has more soldiers waiting to be adopted than folks who have signed on to adopt. If a soldier isn't immediately adopted, Vavette makes a care package on her own and relies on donations to help offset the postage expenses.

Please send Ms. Blevins an email at [www.supportasoldier.org](http://www.supportasoldier.org) if you'd like to join her team. Or write her at Support a Soldier, P. O. Box 5384, Fort Hood, Texas, 76544.

No doubt Vavette's grandfather would be so proud of her if he could see what she's doing now. I know I am. And her husband, Sergeant Major Lee Blevins of the 4th Infantry Division, would probably be helping her in her endeavors, but he's pretty busy at work these days.

Her husband Lee's office is at Camp Liberty in Baghdad, Iraq.

[For more information on the many other worthy volunteer activities sponsored by Texans, you can visit the Department of Defense's website, [www.Americasupportsyou.mil](http://www.Americasupportsyou.mil).]

*Sen. Cornyn is a member of the following Senate Committees: Armed Service, Judiciary, Budget, Small Business and Entrepreneurship, and Joint Economic. He is also the chairman of the subcommittees on Immigration, Border Security and Citizenship and Emerging Threats and Capabilities.*