




America Supports You: Freedom Walk Helps Groups Spread Word

By Samantha L. Quigley
American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON, Sept. 9, 2007 – As more than 10,000 people filled the Pentagon parking lot at the end of the third America Supports You Freedom Walk today, they were greeted by groups individually working toward the collective goal of supporting troops and their families.  [\(Video\)](#)



Karina Rollins (right), talks with Lisa Dixon of Soldiers' Angels after participating in the third America Supports You Freedom Walk on Sept. 9, 2007, in Washington. The troop-support group, one of 21 participating in the event following the walk, offers a variety of support to servicemembers including letters and care packages. Photo by Samantha L. Quigley
(Click photo for screen-resolution image); [high-resolution image](#) available.

Representatives of more than 20 groups that support America Supports You were on hand to let people know what they do for the troops. America Supports You is a Defense Department program connecting citizens and corporations with military personnel and their families serving at home and abroad.

The groups, which send care packages and letters, offer support to wounded servicemembers, and assist military families agreed the walk gave them the opportunity to tell the participants how they could support the troops.

"There's a lot of people out there that don't realize that you can write to a servicemember," said Kristen Petrella, president of the New Jersey-based Hugs from Home, a letter-writing group. "We're going to ... let them know that, 'Yes, you can do that.'"

Landstuhl Hospital Care Project, treasurer Sharon Buck, said her group participated for the same reason. "Our purpose today is to hand out pamphlets if people are interested in learning what our mission is," she said.

The project supports the chaplains' center at the Landstuhl Regional Medical Center in Germany, Buck said. Its support arrives at the chaplains' center in the form of a black backpack containing basic necessities that wounded servicemembers may need but not have when they arrive in Germany, such as underwear, T-shirts, toiletries and other needed items.

Another group participating in the post-Freedom Walk activities, Soldiers' Angels, successfully spread the word about its efforts by attracting walkers like Karina Rollins with the opportunity to write a message to the troops. The Washington resident, who plans to "adopt" a servicemember through the group, said supporting the troops is a must for her despite not having any ties to the military.

"I do not have a family member or a friend who is in Iraq, so it's not a personal thing in that sense," Rollins said. "We need to show them that we care about more than getting soy lattes and watching 'American Idol.' We need to show that we understand that there is something very big and important going on."

The support groups and walkers said the Freedom Walk did just that, and has done so since the inaugural event on the fourth anniversary of the attacks.

"We need to keep the memory alive," Carol Watanabe, lead volunteer with Little Patriots Embraced, a Missouri group, said. "It's important to rally the American people and make them understand that we support ... our troops.

"There's nothing more important than our troops knowing that we are standing behind them," she said.

Little Patriots Embraced works to relieve stress on the families of deployed servicemembers through care packages that include teddy bears, writing journals and blankets for newborns, Watanabe said.

Cindi Bookout, president of Operation Homefront's D.C. Metro chapter, agreed that letting troops and their families know they have support is paramount. Her group accomplishes this through chapters in 31 states that provide support to the families of deployed servicemembers.

"The Freedom Walk is important because it lets (servicemembers) know that there are thousands of people all over the United States – not just here in Washington, D.C., but all over the (country) – that support our servicemembers," she said.

With more than 230 walks scheduled to take place between yesterday and Sept. 11, in all 50 states and 10 countries, Americans are doing just that -- thanking those who serve, remembering those who have made the ultimate sacrifice,

Related Sites:[America Supports You Freedom Walk Special](#)[Hugs from Home](#)[Landstuhl Hospital Care Project](#)[Little Patriots Embraced](#)[Operation Homefront](#)[America Supports You](#)**Related Articles:**[Thousands Commemorate Sept. 11 Anniversary During Freedom Walk](#)[Thousands Take Part in America Supports You Freedom Walk](#)

Carol Watanabe, a lead volunteer with Little Patriots Embraced, embraces a big patriot who had just finished the third America Supports You Freedom Walk on Sept. 9, 2007, in Washington. Little Patriots Embraced works to relieve the stress of families with deployed servicemembers with a focus on children. The group was one of 21 troop-support organizations that participated in the walk. Photo by Samantha L. Quigley

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Operation Helmet, a troop-support group, displays three Kevlar helmets bearing messages of support and thanks. Upon request, the group provides additional padding to be placed in similar helmets servicemembers are using in the field. The group was one of 21 troop-support groups participating in the third America Supports You Freedom Walk. Photo by Samantha L. Quigley

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Howie Pendleton, a Gerald T. Parks Memorial Foundation volunteer, hands an interested America Supports You Freedom Walk participant a pin Sept. 9, 2007, while other interested walkers look at the group's literature. The group assists in the repair of military health care facilities. The foundation was one of 21 troop-support groups participating in the day's Freedom Walk events in the nation's capital. Photo by Samantha L. Quigley

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Participants in the third America Supports You Freedom Walk talk with representatives of Operation First Response, a troop-support group participating in the day's events Sept. 9, 2007 at the Pentagon. The group was one of 21 troop-support groups participating in the third America Supports You Freedom Walk. Photo by Samantha L. Quigley

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Buttons and various informational pamphlets were on display from Gerald T. Parks Memorial Foundation, an America Supports You supporter, during a musical tribute at the Pentagon parking lot, Sept. 9, 2007. The tribute was in honor of the third annual America Supports You Freedom Walk that began at the National Mall. Photo by Petty Officer 2nd Class Molly A. Burgess, USN

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A representative Gerald T. Parks Memorial Foundation, an America Supports You supporter, hands out information during a musical tribute at the Pentagon parking lot, Sept. 9, 2007. The tribute was in honor of the third annual America Supports You Freedom Walk that began at the National Mall. The foundation focuses on repairing and developing health care facilities. Photo by Petty Officer 2nd Class Molly A. Burgess, USN

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People write messages for servicemembers on a quilt that spreads across the Operation First Response display table during the musical tribute in the Pentagon parking lot, Sept. 9, 2007, in honor of the third annual America Supports You Freedom Walk. Photo by Petty Officer 2nd Class Molly A. Burgess, USN

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Informational pamphlets, magnets and pencils were spread across a table displayed by representatives from Operational Homefront, an America Supports You supporter, during a musical tribute at the Pentagon parking lot, Sept. 9, 2007. The tribute was in honor of the third annual America Supports You Freedom Walk that began at the National Mall. Photo by Petty Officer 2nd Class Molly A. Burgess, USN

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A boy writes a card to send to a deployed soldier provided by Soldiers' Angels, an America Supports You supporter, while attending the musical tribute in the Pentagon parking lot, Sept. 9, 2007. The tribute was a conclusion to the third annual America Supports You Freedom Walk. Photo by Petty Officer 2nd Class Molly A. Burgess, USN

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A representative from Little Patriots, an America Supports You supporter, hands out informational pamphlets during the musical tribute in the Pentagon parking lot, Sept. 9, 2007, in honor of the third annual Freedom Walk. Photo by Petty Officer 2nd Class Molly A. Burgess, USN

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With Mo the dog in the lead, Bart Kenerson (left) and Bill Kale arrive at the Pentagon parking lot after participating in the third America Supports You Freedom Walk on Sept. 9, 2007. The walk commemorates the tragic events of Sept. 11, 2001. Photo by Samantha L. Quigley

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Ray DeFrees of Fairfax, Va., enjoys the Harlem Gospel Choir's musical tribute at the conclusion of the third America Supports You Freedom Walk on Sept. 9, 2007 at the Pentagon. The flag he's holding has been held or carried by more than 3,000 people since Sept. 11, 2001. It was carried across the finish line of the Army 10-Miler race by a 94-year-old veteran, the oldest person to carry it in a race. Photo by Samantha L. Quigley

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Gabrielle McPherson (left), celebrated her second birthday Sept. 9, 2007, by participating in the third America Supports You Freedom Walk in Washington. She and her friend, Jaryn Geiger, 22 months, played in the Pentagon parking lot, where the Harlem Gospel Choir performed a musical tribute. Photo by Samantha L. Quigley

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