

Support for military families welcome any time

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Defense Commissary Agency

FORT LEE, Va. – During the holidays many Americans open their purse strings to help those in need, but the “Gift of Groceries” and Scholarships for Military Children are programs that can help military families all year round.

Since the “Gift of Groceries” program began in 2002, the general public has been able to purchase commissary gift certificates to give to military friends and family, as well as to purchase and donate to charitable organizations assisting military families. The certificates can be purchased through a link at www.commissaries.com or by calling 1-877-770-GIFT.

“Donations of commissary gift certificates to worldwide charitable organizations such as the Air Force Aid Society, Fisher House Foundation, and the USO have totaled over \$200,000 in the last three years,” said Patrick B. Nixon, chief executive officer and acting director of the Defense Commissary Agency. That’s in addition to the thousands of dollars in gift certifi-

cates that have been purchased and donated through installation charities.

“Increasingly, many installation holiday food programs seem to be utilizing commissary gift certificates as well,” said Nixon. “Since the commissary benefit saves shoppers an average of 30 percent or more over commercial grocery stores, the commissary certificates have more buying power.” A valuable military benefit, commissaries provide groceries “at cost” to military active duty, Guard and Reserve, and retirees at 268 locations worldwide.

A recent addition to the gift certificate donation program is “Operation Homefront,” a nonprofit volunteer organization that assists military families with emergency needs. Operation Homefront has 31 chapters in the U.S. and has handled over 20,000 cases ranging from car repairs to food assistance since 2002. It is affiliated with CinCHouse.com, a nonprofit organization created to help military wives and women in the military manage day-to-day life.

According to Amy Palmer, executive vice president of Operation Homefront, commissary gift certificates are a more effi-

cient way for them to help families, giving the families the flexibility to shop for the food they need. More information on Operation Homefront and CinCHouse.com can be found at www.operationhomefront.net or www.cinchouse.com.

Commissary gift certificates are made possible through a business agreement with CertifiChecks Inc., at no cost to the federal government. Anyone can buy the certificates, but only authorized commissary shoppers can spend them. There is a small charge for handling, printing and shipping the certificates.

The general public can also help send outstanding military children to college. The Scholarships for Military Children program has awarded nearly \$4 million in scholarships to about 2,500 students since the program began in 2000. The program administrator, Fisher House Foundation, accepts public donations for scholarships at www.militaryscholar.org. Since program costs are absorbed by Fisher House Foundation, every dollar donated goes to fund the \$1,500 scholarships. Applications and information on eligibility are available online at www.militaryscholar.org.

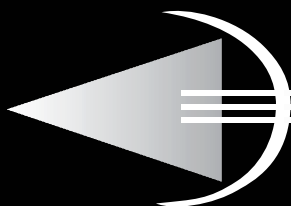


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