



Supporting Soldiers Helping Soldiers

Every once in a while, we come across a situation in which each of us can make a difference.

So as we begin a new year in 2018, I want to relay to you a story where one of our own, together with our organization, is making a real difference.

In the context of the AAAAA and our four pillars of **Networking, Recognition, Voice and Support** of our Army Aviation Soldiers and Families, it is particularly gratifying when AAAAA hears about one of our members who truly made an impact in another warrior's life.

On December 9, 2017 AAAAA member SFC Christopher Smith, stationed in Hohenfels, Germany sent an email to the AAAAA National Office apprising us of a challenge he was having in helping meet the need of a Wounded Warrior. Chris was trying to help a double amputee Marine, Garrett Carnes, who had been rescued by an Army MEDEVAC helicopter in Afghanistan and was in need of a companion dog, but was working through the challenging process here in the U.S. with the Veterans Administration and not being very successful.

As Chris stated in his message to AAAAA, "At the end of the day Soldiers take care of Soldiers." Chris originally heard about Garrett's story through a conversation between his mom and wife while his mom was visiting Germany in the first week of December. Chris decided right then and there to give Garrett his own fully trained German Shepherd companion dog named Unno. The problem became that after incurring the expense of the dog he still needed to get Unno to Garrett in North Carolina. Chris's question, "Did AAAAA know of any way to facilitate getting Unno to the United States?"

This was a remarkable story of a brother warrior being rescued by Army Aviation on the battlefield now being further assisted by an Army Aviation NCO whom he had never even met and only spoken to on the phone. Something had to be done.

SFC Smith, with the help of another

service member, MSG Lockett of 2nd Cav. Regt. Vilseck, Germany and owner of Haus Amberg Shepherds where Unno originated, made reservations for the following week on United Airlines. Serendipitously, our Executive Director Bill Harris and I had just finished our terms on the board of the National Aviation Hall of Fame in Dayton, Ohio and we recalled that the new NAHF Chairman, Mr. Michael Quiello, was a Vice President at United Airlines. We contacted Mike who is a retired Marine pilot himself to see if there was some way we could reduce the costs and/or help underwrite the transportation.

Mike sprang into action and contacted a senior United Airlines Flight Attendant and Purser, Mollie Oliver, based out of LAX who had formed a charity to assist in exactly this kind of situation. Mollie took charge and immediately went to work. As the attached photo attests, not only Unno but Chris himself was able to make the trip to meet Garrett and present the dog he had trained and donated to support his brother warrior thanks to Mollie's efforts.

Army Aviation Soldiers like Chris Smith exemplify the best of the best of what our branch, our Army and indeed our nation is all about. As SFC Smith stated, "This was about Soldiers taking care of Soldiers." AAAAA is proud to have members like SFC Christopher Smith who go above and beyond the call of duty every day both in and out of combat. This remarkable story happened because one Soldier cared to make a difference in another warrior's life. We could not be more proud of him and how he made this Christmas story happen.

We also thank Mike Quiello, Patrick and Alisha Lockett, owners of Haus



Former Marine Garrett Carnes and his new companion dog, Unno.



SFC Christopher Smith, Garrett Carnes, Mollie Oliver and Unno.

Amberg, and Mollie Oliver and all the other ground, flight, and cabin crews at United who made sure Chris and Unno had a successful trip and link-up with Garrett in North Carolina.

Mike, Bill and I have made personal donations to Mollie's 501 C-3 Charity, www.mumsdog.org to help offset the costs incurred as Mollie continues to lead this great organization, helping our Wounded Warriors in a time of need. Maybe you could consider some support as well. She, like SFC Smith and all of you AAAAA members are making a difference every day and we thank you all.

Above the Best!

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