



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

September 11, 2013

Media Contact:

Gayle Fishel

703-908-6433

gfishel@uso.org

First Lady Michelle Obama and Members of Congress *Join Forces* with the USO in Honoring Troops and their Families on 9/11

First Lady Makes Her First Official Visit to the USO Warrior and Family Center at Fort Belvoir and More Than 2,500 USO Warrior Care Packs Assembled at Service Project on Capitol Hill

Arlington, VA. (Sept. 11, 2013) – Today, the White House and Members of Congress joined forces with the USO to pay homage to the tragic events of 2001, salute our nation’s spirit of service and showcase their continued support of those who currently serve in our Armed Forces. In honor of the National Day of Service and Remembrance, First Lady Michelle Obama made her first visit to the USO Warrior & Family Center at Fort Belvoir, where she thanked military families for their sacrifice as well as visited the Intrepid Spirit - the first of nine satellite centers of the Bethesda-based National Intrepid Center of Excellence. On Capitol Hill, more than 76 bipartisan members of Congress united to assemble 2,500 speciality care packs for our wounded, ill and injured troops.

After handing out special Joining Forces cookies, Mrs. Obama spoke directly to a room full of military children. “Do you realize you guys are heroes? Do you know that? We're so proud of what you do because your parents, your moms and dads and grandparents and cousins and uncles and aunts, whoever is in your family who's serving -- you guys help them help our country,” said the First Lady. “We just wanted to shine a light on all of the great work that the USO is doing for military families all over this country. This is a beautiful facility. It's the kind of partnership that represents all that we need to do.”

The largest center in USO history, the USO Warrior and Family Center at Fort Belvoir measures more than 20,000 square feet and opened its doors on February 5, 2013. This was the first visit to the new center for First Lady Michelle Obama, who helped military children with a patriotic craft project, took photos with troops and their families, and offered up hugs of appreciation. Among those to welcome Mrs. Obama to the center was Sloan Gibson, USO CEO and President; Elaine Rogers, CEO and President, USO Metropolitan of Washington, DC; and Colonel Gregory Gadson, Commander of the U.S. Army Fort Belvoir Garrison. USO tour veteran and actor Gary Sinise was also in attendance and will be performing a free 9/11 concert for the Fort Belvoir military community later this evening.

“When I was wounded I didn’t know whether or not I was ever going to be able to hold a camera again,” said Colonel Gregory Gadson, Commander of the U.S. Army Fort Belvoir Garrison. “Photography has been a big part of my life. And art and photography have been a big part of my recovery and the healing process. We are glad that the USO has recognized that and this wonderful USO Warrior and Family Center and programs that it supports. Programs, like the one you are participating in, continue to make a difference in making service members and their family heal.”

The USO Warrior and Family Center at Fort Belvoir supports wounded, ill and injured troops, their families and caregivers as well as local active duty troops, reservists, members of the National Guard and their families by providing them with a place to be together, away from the sterile hospital environment. The center is open daily, boasts more than 20 unique spaces (including a business center, art room, healing garden as well as a game room and music room) and is operated by the [USO of Metropolitan Washington](#).

"It was very special to host the First Lady here at the Warrior and Family Center at Fort Belvoir for her first visit," said Sloan Gibson, USO President. "She was absolutely thrilled to see this very special place that's for our military families and for our wounded, ill and injured troops and their families. It was the perfect occasion for that. Not only was it September 11th, but here we were at the center having a wonderful event for military children and moms and dads, we were also on Capitol Hill doing a USO Service Project with members of Congress and staff. For the USO to provide service and support on a day like today, that's exactly what we're all about."

Earlier in the day, the USO hosted its eighth Service Project on Capitol Hill, and introduced the first assembly of USO Warrior Care Packs. These new care packs were developed by the USO following requests from military and medical personnel to provide comfort care items to wounded troops recovering at hospitals and medical care facilities in the field and at home. Because troops frequently arrive at medical facilities straight from the battlefield with nothing more than their uniform, USO Warrior Care Packs are essential and provide troops with basic hygiene supplies like shampoo, conditioner, deodorant, and lip balm as well as a change of clothing and a blanket.

"We are so excited to be here today, to be able to not only help wounded warriors, but to remember what happened here and around this country on September 11th 12 years ago," said Congressman Jeff Miller, USO Congressional Caucus co-chair. But as we are putting the contents in each of these bags, we remember that they are going to a person somewhere. So with it, send a prayer, send your love, and of course, your respect."

The packs assembled at today's event also included a card signed by USO Congressional Co-Chairs Jeff Miller, Tim Walz, Adam Smith, and Howard P. "Buck" McKeon. The cards were provided to congressional offices in advance of the event so members could write their own personal messages of support and encouragement to the recipients. In addition to the assembling of USO Warrior Care Packs, members of Congress also signed a special USO flag for troops. This flag, made from military battle dress uniforms or "BDUs," will be flown at the USO center in Kandahar, Afghanistan.

USO Warrior Care Packs and center facilities are just two of the many USO programs and services the USO offers to provide support and a home away from home for our active duty military, military families, wounded warriors, their families and caregivers. Visit [USO.org](#) to learn more ways the USO supports those who need us most: our nation's deployed troops, military families, wounded, ill and injured troops and their caregivers as well as families of the fallen.

For additional information (incl. photos and video) from the event:

<https://uso.box.com/s/a2m6vtl85p4cg6r9ecdc>

http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=xY1TFwMAi9A

About the USO

The USO lifts the spirits of America's troops and their families millions of times each year at hundreds of places worldwide. We provide a touch of home through centers at airports and military bases in the U.S. and abroad, top quality entertainment and innovative programs and services. We also provide critical support to those who need us most, including forward-deployed troops, military families, wounded warriors and families of the fallen. The USO is a private, non-profit organization, not a government agency. Our programs and services are made possible by the American people, support of our corporate partners and the dedication of our volunteers and staff.

In addition to individual donors and corporate sponsors, the USO is supported by President's Circle Partners: American Airlines, AT&T, Clear Channel, The Coca-Cola Company, Grand Canyon University, jcpenny, Jeep, Kangaroo Express, Kroger, Lowe's, Northrop Grumman Corporation, Procter & Gamble and TriWest Healthcare Alliance and Worldwide Strategic Partners: BAE Systems, The Boeing Company, Lockheed Martin, Microsoft Corporation and TKS Telepost Kabel-Service Kaiserslautern GmbH & Co. KG. We are also supported through the United Way and Combined Federal Campaign (CFC-11381). To join us in this patriotic mission, and to learn more about the USO, please visit uso.org.

###