



Guard Support of Massachusetts, Inc.

P.O. Box 259, Marblehead MA 01945

www.GuardSupport.org

December 12, 2007

Dear Friends:

As some of you know, this summer I launched a non profit organization to help the families of the men and women serving in the Massachusetts National Guard. This organization is called Guard Support of Massachusetts. I'm writing to ask for your assistance and possible contribution to this effort.

The idea for GSMA came from conversations with my friend and neighbor Lt. Col. Michael Finer – who is now serving as the Garrison Commander at Camp Cropper in Iraq. In a conversation with him before he deployed, he described to me how families frequently need help like emergency financial assistance **after one spouse deploys overseas. Over 7,000 men and women in the Massachusetts National Guard have been deployed overseas since 9/11.**

Families have lots of sudden costs when one parent is gone for a year. Often the person accustomed to running the household budget is the one deployed and so people can get behind. Michael and other officers made a very compelling case that having some simple problems back home solved would make it easier to keep the men and women in the field focused on their primary tasks – keeping themselves and their comrades safe and accomplishing the mission they have been given.

Once we started GSMA we learned a sobering truth: the National Guard is set up to do many things, but the infrastructure is not there to support families for year long overseas deployments. In the regular Army, families may live on or near a base. As a result, these families benefit from an extensive Army base infrastructure, not to mention an entire community going through a shared experience. In contrast, the National Guard families are scattered all across the Commonwealth and neighboring states, and enjoy none of that infrastructure.

As a result, the locales and the types of needs that we must address have multiplied, and with every week that passes we know we need to do even more.

Since August, we've accomplished the following:

- We have given out over \$55,000 in grants to benefit units and their families.
- Many of these grants have met emergencies like paying utility bills, phone bills, car repair bills etc.
- Other grants go to the units to facilitate strong connections with their families back home. This has included things such as funding internet hook-ups for soldiers in the field so they can communicate with their families and paying for transportation back home to see their families in the short interval between completing training and overseas deployment.
- We have funded Family Readiness Groups which are local support groups of families of National Guard members. The money goes toward events such as send-offs, returns and

holiday events I have enclosed a newspaper article about one of the larger return events that we funded.

- We have also provided other assistance that doesn't neatly fall into these categories, such as transportation to family members of an injured serviceman so his spouse could leave their children at home while she travels to the hospital to be with her husband in surgery and during rehabilitation.

- Our work is integrated with the National Guard Family Assistance Centers across the Commonwealth. The employees there are an integral part of the application process. This ensures that our funds are going only where they are really needed.

Please visit our web site – www.guardsupport.org to learn more about these programs.

While we have made progress, there is a tremendous amount we still need to do. We need to keep these existing programs going for the ever increasing numbers of troops being sent. But we also must meet the next set of needs: helping returning service members. This will involve areas such as re-launching small businesses that were disrupted by the serviceman being deployed to Iraq, or job training or family counseling and providing assistance with other long-term needs.

To date, GSMA has been funded by a very small group of people – and we have committed to continue this effort. By broadening the base of contributors however, we can ensure the continuation of our efforts, the expansion of our programs. Broadening our support base will also send a strong signal to the Guardsmen and their Families that their efforts are widely appreciated.

This last point is very important. Even if you are not going to contribute to GSMA, please consider some way to let the men and women of the National Guard understand that we appreciate their sacrifices and we want to help them reintegrate into our communities.

I personally feel very called to supporting these families, and I would very much welcome your assistance with this effort. Any help would be appreciated, including your financial contribution.

If you would like to financially support our efforts, the easiest way is to send a check to:

**Guard Support of Massachusetts, Inc.
P.O. Box 259
Marblehead, MA 01945**

Through our web site you can also make a donation using PayPal or your credit card, if that is more convenient. Just go to www.guardsupport.org and there are easy prompts.

We have applied to have GSMA become a 501(c)(3) organization so that your donation to Guard Support of Massachusetts will be a fully tax-deductible charitable contribution. We have every expectation that this will be granted, but we cannot guarantee at this time that your donation will be deductible. I have also enclosed a letter describing our tax status and process in more detail.

We are making a difference in the lives of our neighbors who have made tremendous sacrifices for all of us. Please help us carry this effort forward.

Best regards.

Nathaniel Dalton