

Moss Creek Marines group supports its "brothers and sisters" in the military

By AMY COYNE BREDESON
abredeson@islandpacket.com
843-706-8134

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How to help

The Moss Creek Marines are raising money for their "Operation Adopt A Combat Unit" program by selling tickets to the Italian American Club of Hilton Head

Alan Calderon remembers what it was like to be in the middle of a war zone.

A Vietnam War veteran and commanding officer of the Moss Creek Marines, Calderon wants to show his appreciation for today's Marines who are in harm's way.

So he and his group of Marine veterans send wish packages to fellow leathernecks deployed in combat zones. They call it "Operation Adopt A Combat Unit."

"I was in Vietnam," Calderon said. "Basically we were outcasts; we were pariahs. Nobody really sent anything to us, except our family. ... We want to let them know that we appreciate what they do to fight for our freedom and to support this country."

The nonprofit Moss Creek group has sent packages to about 28,000 Marines over the past five years, adjutant Roger Garreau said.

He said the group gets in touch with combat units and asks what the Marines want.

Then members go shopping, package all the goodies and ship them off. Packages usually include personal hygiene products, beef jerky, baby wipes, phone cards and sporting goods -- sometimes even X-Box gaming systems and games.

"It's been a major undertaking," Garreau said. "And little did I believe it would take on a life of its own."

Garreau said the group of about 35 local Marine veterans has gotten tremendous support from the community. The group's major fundraiser for the operation is a tennis tournament followed by a golf tournament around Veterans Day. This year's event will be Nov. 9-10 in Moss Creek.

The group is also raising money by selling tickets to the Italian American Club of Hilton Head's second annual Italian Heritage Festival.

"They are our brothers and sisters," Garreau said about the combat units his group supports. "It's a special bond."

Read more: <http://www.islandpacket.com/2011/09/11/1787294/moss-creek-marines-group-supports.html#ixzz1Xw5H1gn7>