

RELEASE NUMBER:090206-06

DATE POSTED: FEBRUARY 6, 2009

Army Chief of Staff salutes Fayetteville citizens for support of military community

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USASOC PAO

FORT BRAGG, N.C. (USASOC News Service, Feb. 6, 2009) – In a visit to Fort Bragg, N.C., Feb. 6, the Chief of Staff of the Army recognized several Fayetteville citizens in a ceremony on the U.S. Army Special Operations Command Memorial Plaza for their outstanding support of the military community and Families.

Gen. George W. Casey Jr., who became the 36th Chief of Staff of the Army in April 2007,

presented Kirk deViere, the chairman for Fayetteville Cares, and Joanne Chavonne, the organization's treasurer, with Army Certificates of Achievement for organizing "Boots and Booties – The World's Largest Military Baby Shower," which was held Nov. 15, 2008 at the Crown Center in Fayetteville, N.C.

"What you've done here today is exactly the type of community support and sentiment that we [Army leadership] hope to generate," Casey said.

Chavonne, who is the wife of Fayetteville Mayor Tony Chavonne, began Fayetteville Cares as a way to promote local community support efforts provided to military members and their Families.

Mayor Chavonne was also present to represent the citizens of Fayetteville.

"If there is to be recognition of patriotic civilian service, there can be no more appropriate location than this Soldier sanctuary city, this military base and this hallowed parade field where honor and sacrifice are celebrated each and every day," he said.



Gen. George W. Casey Jr. (left), Chief of Staff of the U.S. Army, presents Fayetteville, N.C., Mayor Tony Chavonne with a print entitled "No Safe Haven," during a civilian recognition ceremony at the USASOC Memorial Plaza, Feb. 6. (Photo by Spc. Tony Hawkins, USASOC PAO)

During the "Boots and Booties" event, 1,000 new and expectant mothers from the Fort Bragg and Pope Air Force Base communities received dozens of baby items such as clothing, books, toys, car seats and more. More than 125 door prizes were given out, including a new car donated by a local automobile dealership. The event gave away more than \$300,000, almost a third of which consisted of cash donations. The majority of donations came from the Fayetteville community.

Eight individuals who volunteer with Fayetteville Cares also received certificates from Casey. They were: Rebecca Eatman-Jackson, Debbie Lallier, Marie Runkle, George Breece, Jan Anderson, Gayle Nelson, Jenny Beaver and Kristie Lozano.

As large-scale as the event was, Fayetteville Cares could not do it alone. Jane Weaver-Soble, the president of Operation Homefront of North Carolina and the co-chair of the event, also received a certificate for her organization's part in supporting military families.

Three volunteers with Operation Homefront also received certificates for their part in the event. They were: Amy Wallace, Sarah Kanady and Tom Costello.

Operation Homefront of North Carolina is the Charlotte, N.C., branch of the nation-wide organization which provides emergency assistance to servicemembers and their Families through various programs.

Also recognized for their contributions were two local Fayetteville business owners, Dr. W.C. Powers and Mike Lallier, who together coordinated a donation of \$22,000 for the "Boots and Booties" event, as well as the grand prize of a new car.

Lastly, for playing a large part in spreading information regarding the event, two individuals also received certificates on behalf of Fort Bragg Army Community Services. Sue O'Brien, from ACS New Parent Support, and Kathy Mansfield, from ACS Volunteer Services, were co-chairs for information booths about the event and also acted as the liaison officers for Fort Bragg.

Casey also commended the citizens of Fayetteville for its long history of support for the military.

"Fayetteville has always been way ahead of the curve when it comes to taking care of our Soldiers and our Families," he said. "Families are the strength of our Soldiers and Soldiers are the strength of our Army."



Gen. George W. Casey Jr., Army Chief of Staff, speaks to a crowd at the USASOC Memorial Plaza during a civilian recognition ceremony Feb. 6. The ceremony was held to honor several citizens of Fayetteville for their outstanding support of the military community. (Photo by Spc. Tony Hawkins, USASOC PAO)

As a special salute to the city of Fayetteville and its efforts in creating a shelter for America's military, Casey presented Mayor Tony Chavonne with a print entitled, "No Safe Haven." The print depicts the scene of a high-risk air assault operation conducted in eastern Afghanistan in 2007 by the 82nd Airborne Division and the 7th Special Forces Group (Airborne), both of which are stationed at Fort Bragg, N.C.

Chavonne recognized the servicemembers who risk their lives each day in support of the nation, noting that freedom does not come without sacrifice, but also that there is a community willing to be there in a time of need.

"War is not a political word in Fayetteville," he said. "War is where our families and friends go to protect the freedom that our country enjoys. Today's recognition reaffirms a long-standing tradition of people who care; moms, dads, friends and local businesses, and every day people. It tells a story of a city that cares. I'm proud to say as mayor, not just today, but every day, Fayetteville cares."

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