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## **\*PRESS RELEASE\***

### **Armed Forces Foundation Connects Over 100 Schools for Operation Caring Classroom**

Students across the country learn about life for military families.

WASHINGTON--([BUSINESS WIRE](#))--Each year, during the week of Veteran's Day, children in military families are recognized for their service to our country through the Armed Forces Foundation's (AFF) Operation Caring Classroom (OCC) program. Throughout the country, 50 military elementary schools and 50 civilian elementary schools were partnered with the goal of increasing support for military families and recognizing the sacrifices made by families when a loved one is deployed overseas. The program provides an opportunity for civilian students to enhance their understanding of military life and the hardships military families face. It then provides the tools students need to lend support to their peers. OCC has been designed not only to draw attention to the sacrifices made by our men and women in uniform on Veteran's Day, but to maintain awareness throughout the year. "This isn't about one day a year; it is something we need to focus on everyday," said Patricia Driscoll, Executive Director of the Armed Forces Foundation.

This year, OCC reached over 100 schools and as many as 50,000 students across the country. Each school received a school kit with all the materials necessary for the week's program. The students were given school supplies such as pencil pouches, pencils, erasers, and rulers as well as an American flag. They also received an activity book complete with crossword puzzles, word searches, and coloring activities. For teachers there was an activity guide with lesson plans catered towards either civilian or military students, depending on their school. At the request of the principals of the participating schools, speakers were provided by the Armed Forces Foundation to visit the schools and talk about the sacrifices made by the families of a service member when a loved one is deployed. One such speaker was Congressman Tom Petri, from Wisconsin's sixth district who spoke with students at Stangel Elementary School in Manitowoc, Wisconsin.

Ms. Driscoll started the program when she noticed a gap between students' understanding of the military and reality. "When we talked to the kids, we realized that they thought (soldiers) just blow things up and there is nothing but war all the time." Ms. Driscoll believes one of the most important aspects of the program is teaching students about volunteering to help our US service members at a young age. Dr. Donna E. Shalala will be making an appearance with Ms. Driscoll on Friday, Nov. 14, at North Beach Elementary School in Miami Beach, Florida to mark the occasion by helping the students perform some of the activities included in the OCC materials.

In 2001 the Armed Forces Foundation (AFF) was established under the U.S. Department of Defense's military support program. AFF offers vital assistance to active-duty and retired personnel, National Guard, Reserve Components and military families as they cope with difficult circumstances. The Armed Forces Foundation is dedicated to providing comfort and solace to members of the armed forces community through financial support, career counseling, housing assistance and recreational therapy programs. The Armed Forces Foundation has been recognized by the President of the United States, the Department of Defense, the Department of Veterans Affairs, the Department of Education and the Department of Energy for its dedication to America's Service Members. For more information on how you can help AFF carry out its mission visit [www.armedforcesfoundation.org](http://www.armedforcesfoundation.org).