

Helping Heroes for 125 Years

As SSAFA Forces Help approaches the end of its 125th Anniversary, our Christmas Appeal reminded people that our support is more crucial than ever before. The appeal, which appeared in national newspapers over the first two weeks of December, highlighted the scale and scope of our work and featured two very different servicemen helped by SSAFA.

The first was Andy Grant (22), a young Royal Marine who was badly injured in an IED explosion. Throughout the difficult weeks and months that followed, the Association was there for Andy and his family through our SSAFA Norton Homes. SSAFA also arranged for respite care to help Wally Harris (89), the second featured person, and his wife at a time of real need. The D-Day veteran is one of the 47,745 veterans and their families that we assisted last year.



Midnight March

Almost 200 people braved rain and mud to take part in the first SSAFA Midnight March on 29th October.

SSAFA supporters, clients, members of military families and servicemen themselves walked 12.5km (7 miles) to recognise the commitment and courage of those whose loved ones serve with the Armed Forces.

Kerry Harvey, wife of injured soldier Gavin, said: "It was such a brilliant night, I met so many inspirational people who all have heart warming stories to tell. These events remind me that I'm not alone, Armed Forces families are under a lot of pressure and it can be emotionally and financially difficult when something happens. I did it to show my support to SSAFA who provided me with a home from home where I could stay that allowed me to be with Gavin during his recovery."



Downing Street Reception

Prime Minister, David Cameron, hosted a special event at 10 Downing Street on Monday 29th November to mark our 125th anniversary. More than 100 guests were at the event, including members of the Armed Forces and veterans that have been helped by SSAFA, as well as volunteers and supporters of the Association. Speaking about the Armed Forces, David Cameron told those present: "We owe so much to those who serve on our behalf, and to those who suffer, who are often appallingly injured, and to those who don't come home at all." Talking about SSAFA, he continued: "It is extraordinary what you all do."



Remembrance

Families of those who had lost loved ones in recent conflicts lead SSAFA Forces Help's contingent at this year's Remembrance Parade past the Cenotaph in London. Chair of the Support Group for Bereaved Siblings, Ryan Thornton, was the wreath barer, marching in memory of his brother Lee Thornton who was killed in Iraq in 2006. This year 60 people represented the Association, the largest contingent in recent times.



AllStars Beat SSAFA Tri-Service Football Team

More than 1,000 people crowded into Leigh Sports Village to watch a celebrity team play a nail biting match against the tri-Service Station Football Team from RAF Shrawbury. The AllStars team included actors from *Coronation Street*, *Emmerdale* and *Hollyoaks* as well as the local MP, Alan Burnham. The game finished 2-2 with the AllStars clinching the title in penalties (3-2). Organised by Leigh Sports Village and Sainsbury's Leigh, the event raised more than £2,500 for SSAFA.



Milestones for Homes

SSAFA Norton Homes are on course to have supported 1,500 people by the end of 2010. The on-going conflict in Afghanistan means that more and more families are requiring accommodation while loved ones receive medical treatment at Selly Oak Birmingham and Headley Court Surrey.

Big Brew Up

More than 600 Big Brew Ups took place this October making it the biggest year for Brew Ups yet. Among them was a special Big Brew Up held at the British Embassy in Copenhagen, courtesy of Her Majesty's Ambassador Nick Archer. This year also saw one of the largest Big Brew Ups ever with 650 people taking part in a Brew Up at the Defence Academy Shrivenham raising £2,500.

Afghanistan Based Soldiers Go the Distance this Christmas

Eight soldiers based on Camp Bastion in Afghanistan are raising money for SSAFA and Combat Stress by rowing and cycling 5,575km on stationary machines, covering the distance from Afghanistan to Colchester. Setting off on 11th December, the team aims to arrive at their virtual destination in time for Christmas lunch on 25th December. The participants will take two weeks to achieve their goal, working 24 hours a day with an average pace of 16km per hour. Donations can be made at: <http://www.justgiving.com/Lee-Roberts1>

RFA Runner

The Royal Fleet Auxiliary are a resourceful lot. When RFA Argus did not dock in time for Surgeon Lieutenant Laura Skyrme to take part in the Great South Run in Portsmouth, she decided to do the run up and down the ship's flight deck. Despite 25 mph cross winds, she persuaded ten of the ship's company to join her, raising £300 and covering a total distance of some 80 miles.

Adoption 125

SSAFA's adoption team passed a milestone this summer when they facilitated the adoption of their 125th child during our 125th anniversary. www.ssafa.org.uk/adoption.html

Soldiers Scale

Himalayan Mountains
Sergeant Nikk Cabo and Sergeant Tom Stringer spent three weeks on the ultimate challenge, climbing from Everest Base Camp to Island Peak, raising £3,444. Both men served in Afghanistan, and are now planning their next expedition.

Alan Titchmarsh celebrates 125

TV gardening guru and author Alan Titchmarsh compèred a black-tie dinner celebrating SSAFA125 on the Isle of Wight. More than 200 people attended the event, which was held at Cowes Yacht Haven. The evening opened in spectacular style with drumming by members of the Corps of Drums, the Black Light Display.

Troops Writing Competition

Kingston University has organised a creative writing competition to mark SSAFA's 125th anniversary. Entrants can submit unpublished fiction or non-fiction prose or poetry on the theme of "service work and life". The closing date is 17th December and profits from the competition will go to SSAFA. To enter, and for full competition details, visit <http://fass.kingston.ac.uk/kup/competition/>

Ruby Runner

Roger Millray, a caseworker and fundraiser from Kendal, Cumbria, took his wife on a cruise on-board the Saga RUBY for their Ruby Wedding Anniversary, but on their actual anniversary he ran the London Marathon for SSAFA completing 168 laps of the ship. He organised everything single-handedly and raised £2,100.

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