

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Media Contact:

Sarah Ann Rhoades

703.548.0019

Srhoades@schmidtpa.com

**Children Donated Nearly 4 Tons of Candy to U.S. Soldiers Overseas
through Operation Troop Treats**

*The 7th Annual Operation Troop Treats, a Dentist-Driven Initiative Serving U.S. Service Members,
Also Included Community Drives Organized by Kids in Virginia Beach and Washington, D.C.*

Children and families across the country donated over 7,000 pounds of Halloween candy during the seventh annual Operation Troop Treats, the nation's largest dentist-sponsored Halloween candy exchange benefiting U.S. service members and their families.

Designed to promote good dental health while giving deployed U.S. troops a "sweet" reminder of gratitude from back home, dental offices across the country and [Operation Gratitude](#) partnered to develop Operation Troop Treats (OTT), which encourages children and families to exchange their Halloween candy for toys at participating dental offices nationwide.

The donated candy is shipped in care packages to U.S. troops deployed overseas via Operation Gratitude, a 501(c)(3) volunteer-based organization that produces and sends care packages to U.S. service members deployed in harm's way, their children, wounded heroes, veterans, new recruits and first responders.

"We are proud to give kids the opportunity to show their generosity and patriotism, while, at the same time, learning about good dental hygiene practices through Operation Troop Treats," said Adam Poole, DDS. "As we've seen time and time again over the last seven years, kids and their families love expressing their gratitude for the troops by donating candy for care packages. It is really moving to see the entire community come together every year for such a great cause."

The candy haul from this year's Operation Troop Treats came from dental offices in 14 states and the District of Columbia.

Along with thousands of individual donations, several children partnered with their local dental providers to organize their own community-wide candy collection drives as part of this year's Operation Troop Treats.

Lauren Fenty, age 12, lost her father in Afghanistan when she was only 28 days old. Inspired by his memory, three Halloweens ago Lauren went in search of a way to support the troops and

organized her first school-wide Halloween candy collection effort at John B. Dey Elementary School in Virginia Beach, Virginia. Now in middle school, Lauren continues to be involved in the Halloween candy exchange at the elementary school each year. This year, Lauren collected candy and worked with an OTT-participating dental office in Virginia Beach to send the candy to Operation Gratitude.

“Operation Gratitude’s mission is to thank all who serve, bridging the divide between grateful Americans and the Heroes who serve and protect them,” said Kevin Schmiegel, Lieutenant Colonel, USMC (Ret.) and CEO, Operation Gratitude. “The Halloween Candy Give-Back Program provides every American child the opportunity to learn about service, sacrifice and generosity.”

Since 2012, children and families have donated more than 19 tons of Halloween candy through Operation Troop Treats.

In addition to the Halloween candy, dental offices donated 200 dental kits and the funds to cover the assembly and shipment of 200 care packages to Operation Gratitude.

For more information about **Operation Troop Treats**, visit www.operationtrooptreats.com.

About Operation Gratitude

Operation Gratitude annually sends 200,000+ care packages to Veterans, First Responders, New Recruits, Wounded Heroes, their Care Givers, and to individually named U.S. Service Members deployed overseas and their families waiting at home. Each package is filled with food, entertainment, hygiene and hand-made items, as well as personal letters of support. Our mission is to lift the spirits and meet the evolving needs of the Military and First Responder communities, and provide volunteer opportunities for civilians anywhere in America to express their appreciation to all who serve our nation. Each package contains donated product valued between \$45 and \$100 and costs our organization \$15 to assemble and ship. Since its inception in 2003, Operation Gratitude volunteers have shipped more than 1.9 million care packages.