

MAY 15, 2025

Family

familymedia.com The Magazine For Military Families



READ TO SUCCEED

Volunteer non-profit Operation Paperback helps active-duty troops, veterans, wounded warriors, and military families experience the joys of reading via millions of books sent all over the world

Cover Story

By DONNA BOYLE SCHWARTZ

Read to Succeed

Volunteer non-profit Operation Paperback helps active-duty troops, veterans, wounded warriors, and military families experience the joys of reading via millions of books sent all over the world





Reading is often described as a “great escape,” and troops all across the globe have been the recipients of more than 3.5 million books delivered through a national non-profit organization, Operation Paperback.

Founded in 1999, the organization boasts a network of more than 19,000 volunteers from all 50 states who send an estimated 15,000 books each month to active-duty troops, veterans, hospitals, and veteran’s care facilities, as well as United Service Organizations (USO) centers at U.S. airport transit points. These volunteers pay for the postage to mail books to troops and veterans; the books are eligible for a special Media Mail rate through the U.S. Post Office, about a third of the cost of Priority Mail.

“We provide books!” enthuses Operation Paperback president and chief executive Chrissy Honeywell. “We provide mental and emotional escape to folks who are sometimes in very difficult circumstances, including deployed troops, housebound veterans, military personnel suffering from PTSD, etc. A book can be educational, a book can be comforting and inspiring, and a book can just mentally take you

away for a bit so that you can return to your life refreshed.

“Our goal is to support those who are serving – and who have served – in the military with reading material for escape and relaxation,” she explains. “We currently have 803 troops and veterans on our mailing list. In addition to sending individuals books to read, we also have supplied military book clubs with specific titles, we have provided professional reading list titles for our troops’ continuing education, and we have started unit libraries for both deployed and domestic units.”

Operation Paperback started as a family affair, Honeywell says: “Operation Paperback was started in 1999 by my father, Dan M Bowers. when my late husband CMS Rick Honeywell, U.S. Air Force, was deployed to Kuwait,” she recalls. “It was a new base in Kuwait, a ‘tent city,’ and I mentioned to my dad that Rick had said that there wasn’t much in the way of amenities there. Our spouses’ group sent over a care package of snacks and board games and decks of cards and books—and my dad asked me if they could use more books. In no time at all

there were 800 paperbacks in Kuwait and Rick’s guys were building bookshelves for them.

“I thought that would be the end of it, but my dad had bigger ideas,” Honeywell continues. “He asked if other units could use books too, and started asking neighbors and friends for paperbacks. He put stickers on the books – ‘Operation Paperback: Recycled Reading For The Troops’ – with his email address so that soldiers could write to him and ask for more books.

“Things have grown and evolved since 1999,” she adds. “Volunteers used to email my father if they had books to send, and he would send them an address from the list he had. Now, 25 years later, we have an interactive website where troops and veterans can sign up, and where volunteers can log in and specify what types of books they have to share, and the website will match them with someone needing books. Last year, more than 90,000 books were sent to troops and veterans, and the total number of books sent since 1999 is more than 3,567,625. About 10 to 15 years ago, we added military families

Dan Honeywell personally sent more than 111,000 books during his time heading the organization

and veterans to our mailing list, and since then there have been more veterans and families on our mailing list than troops."

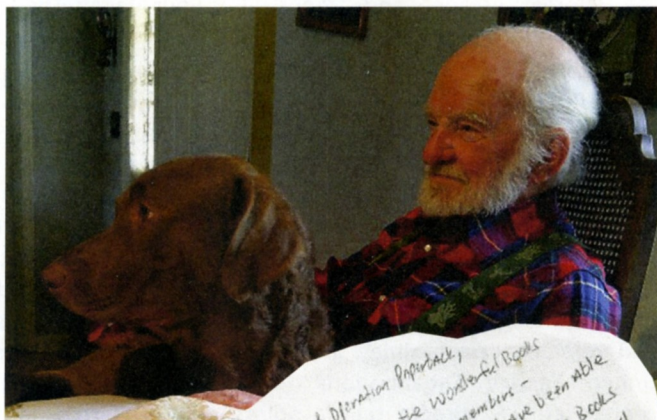
Honeywell said her late father personally sent more than 111,000 books during his time heading the organization, a total only surpassed by two other Operation Paperback volunteers. "He was a retired engineer, an avid reader, a dedicated fisherman, an animal lover, and a curious gardener," she notes. "He was a good man who did his best every day to take care of his family and to make a difference in the world when he could."

The entire organization initially relied on word of mouth among troops and their families, and today has active outreach on social media. "It's astonishing, really, to think about the growth of Operation Paperback, especially in the years before social media was up and running," Honeywell observes. "I credit those little stickers that my dad insisted we put on the books — because as the books were passed around and shared by deployed soldiers, folks knew who to ask for more books. Anyone in a military family, past or present, is welcome to request books."

Operation Paperback also provides books by request for special causes or circumstances. For example, the group provides books from military "professional reading lists" to support servicemember professional development goals; they supply military chaplains with a variety of specifically-requested titles to assist in counseling troops, both before redeployment and after reunification; and they offer children's books to deployed soldiers who read to their children via webcam or on DVDs.

Over the years, the organization has received commendations from the President of the United States, the governor of Maryland, the mayor of Baltimore, and the United States Junior Chamber of Commerce. "While we value the praise we have received at home, the words that mean the most to us are those that come directly from those we serve," Honeywell asserts. "They let us know that our efforts are appreciated every day. (See sidebar: In Their Own Words)

"I can't count the number of times our books have been called 'lifesavers' by our recipients," she adds. "From a small bookshelf in Kuwait in 1999—to more than 3.5 million books sent by 2025—the most rewarding thing is knowing that everyone can make a difference in someone's life. One book at a time." 🇺🇸



For more information or to request books, please visit the Operation Paperback website:
<https://operationpaperback.org>

In Their Own Words

Operation Paperback receives numerous thank you notes from deployed troops around the world:

"Thank you so much for taking the time to share books with us! I was able not only to achieve, but exceed my annual reading goal of 18 books, and managed to finish 25! Upped my goal for this year and already starting off strong! Thank you for your small kindness and know that your support is greatly appreciated. Being away from home, friends and family for so long can be tough, but reading has been such a nice way to maintain a routine and connect with others, even while apart." – **Alison S. (Saudi Arabia)**

"As an avid reader and self-proclaimed bibliophile; I'd like to thank Operation Paperback, their team, and sponsors. Life in the military can be challenging and having companies and people show their support in such generous ways is heartwarming. There are times during deployment when reading books are the one of the few activities available to you, so thank you for these gifts. It's an honor to serve, but appreciation does not go unnoticed."

– **Gabby C. (Germany)**

"I would like to send my sincere thank you for the beautiful books I received today and excited to start reading! We have a very small selection of books in English available in store so it's a bigger treat than I can express. Thank you for being you and dedicating to such a heartfelt cause."

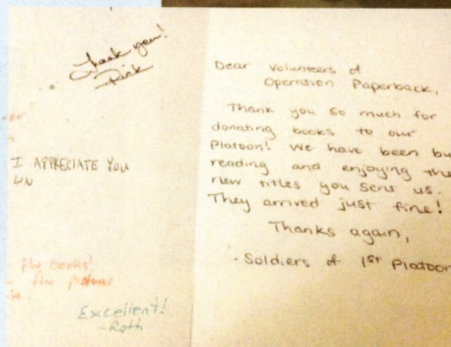
– **Carrie M. (Germany)**

"I want to thank you so very much for the wonderful books! Completely made my day! We are stationed in Germany and finding books is a challenge or very expensive. I'm also a hands-on book gal, not a fan of online reading! I can't wait to start reading!!! Love and much appreciated." – **Kristin M. (USA)**

"I really appreciate the books; I'm working in a secure facility and having physical books has made my days much more bearable on slow days." – **Clayton W. (Qatar)**

"Good afternoon. I would like to give everyone at Operation Paperback a huge thank you! The books you have been sending for our veterans have made a huge impact on them. Because of you, we are now able to open a small library in our facility where the veterans can take out books for recovery education, self-help, and casual reading. This means so much to them. The joy you have brought our veterans is incredible and all of us here at the Joseph House want to give you a huge thank you! Thank you so much and keep spreading this joy to more veterans." – **Brendan T. (USA)**

"I appreciate all the efforts put to send us books. Our



small community has a limited number of books and we are always looking for more books in English. Your efforts are helping fill a gap in our community. **THANK YOU!!!**

– **Roxanne Fontana (Norway)**

"Hello, I just wanted to say thank you for the box of books. There were quite a few good ones that seemed very interesting. My son picked one out of the box that pertained to science. We appreciate your support and kindness to military families. Warm regards." – **Alisha A. (USA)**

"Wow! I just learned about your organization and I'm blown away by everyone's kindness and generosity. It's been very lonely out here but happy to have found companionship with a book." – **Susana G. (Germany)**

"Hello! I just wanted to confirm that I received the shipment of books and to say thank you! It is very much appreciated. I am excited to have multiple books to choose from and expand my literary horizons. I will definitely be spreading the word about this amazing program. Thanks!" – **Francis P. (USA)**