

OPERATION OPEN ARMS WAS ESTABLISHED IN MAY 2005 AND HAS RECEIVED OVER 3200 E-MAILS ABOUT THE ORGANIZATION FROM ALL OVER THE COUNTRY AFTER A STORY WAS AIRED ON "THE TODAY SHOW" ON NBC AND OPERATION OPEN ARMS IS ANON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION THAT LITERALLY OPENS THE ARMS OF OUR COMMUNITY AND EXPRESSES GRATITUDE TO ACTIVE-DUTY AMERICAN SOLDIERS FIGHTING ON FOREIGN SOIL.

WHEREAS CAPTAIN JOHN BUNCH, THE FOUNDER OF OPERATION OPEN ARMS IS A CHARTER CAPTAIN OF GIDDY-UP FISHING CHARTER, IS AN OFFICER AND A PROUD RESIDENCE DEPARTMENT OF SAINT JAMES CITY.

ON JULY 4, 2007 CAPTAIN BUNCH ASA FISHING CHARTER CAPTAIN AND RETIRED MARINE CAME TO THE RESCUE OF A HEART ATTACK VICTIM AND HIS FAMILY AND ASSISTED THE MARINE PATROL, COAST GUARD AND LEE COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE IN THE RESCUE MISSION AND WHEREAS ON JANUARY 22, 2007, CAPTAIN JOHN BUNCH RECEIVED THE AL MILLS CITIZEN OF THE ISLAND AWARD FOR HIS CREATION OF OPERATION OPEN ARMS.

WHEREAS THE AL MILLS AWARD WAS THE THIRD RECOGNITION IN RECENT MONTH FOR CAPTAIN BUNCH AND OPERATION OPEN ARMS.

IN 2006 HE RECEIVED A DISTINCTION AWARD AT THE E AWARDS BY THE CONVENTION BUREAU AND WAS HONORED BY MARTINEZ AND RECEIVED A THREE-STAR CAPTAIN'S CAP WHICH MAY BE A PINE ISLAND FIRST.

WHEREAS CAPTAIN BUNCH ATTRIBUTES THE SUCCESS OF OPERATION OPEN ARMS AND THE CAUSE TO THE PEOPLE OF GREATER PINE ISLAND AND LEE COUNTY, WHEREAS OPERATION OPEN ARMS HAS MORE THAN 125 SPONSORS WHO OFFER GOODS AND SERVICES TO THESE BRAVE SOLDIERS AND WHEREAS JOHN BUNCH COULD NOT MAKE OPERATION OPEN ARMS SUCCESSFUL WITHOUT THE GUARDIAN ANGEL WHICH SHARES THE AWARD AND ALL OF THE VOLUNTEERS WHO BELIEVE STRONGLY IN THE ORGANIZATION.

WHEREAS OPERATION OPEN ARMS PROVIDES SOLDIERS ON LEAVE WHO HAVE ORDERS TO RETURN OVERSEAS WITH A PLACE OF RESPIRE FOR THEM AND THEIR FAMILIES.

WHEREAS OPERATION OPEN ARMS AND CAPTAIN BUNCH ACCEPT CONTRIBUTIONS AND GIFT CARDS TO DISTRIBUTE TO THE VISITING SOLDIERS THAT THEY CAN REDEEM AT LOCAL RESTAURANTS, NAIL, HAIR SALONS, MOVIE THEATERS, CLOTHING AND GIFT SHOPS, AMUSEMENT PARKS OR WHAT AN INDIVIDUAL BELIEVES MAY BE APPRECIATED BY A SOLDIER ON LEAVE.

WHEREAS OPERATION OPEN ARMS HAS DECLARED LEE COUNTY AS THE FRIENDLIEST MILITARY COMMUNITY IN THE UNITED STATES AND WITH GREAT HONOR WE RECOGNIZE CAPTAIN BUNCH AND ALL THE BUSINESSES AND INDIVIDUALS INVOLVED IN THE OPERATION OPEN ARMS ORGANIZATION AND SAY THANK YOU FOR YOUR UNSELFISH ACTS OF KINDNESS AND COMPASSION FOR OUR BRAVE SOLDIERS AND THEIR FAMILIES.

THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS LEE COUNTY DECLARE THE WEEK OF DECEMBER AS OPEN ARMS WEEK IN LEE COUNTY AND WE RECOGNIZE THIS IS A WEEK OF SPECIAL IMPORTANCE AND IS WORTHY OF RECOGNITION BY THE CITIZENS OF LEE COUNTY AND

THE RESOLUTION IS SIGNED BY THE CHAIR, COMMISSIONER RAY JUDAH.

[APPLAUSE] CAPTAIN, IF YOU COULD PLEASE COME UP WE'RE GOING TO TAKE A PICTURE THERE YOU GO I FEEL MUCH MORE COMFORTABLE DOING THE TV FISHING SHOW THAN SPEAKING IN FRONT OF THE COMMISSIONERS.

I KNOW YOU HEAR THIS ALL THE TIME.

THERE ARE PROBABLY 130 OR 140 SPONSORS THAT DESERVE TO BE SITTING NEXT TO ME, WALKING UP HERE AND GETTING THIS AWARD.

WITHOUT THEM, OPERATION OPEN ARMS AND THEM SAYING "YES", THIS GREAT PROGRAM WOULDN'T BE POSSIBLE.

I WANT EVERYBODY IN THIS ROOM TO IMAGINE SERVING IN IRAQ OR AFGHANISTAN, FLYING BACK HOME AFTER YOU HAVE MISSED YOUR FAMILY, AFTER YOU HAVE NOT SLEPT IN YOUR BED, AFTER YOU HAVE NOT SEEN YOUR DOG AND YOU FLY IN TO FORT MYERS, YOU GET A LIMO FROM THE AIRPORT TO YOUR HOME OR TO A HOTEL.

YOU GO EAT FREE.

THE LIMO'S FREE.

THE HOTELS ARE FREE.

IF YOU WANT TO GO FISHING, WE HAVE OVER 30 FISHING GUIDES TO TAKE YOU FISHING FREE.

IF YOU WANT TO GO SAILING, WE TAKE YOU SAILING FREE.

IF YOU WANT TO GO EAT FREE, GREAT SPONSORS LIKE THE FARMERS MARKET RESTAURANT, BILL VARNWELL, YOU CAN GO THERE AND EAT THREE MEALS FOR YOUR TWO OR THREE WEEKS OF LEAVE AND HE DOESN'T ALLOW ANYONE TO TIP WHICH IS AN AMAZING THING.

I NEVER DREAMED THAT STARTING THIS SMALL LITTLE PROGRAM ON PINE ISLAND FOR PINE ISLAND'S OWN, THAT THIS WOULD EXPAND NOT ONLY TO LEE COUNTY AND COLLIER COUNTY BUT NEXT YEAR PROBABLY CHARLOTTE COUNTY AS WELL.

95% OF THE PEOPLE THAT I HAVE ASKED TO BE IN OPERATION OPEN ARMS SPONSOR HAVE AGREED TO DO SO.

AND THESE PEOPLE DO THIS LIKE THE TARPIN LODGE, DIAMOND HEAD, ALL OF THE GREAT CAPTAINS.

WHEN A CAPTAIN GOES OUT THERE AND TAKES OUR TROOPS FISHING, THEY DO THAT AT THEIR OWN EXPENSE.

THEY GET TWO TO THREE MILES PER GALLON IN THEIR BOAT.

THEY TAKE THEIR TIME AND MISS A \$500 DAY.

I'M PROUD TO SAY THAT THIS IS THE ONLY PROGRAM THIS EXTENSIVE IN THE ENTIRE UNITED STATES.

I OWE IT TO THE PEOPLE OF LEE COUNTY, TO THE SUPPORT OF THE COMMISSIONERS AND PROBABLY THE RECOGNITION THAT CONGRESSMAN DIAZ-POLART, CONNIE MAC, SENATORMEL MARTINEZ, SENATOR JIM WEBB, A BUDDY OF MINE FROM THE MARINES AND CONGRESSMAN JOHN MERTHA WHO WAS IN THE MARINES AS WELL.

THEY HAVE ALL SUPPORTED THIS PROGRAM.

ONE THING I WANT TO MAKE CLEAR IS OPERATION OPEN ARMS IS VOID OF MONEY, VOID OF POLITICS AND VOID OF RELIGION.

I THINK THAT'S WHY EVERYONE GRAVITATES TO IT.

BECAUSE YOU DON'T HAVE TO SUPPORT THE WAR TO SUPPORT THE WARRIORS.

THAT'S WHAT IT'S ALL ABOUT.

I THANK YOU TODAY.

I WAS A LITTLE BIT NERVOUS.

I NEVER GET NERVOUS ON TV.

BUT THIS IS A DEFINING MOMENT AND A VALIDATION PROCESS FOR OPERATION OPEN ARMS.

I WANT YOU TO KNOW THAT AS LONG AS I HAVE ANYTHING TO DO WITH THIS, OPERATION OPEN ARMS WILL SOMEDAY PUT LEE COUNTY ON THE MAP AS THE MOST FRIENDLY COUNTY IN THE UNITED STATES FOR OUR VETERANS TO COME TO.

THANK YOU.

[APPLAUSE] CAPTAIN, WE SALUTE YOU.

YOU'RE VERY HUMBLE.

YOU HAVE PUT TOGETHER QUITE A PRODUCTIVE PROGRAM ON BEHALF OF THE MEN AND WOMEN OF THE ARMED SERVICES.

[INAUDIBLE] THANK YOU, SIR I'VE GOT TO RUN A FISHING CHARTER WISH WE WERE GOING WITH YOU TAKE CARE.

ARE THERE OTHER RESOLUTIONS I'M NOT AWARE OF THAT NEED TO BE AND SHOULD BE READ? NO? ALL SET THEN? THANK YOU VERY MUCH, COMMISSIONER HALL.