

For Immediate Release

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WATERTOWN BROKER RECEIVES \$2,500 GOOD NEIGHBOR AWARD

(Boston, MA)—Hundreds of U.S. soldiers serving overseas have received a special package from Greater Boston Association of Realtors® (GBAR) member Wendy Rocca, who received the 2009 Greater Boston Good Neighbor Award along with \$2,500. She is a Watertown resident and real estate broker with Century 21 Commonwealth in Watertown.

“We were thrilled, shocked and honored to receive this award. The generosity of the Greater Boston Real Estate Board has enabled us to ship many more "cheer boxes" than we thought possible,” said Rocca.

The Good Neighbor Award is modeled closely after that given by the National Association of Realtors® (NAR) and recognizes real estate professionals for their community activism. Recipients of the award have made an extraordinary commitment to improving the quality of life in their communities through volunteer work.

Rocca, a GBAR member since 1997, co-founded Operation American Soldier (OAS) with her husband John soon after the War on Terror began. While their daughter Tracy was deployed in Iraq in 2002 she asked that several items to be sent to her. Wendy asked if anyone else needed anything and that was the birth of OAS.

“We are fortunate to have a person like Wendy Rocca as part of our company. Wendy is passionate in her everyday business, if it is not helping buyers and sellers it is shipping to the soldiers all over the world. She has made a commitment to her fellow Realtors®, community, servicemen and women and her family,” said Jim Zarkadas, owner of Century 21 Commonwealth in Watertown. “Most people talk about doing something, Wendy is a great example of following through with her goals; whether it be business or community work; it is an honor to have her working in my office.”

Since 2002, OAS has shipped more than 1,000 care packages and over 19,000 pounds of food and supplies to 500 men and women serving overseas. The “Cheer Boxes” as they’re called, include a variety of items such as squirt guns, Frisbees, muffins, socks, cigars, coffee, garden seeds, DVDs, books, makeup, exercise equipment, food and much more. Each Cheer Box also contains a letter asking if that soldier knows of anyone not receiving support from home. The names and addresses have continued to pour in as well as hundreds of e-mails thanking Wendy and her husband for their kindness and dedication. The couple has gone that extra mile – spending \$14,000 in out-of-pocket money (mostly in postage fees) to ensure no soldier leaves mail call empty-handed.

“Our goal is simple: We will send packages and letters to as many soldiers as possible, for as long as we can. We will try to bring a little bit of cheer and maybe a smile to the brave men and women that serve in harms way,” said Wendy, whose three children are currently serving in the armed forces.

The Greater Boston Association of Realtors® is a private trade association with more than 5,500 Realtor® members who specialize in residential real estate in Eastern Massachusetts. GBAR is the largest of five divisions of the Greater Boston Real Estate Board (GBREB).

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Editors Note: For a high-resolution photo of Wendy and her husband receiving the award and check, please contact Christina Meehan.