

PRESS RELEASE: <DATE>

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<PHONE NUMBER>**

**NJ STATE ELKS “ARMY OF HOPE” HELPS FAMILIES OF NEW JERSEY
SOLDIERS KILLED OR SEVERELY WOUNDED IN THE IRAQ/AFGHANISTAN
CONFLICTS.**

Imagine the financial difficulties facing a young wife in New Jersey caring for two children who have just learned that her soldier husband has been killed while serving in Iraq or Afghanistan. Of course, some financial assistance will eventually be paid by the federal government but whom, in the first few months, is going to help pay the rent, utilities and food for the now fatherless family?

Last year, thirty seven out of a total of fifty two New Jersey families who lost a loved one serving in the Middle East were helped by the New Jersey Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks (BPOE) as part of their “Army of Hope” program. Funding for the Army of Hope comes from local Elks Lodges, throughout the state who, through their picnics and other fundraisers, raised over \$167,000 last year. We have also received support from corporate and community donations.

This year, the NJ Elks are having their Statewide “Army of Hope Picnic” fundraiser at the Old Bridge Elks Lodge on September 17th from 12 noon to 4pm. The Lodge is located at 67 Old Amboy Road in Old Bridge and the tickets may be purchased for \$20 per adult and \$5 for every child less than 10 years of age. The picnic will include hamburgers, hotdogs, sausage and peppers, soft drinks and beer. The ticket price covers all admission, food and entertainment. We will have a military band, drum and bugle corps and bagpipers playing patriotic and service related tunes. Tickets may also be purchased prior to the picnic by contacting your local Elks Lodge. We welcome all that would like to join us in a patriotic celebration and tribute to our troops and also honoring both our Fallen Heroes and Wounded Warriors. Bring your family and join ours in celebration.

This year the Army of Hope wants to expand its support program to include assistance to families of service men and women from New Jersey that has been critically wounded in these conflicts. “How will a wife or husband, mother or father be able to afford to fly on a few hour’s notice to a recovery hospital in Germany, for example, without some form of financial assistance?” asks NJ Elks Army of Hope Chairman Jim Hall. “This year we are hoping to substantially increase the funds raised to include these very real needs.”

The NJ Elks are also very appreciative of both private and corporate donations, which can be sent to: Michael Trieste at 38 Nautilus Drive, Leonardo, NJ, 07737. Checks should be made out to the **NJ State Elks Charities Inc.** The Army of Hope is assisted with the cooperation of the New Jersey Department of Military and Veterans Affairs in distributing your donations to our Heroes.