EPIC Honors the Role of Veterans in Charity’s History and Mission

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In his annual Proclamation ahead of Veterans Day, President Barack Obama declared: “On Veterans Day, we reflect on the immeasurable burdens borne by so few in the name of so many, and we rededicate ourselves to supporting those who have worn America’s uniform and the families who stand alongside them.”

Today, the Education for Peace in Iraq Center (EPIC) honors our nation’s veterans, including the men and women who served and sacrificed so much in Iraq, and salutes the veterans who are a part of our charity’s history and continuing mission.

In 1998, a U.S. Army veteran of the 1991 Gulf War, Erik Gustafson, founded EPIC to advocate for better humanitarian conditions for ordinary Iraqis who were suffering under crippling international sanctions and Saddam Hussein’s misrule. Over the years, the organization has attracted the support of fellow veterans who care about the future of Iraq. More recently, EPIC has welcomed opportunities to host and support veteran-led charitable initiatives that are making a real difference in the lives of displaced and vulnerable children and families in Iraq.

Under EPIC’s auspices in early 2014, U.S. combat veterans Zack Bazzi, Scott Quilty, and Patrick Hu launched TentEd, a rapid impact project to support the education of displaced and refugee children in camps located in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. The three men had served together in Iraq and they shared a belief in the importance of helping children fleeing violence continue their studies.

“When I got home, I signed out from Iraq, focusing instead on recovering and starting a family. But I knew one day that I would be drawn back. When I heard from Zack about the conditions in the camps, it seemed like the right time to re-engage in Iraq,” said Scott Quilty.

On December 2014, EPIC and three other veteran-led charity organizations launched Soccer Salam to deliver emergency humanitarian aid to families displaced by violence in Iraq. To date, all four organizations have assisted 2,250 families in need.

“We begin with the children. In them all nations find their hope and future. May God bless Iraq. May it never again suffer as it has these difficult years,” said Jonathan Webb, Chairman of the Board at the Iraqi Children Foundation.

What brings these veterans together is a common drive to give back to the people of Iraq. They recognize that their efforts are not only helping vulnerable populations in Iraq, but also serving our nation by fostering positive relations between Americans and Iraqis and between the United States and the region. For some veterans, it also helps to honor their fallen comrades.

“Partnering to help Iraq achieve a peaceful and bright future is our way of making sure the sacrifices made by so many thousands of American and Iraqi service-men, women, and families, don’t lose meaning,” said Sean Atkins, Director at Goals and Dreams Outreach Foundation.
After serving in the Army Reserves in Iraq, Rick Burns, the Founder and President of the Karadah Project International, believed he could use his experience in Iraq to create a lasting impact. “It is easy to look at crises around the world as distant, geopolitical events. But they are human events,” he said.

We want to share and applaud the hard work of these passionate and dedicated veterans, and the inspiring progress they have made through their hard work along the way.

For media inquiries or to arrange an interview with any of the veterans listed above, contact:
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