Press Release

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Fort Drum Public Affairs

Fort Drum volunteers step up to make big community impact

FORT DRUM, N.Y. -- Soldiers are often thanked for their military service, but many of them serve in other ways that also have a profound impact on the lives of others.

During a recent Volunteer of the Quarter ceremony at Fort Drum, three 10th Mountain Division (LI) service members were recognized for giving their time and effort to support a community event in Jefferson County.

Spc. Angel Hernandez, Pfc. Ferrone Malone, and Spc. Jaylen Royster volunteered to help with the Compassionate Care Foundation’s Bridge the Gap event in September.

Amberlee Clement said nearly 400 people attended the event and raised more than $107,000 for cancer care in the North Country. Clement is the Fort Drum Equal Employment Opportunity Disability Program manager, but she also serves in her community as board president for the Compassionate Care Foundation.

During the event, attendees walked more than a mile across the Thousand Islands Bridge to raise awareness and funds for complementary, integrative therapies for cancer patients.

“It was a big success, and it takes kind and loving hearts and hands to volunteer their time to support the community and a non-profit that helps enhance the lives of others,” Clement said. “These Soldiers’ generosity and willingness to assist us was truly inspiring.”

Royster said that Clement visited the Fort Drum Better Opportunities for Single Soldiers Center to promote her organization’s charitable endeavor, in the hopes of attracting a few volunteers.

“She only spoke briefly about it, but it was a very heartfelt speech,” said Royster, 10th Mountain Division Artillery BOSS representative. “After that, I knew I had to go help at the event.”

Royster said that anything he could do to support cancer patients, survivors, and caretakers was worth spending his personal time. It hit a little closer to home for Malone.

“This was meaningful to me because I have people in my family that were impacted by cancer,” he said. “My grandfather passed away from cancer, and my grandmother, who I never knew, passed away when my father was young. I feel that cancer is everybody’s fight, so I was happy for the chance to do this.”

Malone is set to deploy with his unit soon. Even with all the pre-deployment activities Soldiers must do before going overseas, he still wanted to dedicate some time to community service.

“I just like being around people and building community,” Malone said. “My family is in New York City, so I’m not spending much time there. And when Angel told me about this event, I said I’d like to go.”

They arrived early to help set up vendor stations, which they also disassembled at the end of the day. It was easy to blend in with the other volunteers until one of the organizers announced that three Fort Drum Soldiers were helping at the event.

“After we got the shout-out, people would ask us questions about the Army and if we were enjoying it,” said Hernandez, Fort Drum BOSS president. “And because a lot of our guys are deploying soon, like Malone, they wanted to know what that is like. It was a great experience talking with people all day.”

“Everybody was so appreciative, and it really felt great to get involved like this,” Royster added. “I don’t want to sound cheesy, but I typically spend every day just wanting to make somebody smile. If I can get people to laugh and smile, it’s a good day. And to be able to make that many people smile in one setting, that was a good feeling.”

Clement said the way they interacted with attendees was gratifying to see.

“From my perspective as a disability program manager, the critical part they played was ensuring everyone could participate,” she said. “They provided transportation via golf carts to and from the Thousand Islands Bridge for those who couldn’t make the walk independently.”

Monica Behan-Purcell, Compassionate Care Foundation director, attended the Volunteer of the Quarter event to extend her thanks to the Soldiers.

“When I first met Ferrone, Angel and Jaylen, we were in a lot of havoc organizing this event,” she said. “It was our inaugural event, and they just showed up with these bright, smiling faces, and this willingness and attitude that just made us feel like we got this.”

Hernandez has volunteered with the BOSS program since 2021 when he served as a battalion representative. Earlier this year, he was named brigade representative before assuming the duties of president.

“Community service is one of the pillars of the BOSS program, so volunteerism is extremely important to us,” Hernandez said. “The local communities give so much to us, so we should take every chance we have to give back and show our support. A Soldier’s most valuable asset is time, so I think it really means a lot to us when we can use some of our time to helping others.”

As much as the BOSS program does to provide Soldiers with life skills opportunities, social events, and recreational activities, Hernandez said he thinks the BOSS program’s reputation is built upon volunteerism.

Royster said the BOSS program is involved with the SPCA and Veterans Food Pantry in Watertown, and they also support events in the Fort Drum community such as American Red Cross blood drives.

“It’s a great energy, and everybody leaves happy,” he said. “I would encourage anyone to try volunteering just once to experience that feeling. It can really change you, enough to make you want to return and do it again.”

Malone said he has volunteered to help clean and care for the animals at the SPCA whenever BOSS organizes a trip.

“I have cats at home, and my mom has dogs, so I love animals,” he said. “I also volunteer to help out at the BOSS Center just because I’m so close with them.”

Originally from Brooklyn, Malone said he used to work with a volunteer ambulance service before enlisting in the Army.

“I enjoyed that because I like helping people,” he said.

BOSS volunteers will be back in action next week for the free Home for the Holidays Thanksgiving meal, from 1 to 4 p.m. Sept. 28 at The Peak. After that, BOSS members will help fellow Soldiers and family members find the perfect Christmas tree for their homes or barracks during the annual Trees for Troops event Dec. 6-7 in The Peak parking lot.

To learn more about the Fort Drum BOSS program, stop in the center on 5th Armored Division Drive, call (315) 772-7807 or visit [https://drum.armymwr.com/programs/boss](https://usg01.safelinks.protection.office365.us/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fdrum.armymwr.com%2Fprograms%2Fboss&data=05%7C02%7Clisa.r.albrecht.civ%40army.mil%7C23c6d94e84684fab6a6a08dd0b043f6f%7Cfae6d70f954b481192b60530d6f84c43%7C0%7C0%7C638678835085587726%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C0%7C%7C%7C&sdata=YRaLdoDzvlCg2CVQGedYfAtxY3Ts1yU65xoNNp20Ius%3D&reserved=0).

For volunteer opportunities and how to track hours through the Volunteer Management Information System, contact the Army Volunteer Corps program at (315) 772-2899, stop by the office inside the Family Resource Center on Mount Belvedere Boulevard or visit [https://home.army.mil/drum/about/Garrison/directorate-human-resources/soldier-and-family-readiness-division-sfrd/family-resource-center-frc/army-volunteer-corps](https://usg01.safelinks.protection.office365.us/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fhome.army.mil%2Fdrum%2Fabout%2FGarrison%2Fdirectorate-human-resources%2Fsoldier-and-family-readiness-division-sfrd%2Ffamily-resource-center-frc%2Farmy-volunteer-corps&data=05%7C02%7Clisa.r.albrecht.civ%40army.mil%7C23c6d94e84684fab6a6a08dd0b043f6f%7Cfae6d70f954b481192b60530d6f84c43%7C0%7C0%7C638678835085617362%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C0%7C%7C%7C&sdata=uGELhMb1zacChc8SNylhvBzA30gEgOSnvEu3SYAXa6c%3D&reserved=0).

*Editor’s Note: This article is part of a limited series on volunteerism, leading up to National Volunteer Appreciation Month in April.*

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Photo Captions-

Volunteers1: Spc. Angel Hernandez, Pfc. Ferrone Malone, and Spc. Jaylen Royster volunteered to help with the Compassionate Care Foundation’s Bridge the Gap event in September. They were recognized for their efforts during the Volunteer of the Quarter ceremony in The Peak ballroom Oct. 15. (Photo by Mike Strasser, Fort Drum Garrison Public Affairs)

Volunteers2: Fort Drum community members were recognized for their efforts during the Volunteer of the Quarter ceremony Nov. 15 at The Peak. Among the 28 nominees were Spc. Angel Hernandez and Pfc. Ferrone Malone, who volunteered to help with the Compassionate Care Foundation’s Bridge the Gap event in September. Absent from the ceremony was Spc. Jaylen Royster. (Photo by Glenn Wagner, Fort Drum Visual Information)