Valour-IT: PBS Takes Notice

Description

FbL sent out a link to Valour-IT, Milblogs Give Hundreds of Laptops to Wounded Soldiers at the PBS Mediashift website, highlighting Valour-IT.

Mark Glaser opens his post with this:

> As I sit here and type this blog post, I pause for a moment to consider how important my fingers and hands are to me as a blogger and writer. If I should be injured or lose the use of my hands in some awful accident, what would I do?
>
> That hypothetical situation is very real for some American soldiers serving in Iraq and Afghanistan, where body armor helps protect them from getting killed from the blasts of improvised explosive devices (IEDs) Ã¯Â¿Â½ but injuries to extremities are common. In the summer of 2005, when Army Captain Charles Ã¯Â¿Â½ChuckÃ¯Â¿Â½ Ziegenfuss, a military blogger, was severely injured by such an IED, he asked his blog audience to help him get voice-to-text software, Dragon Naturally Speaking, for his laptop.

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Take a few moments to read and consider the story, which I now know began in August, 2005, the â€œbrain childâ€• of two people, who connected via the Internet, several thousand miles apart physically, yet of one mind, and each had the puzzle pieces to get the Valour-IT program started.

Here we are, 15 months later, at least $350K in the books and 650+ units in place, headed towards 850 in place by Christmas this year, and funding for more as a result of this yearâ€™s fund drive. Hereâ€™s some insight from Markâ€™s article:

> Neither FbL or Ziegenfuss make any money themselves from the project, which has zero overhead and is completely volunteer-run Ã¯Â¿Â½ just like SoldierÃ¯Â¿Â½s Angels, which offers all sorts of services for wounded soldiers. FbL, who prefers to keep her real name out of the spotlight and off her blogs, told me how amazed she was by the power of the blogosphere to organize for a cause and come together virtually.

Throughout the year and in particular when there are big disasters, the common comment is â€œI want 100% of MY MONEY to go to the cause!â€• Well, guess whatâ€¦Valour-IT is that charity.

Also: Based on info in this article, it seems the checks are still being counted and the over the top number I reported about a week ago of $204K is not it. Itâ€™s headed to $230K for the drive. That will be $50K more thatn the goal. What a testament to the compassion of the people who came in contact with this program.

FbL hasnâ€™t settled on just laptops for our troops. The PBS article mentions her idea for Personal Digital Assistants for those suffering from traumatic brian injury (TBI):

> Beyond that, FbL imagines another program that would offer personal digital assistants (PDAs) for soldiers suffering from traumatic brain injuries (TBI). TBI is a common problem for soldiers in Iraq who have suffered brain damage from IED blasts. One of the common problems is short-term memory loss, and the PDAs could help injured soldiers remember their appointments, to-do lists and other minutiae lost in the haze during recovery.

And if you ever thought one person, or two, couldnâ€™t change things, Iâ€™d invite you to study the history of this 15 month old program, that has come from a twinkle in someoneâ€™s eye, to affecting the lives of hundreds and on itâ€™s way to helping thousands, and, Iâ€™d suggest, a model for collaboration efforts via the power of the Internet. Not only did it bring many military associated people together, but it also saw others from all walks of life and political backgrounds join in to do something special:

> Valour-IT is another result of average folks banding together online to make a difference, getting beyond petty politics and government bureacracy to get something done and do it right. ItÃ¯Â¿Â½s one of those classic holiday stories of people giving of their time, their money and even the bully-pulpit space of their blogs to help others in need.

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Like the proverbial snowball in the cartoon, rolling downhill and gathering girth and speed, Valour-IT is such a project, headed towards avalanche status.

If you can pitch in, your help is welcomed.

A special plea is for any knowledge of how FbL might be able to take this program to the next level and make it an endowment supported entitiy, rather than being supported through our online drives. Does anyone know how to do that?

> Meanwhile, FbL is looking for full-time work at a military non-profit in Southern California and is hoping that Valour-IT can become a fully funded endowment, so that online fundraising campaigns wonÃ¯Â¿Â½t be necessary. She says they are close to getting a large donation that could make that happen, and might make a deal with a computer hardware company that would donate refurbished computers or lower the cost below the $600 they usually pay per laptop.

Thanks for the support and please pass this info around!

Trackbacked at:
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