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A helping hand for our heroes

A fantastic festive donation has meant Christmas has come early for the Fife branch of a charity which helps our nation's heroes.

The donation of £10,000 from ExxonMobil's Fife Ethylene Plant at Mossmorran to SSAFA, the Armed Forces charity has already enabled the charity – which provides a range of assistance and support to serving and former members of the Armed Forces – to put on an eagerly-anticipated Christmas carol concert in Dunfermline's Glen Pavilion.

The fundraising concert, on December 1, featured carol singing, a performance by the Military Wives Choir and SSAFA Brass, the charity's band, and was well-attended, helping to raise SSAFA's profile locally.



Pictured L-R: George Givens – SSAFA Fife Branch Chairman; Robert Balfour – Lord-Lieutenant of Fife; Tom Antram – community liaison for FEP; Richard Barclay – process leader at FEP; and Allan Steele – Corporate and Special Events Officer.

In addition the donation will help the charity to continue its valued work in many areas, including just some of the following:

- Providing disability equipment
- Buying household goods
- Short breaks for families with a disability
- Supporting financial problems
- Household repairs and adaptations
- Providing funding for equipment and/or books required for school
- Buying school uniform
- Providing financial support for school trips where the trip forms part of the educational curriculum
- Providing food vouchers and heating support

“The work SSAFA does is very varied, and the first step in the process is sending one of our caseworkers out to speak with the person or family needing the help to ascertain just how we can provide support,” explained Allan Steele, Corporate and Special Events Officer with SSAFA.

“For the past two years, during lockdown we ran a recruitment campaign to take on more caseworkers so we can reach out to more people.

“The need is increasing, particularly in the current economic climate, and people who were scraping by before are now really struggling.

“This money will help train up our new caseworkers to go out and see clients to ensure they are getting the help they need.”

George Givens, chairman of the Fife Branch of SSAFA added: “All of us at SSAFA in Fife are very grateful for the generosity shown by ExxonMobil to our veterans, those still serving, and their families.

“The support given by donors, whether large corporations or individuals, means that SSAFA can carry on doing the work it has for nearly 138 years in times of peace and in times of conflict, so, on behalf of everyone at SSAFA – volunteers, staff, but most importantly our beneficiaries – thank you.”

Gary Beckingham, Site Safety Advisor at Fife Ethylene Plant, said: “As a former serving member of His Majesty’s Royal Marines, I am extremely proud and touched to hear of the donation that the site has made to SSAFA. I know it will make a positive difference.

“I remember how difficult I found it when I transitioned into ‘Civvy Street’ over 20 years ago – nearly re-joining on three separate occasions. Fortunately I found a path and eventually made a successful transition into civilian life. I know others are not so fortunate.

"I am now the proud father of one son serving in the Army and another awaiting his joining date for the Royal Marines. It is comforting to think that, if needed, an organisation like SSAFA exists to offer support in times of need.

"The donation is very timely, SSAFA support is needed now more than ever due to the emotional and financial stress of the cost of living crisis."

Rich Barclay, a Process Team Leader at FEP, added: "I was fortunate to serve in the RAF for over 12 years where I saw first-hand the work the wonderful people of SSAFA carry out.

"I remember the pain one of my closest friends went through when they needed help with one of their children. SSAFA helped them with much needed guidance and advice both during and post service helping them get suitable accommodation for their family and also helping out financially with some of the funding needed to adapt the household.

"The sense of family and belonging the forces give you can be daunting when you leave and SSAFA help ensure you retain that belonging.

"Knowing ExxonMobil have helped a charity close to my heart in such a positive way makes me proud of working for a company that also values these principles."