



**The Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and
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Military charity marks 125 years of service to troops

Forces sweetheart Nell McAndrew and Chelsea Pensioners help

SSAFA Forces Help launch a year of anniversary celebrations

Forces sweetheart Nell McAndrew helped **The Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen & Families Association (SSAFA) – Forces Help** launch SSAFA 125, a year of 125th anniversary celebrations at The Royal Hospital in Chelsea today (February 9th).

Nell, who is an active supporter of SSAFA Forces Help, was joined by Chelsea Pensioners and a timeline of troops representing the military charity's remarkable 125-year history of supporting servicemen and women and their families.

The people in the timeline represented the Red Coats of the 1885 British Army and those who fought in the Boer War, the First World War and the Second World War, a testament to the charity's ability to adapt and evolve to meet the changing needs of Britain's Armed Forces over three centuries.

Nell, who took part in the SSAFA Forces Help skydive last year, said: "I am a passionate supporter of our Armed Forces and I'm really proud to help SSAFA Forces Help celebrate such a milestone anniversary today.

"What's so special about SSAFA is the fact that they will be there for our servicemen and women and their families for the rest of their lives. They provide a huge amount of support to those who are out in Afghanistan fighting

now and their loved ones. But equally those who served their country more than 70 years ago in the Second World War or those who fought in the Falklands know that they can also rely on SSAFA in times of need.”

SSAFA has been supporting members of the Armed Forces and their families over the course of three centuries. The Association was founded by Major Sir James Gildea to support the wives and families of the Second Expeditionary Force when it set sail for Egypt in February 1885. 125 years later and SSAFA has 800 staff, based wherever the British Forces are around the world, and 7,000 trained volunteers.

SSAFA recently opened two ‘homes from home’ for the families of service personnel with serious and life-threatening injuries. The SSAFA Norton Homes, which are near to the main military treatment centres at Selly Oak, Birmingham, and Headley Court, Surrey, allow families to stay near to their loved ones when they need them most. So far more than 800 mums, dads, partners, children, grandparents, aunts, uncles, brothers and sisters have stayed at the homes.

The Association also runs Family Support Groups for those dealing with loss, or serious injury to a loved one who is serving in the Armed Forces. The groups give relatives the opportunity to share information and advice and offer mutual support to people who have been through similar experiences.

Major General Andrew Cumming, SSAFA Forces Help chief executive, said: “2010 is going to be a really special year for SSAFA Forces Help and we hope many of our friends and supporters will get involved and help us celebrate SSAFA 125.

“We are very proud of our life-long commitment to our servicemen and women. As our Armed Forces, once again, face difficult and challenging times SSAFA’s work is more important than ever before and it is vital that our troops know they can rely on us to provide direct practical support when they and their families need it.”

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Editor's Notes

SSAFA 125

SSAFA 125 will see a year of events around the world as SSAFA celebrates its volunteers, clients and staff. On Saturday, February 13th, the charity will hold its first ever National Collection Day in towns and cities around the country and on Thursday, February 18th, a special Service of Celebration takes place at Westminster Abbey.

SSAFA Forces Help aims to raise £1.25million in its anniversary year and its Target 125 fundraising drive asks supporters to raise £125 each. The year will also see the Big SSAFA Quiz in May and the Big Birthday Brew Up in October.

To find out more about the SSAFA 125 anniversary celebrations or to sign up for the Target 125 fundraising campaign visit www.ssafa125.org.uk

SSAFA Forces Help

The Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Families Association (SSAFA) Forces Help is the leading national charity committed to helping and supporting those who serve in our Armed Forces, those who used to serve, and the families of both. We provide a reliable, caring and trusted service to more than 50,000 people each year.

Our professionally trained staff and network of 7,000 volunteers provide practical and financial assistance, emotional support and a wide range of services to ensure that SSAFA Forces Help makes a real difference whenever anybody turns to us for help.

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