

PRESS RELEASE

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Community steps up for co-op's annual USO drive

For 16 years, Firelands Electric Cooperative has partnered with local radio stations [WLKR-FM](#) and [K96-FM](#) to collect donations for USO Ohio's Step Up for Soldiers. According to the co-op's Communications and Member Relations Specialist Tracy Gibb, the number of contributions was impressive this year. "The generosity of our members and the community was overwhelming," says Gibb. "They really took it to the next level this year."

From Nov. 13 through Dec. 15, members of Firelands Electric and the communities they serve dropped off hygiene essentials and nonperishable snack items at the co-op's office in New London. Some of the donated items included razors, deodorant, toothpaste, shampoo, playing cards, chewing gum, hard candy, beef jerky, trail mix, and crackers. WLKR/K96-FM picked the items up at the conclusion of the drive and will deliver them to USO Ohio to be included in care packages for military personnel stationed overseas, as well as those returning from deployment.

Firelands Electric's successful 2023 drive also received help from several organizations. Aimee Lloyd of South Central Schools has collected care package items for the co-op since 2018 by organizing a drive at the school. She became involved because her son was a member of the Ohio National Guard. This year, South Central Teen Leadership Corps members Kaylee Oehrli and Devon Muirhead also designed a "Passion Project" to support the school's efforts.

The fifth-grade classes at New London Schools also collected items for USO Ohio as a service project. Collection boxes were set up throughout the school and all students and staff were encouraged to help support their cause. In addition, the management team at Polaris Fashion Place in Columbus also made a generous contribution. Polaris General Manager Tamra Bower also happens to be a Firelands Electric member. After seeing the USO article in *Ohio Cooperative Living*, she and the Polaris team contacted the co-op about participating in the 2023 drive.

The USO supports military families through more than 250 locations nationwide. The organization serves Active Duty, Guard, and Reserve members in all branches of the military. USO Ohio is a non-profit organization which relies solely on the kindness of the citizens, organizations, and corporations throughout the state and receives no government funding. Visit the USO Ohio website (<https://ohio.uso.org>) to learn more or to make a tax-deductible monetary donation. Additional photos from this year's drive are also available at www.flickr.com/photos/firelandsec/albums.

"It's always an honor to partner with WLKR and K96 for this great cause," says Gibb, "and the co-op hopes that next year's drive will be even bigger."

Firelands Electric, A Touchstone Energy Cooperative, is a member-owned, not-for-profit electric cooperative providing service to approximately 9,100 homes and businesses in rural areas of Ashland, Huron, Lorain, and Richland counties.

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PHOTO CAPTION: WLKR/WKFM Executive Marketing Specialist Lexi Sarrica loads the station's van with donations from Firelands Electric Cooperative's recent USO Ohio Step Up for Soldiers drive. In their 16th year as a collection point for the drive, the co-op had one of its biggest donations ever.



PHOTO CAPTION: The fifth-grade classes at New London Local Schools recently collected donations to contribute to Firelands Electric Cooperative's USO Ohio drive as part of a service project.

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