

# VFW Free Call Days 'Truly a Blessing'

## Operation Uplink provides more than 54,088 free connections on Labor Day.

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This past Labor Day, 54,088 connections were made from deployed military personnel to the United States during a 24-hour **VFW Operation Uplink™** “Free Call Day” (FCD). At least once a month, Operation Uplink hosts a Free Call Day for service members serving in Iraq, Afghanistan, Kuwait, and hospitalized veterans, giving them the opportunity to call their loved ones in the States at no cost.

Connie Lynch, wife of Patrick Lynch, who is stationed in Afghanistan, is always very grateful for the Operation Uplink Free Call Days. While some soldiers take the plunge and purchase local cell phones, the rates are generally very costly and the reception, spotty, so giving the soldiers the option to call the U.S. for free for an entire day is something most cherish.

“It's so wonderful to be able to talk to my husband for as long as he's able to without worrying about how much it's going to cost us! He's also able to talk to his parents more, which I know they appreciate,” said Lynch.

Free Call Days are available at more than 800 MWR internet cafes using SPAWAR. Soldiers use their regular SPAWAR prepaid PIN number and use regular dialing procedures, if they don't have a PIN, on the day of the FCD, the café manager can issue them one. A sponsor message greets them before the call is placed to inform them that the call is at no charge and they are free to talk for as long as they are able.

When service members have to pay for their own calls home, they usually only can afford to talk for 10-15 minutes. But with the help of Operation Uplink's FCD, Patrick is able to call home without worrying about how much the call will cost.

“Every single phone call is a precious thing, and when it's been a week and a half or two weeks since I last heard his voice, I hold onto every second I can get! I cannot express enough appreciation to everyone who makes these calls possible; they truly are a blessing,” concluded Lynch.

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