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### **Good News for James A. Haley VA Spinal Cord Injury Patients and Families!**

*AFFF/USO Tampa Bay/Taco Bell donation will provide a new USO Day Room located within the hospital*

**Tampa, FL** – Military patients receiving care in the Michael Bilirakis Department of Veterans Affairs Spinal Cord Injury Center in the James A. Haley VA Hospital have something to look forward to during their typically extended stays. A brand new *USO Day Room* will soon be open for use! The Armed Forces Families Foundation (AFFF) has donated over \$30,000 to outfit the center serving our military. Funds for the donation were raised in local Taco Bell restaurants during their annual “Freedom Bells” fundraiser in an effort to help serve those who serve us. Working in conjunction with the AFFF and Taco Bell, the USO World Headquarters donated an additional \$25,000 to complete this outstanding project. The Tampa Kiwanis donated \$2,500 for the children’s area.

**An initial VIP Only Ceremony will be held to commemorate the opening of the Day Room. The soft open will be held on September 25, 2013 at 1:00pm. All local media is invited to attend this memorable event.**

The Grand Opening of the Day Room will occur at a later date in January when the project has been fully completed. Walter Lamerton, Chair Board of Directors for USO Tampa Bay said, “This enhances the USO Warrior and Family Care mission of *Always by their Side* to lift their spirits. The Armed Forces Families Foundation (AFFF) continues to support many USO projects throughout the southeast of the United States. We are extremely grateful for this great partnership.”

Many of the Spinal Cord Injury patients are long-term residents undergoing a very grueling rehabilitation process. With this in mind, the Director of the James A. Haley VA Hospital identified the serious need for a comfortable space for patients and families or loved ones to meet. Presently patients had only their inpatient rooms with families placing blankets on the floor of the inpatient room to provide a space for children to play.

The new *USO Day Room* is a full 1,900 square foot space fully equipped with everything to make for a both a recreational and relaxing space with a “family feel”. The center will include televisions, children’s toys, games, pool table, air-hockey table, furniture, and a fire place. Additionally, the space will include Florida-themed artwork making an atmosphere of leisure and respite.

The Armed Forces Families Foundation (AFFF), in conjunction with participating Taco Bell restaurants, has completed numerous projects for military and their families all across the Southeast. Their most recent Fundraiser in December led them over the ONE MILLION DOLLAR MARK! 100% of every dollar donated goes toward projects to help those who protect us. For more information, please visit the following Web site:  
<http://www.armedforcesfamilies.org/>

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