

**For Immediate Release**

April 4, 2003

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**Heritage Trusts Assists With Repatriation**

**By: Robin Kohl**

On March 21<sup>st</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1300 people, a good portion of whom were children, and 30 pets fled Turkey and entered the United States through Charleston, SC. From Charleston, they would go to other destinations within the United States. These people and their pets came in on five flights. The planes were commercial jets chartered by the United States. According to Major Linda Pepin, Base spokesperson for the Charleston Air Force Base, most of these people were military dependents. Some were civilian Department of Defense schoolteachers and a few were contract employees. All were fleeing Turkey due to the Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Pepin said that about 750 people volunteered to help these folks. The volunteers were from the Charleston Air Force Base, The Lowcountry Chapter of the American Red Cross, Heritage Trust Federal Credit Union and several other agencies.

There were many services provided. Each of the 30 pets had to be checked out by a veterinarian. There was a great deal of food provided by the Red Cross. The Red Cross also made sure that each child received a Teddy Bear. Volunteers helped with childcare and baggage handling. SunCom provided phones so that the families could call back to Turkey, and call forward to the final destination, at no charge. Medical personnel were on hand for any possible medical needs and Chaplains helped those with spiritual needs.

Volunteer ticket agents also aided the passengers in their travel plans from Charleston to other cities. According to Major Pepin, Delta Airlines added flights so that the travelers could reach their final destinations more quickly. Continental Airlines was also very helpful in making flight arrangements. Many had to wait several days for a flight, and the Red Cross helped them with local accommodations.

Four Heritage Trust employees, Holly May, Velvet Walker, Judy Robinson and Desiree Proudfit helped with preparing well over 1100 sandwiches. The incoming passengers greatly appreciated the meals that were provided for them.

Many of the military dependents received an advance on their per diem. Instead of carrying a great deal of cash with them, they were given the option of Travelers Cheques. Because of the close ties that Heritage Trust has with the Charleston Air Force Base, Base authorities contacted the Heritage Trust Business Development

Director, Tina Doscher, and asked if the credit union could provide the Travelers Cheque service. Six Heritage Trust employees worked in shifts, virtually around-the-clock, to provide this free service. District Manager, Chuck Hiers, headed the project. Those that helped at the airport were Tina Doscher, Chuck Hiers, Brenda Dugan, Velvet Walker, Bonnie Dordal and Robin Kohl.

Major Pepin said that it was “very helpful to people coming through the line to have the option of Travelers Cheques versus cash. We’re grateful to Heritage Trust for volunteering that service.”

Heritage Trust began serving members in 1955 as Charleston Air Base Federal Credit Union. It was originally chartered to serve the Base’s civilian employees and their families. The charter was amended two years later to include military personnel and family members.



Seated L-R: Velvet Walker and Tina Doscher. Standing L-R: Holly May, Bonnie Dordal, Chuck Hiers, Desiree Proudfit, Robin Kohl, and Judy Robinson. Brenda Dugan not shown.

Attached to e-mail is .TIF CMYK image for printing.