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Love's reunion

GIVING BACK TO THOSE WHO DEFEND OUR COUNTRY

Sometimes charity finds you. PPA member Angela Beene operates ABC Photography in Edmond, Okla. One day last November, a photographer from Texas called to ask if she'd be interested in doing a photo shoot for Operation: Love ReUnited.

The photographer had found Beene through an online search and he liked her work. A Love ReUnited photographer himself, he'd been asked to do one of the organization's photo sessions for a family in Oklahoma, but they lived too far away. Would Beene be

interested in taking them on, he asked.

Before answering, Beene did some quick research on Operation: Love ReUnited, a.k.a. OpLove. She learned that the organization supports United States military families by providing family portrait sessions with patriotic themes. The sessions focus on soldiers and sailors just before they're deployed, and more important, when they return to their families. Participating photographers waive all fees, and provide a 4x6 album of images to the servicemen and

women at no charge.

Initiated in September 2006 by Tonce Lawrence of Denver, Colo., OpLove is a growing network of photographers who are eager to volunteer their time and talent. They also do sessions with families in the absence of the serviceman. The goal of the sessions is to document their special time with loved ones, and provide the images to help sustain the morale of the servicemember while he or she is overseas. Having a photographer capture the reunion frees the family to fully enjoy and remember the moment without worrying about taking photographs.

Impressed by the OpLove's motto, "giving back to those who want nothing more than to come home," Beene said yes. Immediately inspired, she got more involved with the organization, the perfect charity for her. It focuses on a special group of people who get little attention from photographic charities, and the families are appreciative.

Most important, OpLove allows Beene to say thank you to the men and women who serve this country. "The members of the military sacrifice an incredible amount," she says. "Before that first shoot, I read some testimonials of how emotionally overwhelming it was to do one of these sessions. It truly is a humbling experience. You walk away with such grateful feelings toward these people whom you've never met before. You just want to help them out." ■

—Jeff Kent

For more information on Operation: Love ReUnited, or to sign up for its network of photographers, visit www.oplove.org.

Share your good works experience with us by e-mailing Cameron Bishopp at cbishopp@ppa.com