

GREENCARE FOR TROOPS

WHEN THE BREADWINNER'S AWAY ON DUTY



Who do military families turn to for help when a spouse is called up for a second and even a third tour of duty? GreenCare for Troops, a nationwide program that connects lawn and landscape companies with families whose major breadwinner is serving in the Middle East, is one alternative. Over the last couple of years, Poynter Landscape & Construction in Ballwin, Missouri, has participated in this Project EverGreen initiative and has lent a helping hand to 12 military families in the St. Louis area.

"Military and National Guard personnel are being deployed in record numbers," explains company president Richard Poynter. "When a loved one is assigned overseas, military spouses often operate as a single-parent family with a lot on their plate. Even if yard work is something they enjoy, they no longer have the time to do it.

"We became involved to ease the stress associated with doing lawn and landscape maintenance and to assure family members that their properties and yards won't deteriorate just because a loved one is serving his or her country."

Good fit

Because he has a brother who served in Iraq, Poynter says he understands what families go through when duty calls. "There's only so much time in a day. Families operate under enough stress not knowing what's going on with their loved ones, not to mention having more work to do at home, too. Over the last year or so, our crews have mulched garden beds, planted flowers, cleaned up beds, and put down fertilizer. One military wife even asked us to finish chopping and stacking firewood, a task her husband always accomplished before winter set in.

"When a family calls, we find out where their needs are, and if we can accommodate them, we will. If it's a service we don't provide, we will help find a company that offers that service."

The irony, adds Poynter, is that the military mentality is to be self-sufficient and avoid complaining. "Families try to take care of one another and almost always never ask for help. With most of the families our company helped, we found out about their needs through friends or



neighbors who made the initial contact with us."

Poynter notes that participating in GreenCare for Troops was a good fit for his company. It was a way to give back to the community and, he emphasizes, his employees truly enjoyed helping out. "As long as our servicemen are wearing 50 pounds of equipment, camping out in the desert in 150-degree heat, and getting shot at — all the while protecting us and serving our country — the least we can do is take care of their families by pulling their weeds, edging their grass, and trimming their trees and shrubs."

For anyone interested in learning more about GreenCare for Troops, contact Richard Poynter at (636) 256-2600, or visit the Project EverGreen Web site at projectevergreen.com.

For their work with GreenCare for Troops, Poynter Landscape & Construction received a PLANET Community Service Recognition Award.