



**“ONLY TWO
DEFINING FORCES
HAVE EVER OFFERED
TO DIE FOR YOU—
JESUS CHRIST AND
THE AMERICAN
SOLDIER. ONE DIED
FOR YOUR SOUL, THE
OTHER DIED FOR
YOUR FREEDOM.”**

-UNKNOWN

Carol Pingelski Hotaling

The Yellow Ribbon Lady

By Jenna Caputo

Photos By Angela Mia Photography & Contributed By Carol Pingelski Hotaling

Scott Hummel, Marine in Dessert Storm with Carol (Operation Mustard Seed)

Carol Pingelski Hotaling grew up as one of three kids right here in Halfmoon, NY. She has been a lifelong learner, always wanting to know how things work and to be involved in every aspect of what she's doing. As a child, she was a Girl Scout and knew from an early age that she wanted to help people and make a lasting difference in the world someday. She just wasn't sure how yet.

While attending Shenendehowa High School, she took a job as a cashier and head of the candy department at Grants store. Her aunt introduced her to Paul Hotaling, a local mechanic, and their story became history as they married and had two children, Paul and Diane.

After Grants, Carol had taken a job at Cluett Peabody, an Arrow shirt manufacturer in Troy, NY. Carol enjoyed taking the newly pressed garments and folding and pinning them in place with the cardboard and tissue paper. Paid by the piece, she tried to do more each day than the last, and was able to complete 58 dozen shirts a day! Carol eventually took a job at the New York State Senate,



working with the mail. Hundreds of letters would go by on a conveyor belt and it was her job to read each zip code and sort them into the right group and rubber band them together as fast as she could. She's had other jobs in the meantime, but one thing shone through loud and clear—

she certainly had a knack for doing large-scale projects in an efficient manner!

Making yellow ribbons seemed like a natural transition. She began in 1990 during Desert Storm, tying the soft, fluffy bows up around town to honor our troops fighting overseas. In 2004, her sister, who lives in Ohio, told her about Matt Maupin, the first prisoner of war captured in Iraq on April 9, 2004. Although his captors had released a video, his remains were not found until four years later. Carol wanted to speak with Matt's parents, so her sister sent her the phone number, and Carol found out the Maupins had founded the Yellow Ribbon Support Center to help current troops. In 2006, Carol flew to Cincinnati to volunteer at the Center for six weeks. They were holding their first fundraising banquet that year at the Oasis Country Club in Loveland, OH, so Carol made hundreds of bows for the banquet.

The trip sparked something in her. When she got back home, Carol was determined



Colonel Jamie Green and Carol



to do more than just make bows and assist in fundraisers for our troops. She decided to start the NYS Yellow Ribbon Day, making April 9th a day of remembrance to honor the service and sacrifice of our troops and to thank their families they left

behind. Carol wants to be sure that people always remember all our troops. Now that the day is official in New York State, Carol is determined to have it recognized at a national level too. It has passed through the NYS Senate and NYS Assembly, and

they are now waiting on Congress to pass it for every state so our current troops can have a day of their own.

Her work has not gone unnoticed. Last year, State Senator James Tedisco chose her for the Woman of Distinction honor. “Carol Pingelski Hotaling is a tremendous patriot and has been a fierce and tireless advocate for our active-duty service men and women,” Tedisco stated. “Although Carol has always desired to put the needs of our troops first and foremost and avoid the spotlight, it’s time our state takes a moment to thank and recognize her love of country and steadfast support for the best, brightest, and most compassionate fighting force for good on Earth—the men and women of the US Military.”

New York State’s Yellow Ribbon Day started at the Saratoga Wilton Elks club and is now commemorated every year in Carol’s hometown of Halfmoon at the Halfmoon Town Hall with a large ceremony. In preparation for the day, the Blue Star Mothers are collecting snacks and hygiene items until April 7th. These items will be placed in their Freedom Boxes, which are sent to our troops overseas. The collection boxes are currently available at every motor vehicle, town clerk, and Hannaford in Saratoga County. A year-round collection box is available at the Town of Halfmoon office. The April 9th celebration will begin at 11am at the Veterans Memorial on Rt. 236 in Halfmoon. This year’s keynote speaker is from the Division of Military and Naval Affairs.

While April 9th is an important day to celebrate, Carol wants to make sure our troops are remembered all throughout the year as well. With help from the



Parade for Soldiers in Dessert Storm, 1990



June Izzy Bailey, Matt Maupin’s Mom Caroline, Matt’s Brother Micah, Matt’s Dad Keith

Ballston Spa VFW Post 358, she makes and distributes thousands of ribbons throughout New York State as well as for other states, too. In the past, Carol has visited the airports to present yellow ribbons to our returning service members, and she makes sure her ribbons are always present for patriotic parades, homecomings, and as memorials at the funerals of those who have served.

Carol has volunteered her time with many organizations including the NYS Trooper Foundation, After-the-Fire, her neighborhood watch, Adopt-a-Street, the Women's Aglow Fellowship, and the Halfmoon Herald, among others. Along with her sister and brother, she bought a bench for the Clifton Park/Halfmoon firehouse to commemorate their parents and a handful of volunteers who founded the firehouse in 1937.

Besides the Woman of Distinction award, Carol has also received numerous other awards for her efforts, locally as well as nationally, including the National Guard Community Purple Award for her service to both the Guard members overseas and to their families at home, not to mention receiving the key to the Town of Clifton Park, among other awards as well. The Town of Halfmoon also erected a bench in her honor for her work as the

Yellow Ribbon Lady. The bench has a plaque and a picture of a yellow ribbon to commemorate. But her work is not over. In addition to her fight to make Yellow Ribbon Day national, she recently has contacted Governor Hochul's office to have the capital adorned in yellow lights for the month of April. City Hall in Albany already has a yellow ribbon, and she's hoping other towns in the Capital District will follow suit.

Carol loves being known as the Yellow Ribbon Lady. She always wanted to do good in the world and to make a difference, and she's proud to have served in some way. She will not stop working as a support for our troops and their families. "We have to make sure it's all about current troops because that's what it's all about. They don't have a day of their own, so that's what I'm fighting for," she says. "That was our number one priority in this world before this virus—the troops. They're out there every day for you and I. I'm trying to get it passed nationwide. We should be very grateful that our United States of America flag is still standing, and I would like everyone to put a flag and a yellow ribbon in front of their home to remember our military fighting for us. Thank you to all our troops, and God bless America!"

NEW YORK STATE YELLOW RIBBON DAY

SATURDAY, APRIL 9, 2022

Veterans Memorial
162 Route 236, Halfmoon, NY

11:00AM

With Remarks from the Division of
Military and Naval Affairs

Hosted by the Town of Halfmoon &
Carol Pingelski Hotaling, "The Yellow
Ribbon Lady"

Blue Star Mothers collection boxes
available at local DMVs, Town Clerks &
Hannafords. Items requested include:

- Non-aerosol insect repellent
 - Anti-itch cream
 - Chapstick
- Individual Size Tissues
 - Hand Sanitizer
- Crossword/Puzzle Books
 - Black Socks
- Individual Powdered Drink Mixes
 - Hygiene Products
 - Dry Snacks
- Hand & Feet Warmers
 - Baby Wipes
 - & More!

Contact Blue Star Mother Donna Abare
at capitalregion2bsm@gmail.com with
questions about Freedom Box items.

*"Never forget our troops deployed in harm's
way around the world protecting the
freedoms we hold so dear."*

My Yellow Ribbons

By George H. Randall, friend of Carol Pingelski Hotaling

On the trees are yellow ribbons
Placed by loving hands that care
And my doorway beckons your return
With the yellow ribbons there.
As I look upon them daily
I think of your many cares
And my voice for you is lifted
To our Lord who answers prayers.
My thoughts go back to other days
Of the good times that we've known

And the future that we talked about
When we were all alone.
And though you're far away today
My heart is there with you
For miles of oceans can't separate
A love that is so true.
And some day soon when you come home
And you have a moment free
You can help take down the ribbons
That have meant so much to me.