

OPERATION TOM



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Never Leave a Brother Behind: An Honor Flight Friendship Inspires Operation Tom

BUFFALO, N.Y. (August 17, 2026) — The military teaches one lesson that lasts long after the uniform comes off: never leave a brother behind.

For Amherst Army Sergeant Major Jeremy Young, those words are more than a motto, they are a way of life. Young, a National Fuel employee, connected with Buffalo Niagara Honor Flight through the company's longstanding support of the organization and was inspired to become personally involved in its mission.

While volunteering as an escort on one of those flights in 2023, Young met fellow Army veteran Tom Dunfee. During the trip, the two servicemen quickly formed a bond rooted in shared service, mutual respect, and the unspoken understanding shared by those who have worn the uniform.

As the flight came to an end, Young learned more about the challenges Dunfee had faced since returning home from Vietnam. Living alone with significant mobility and health issues connected to his military service, along with limited financial resources, Dunfee struggled with many of the everyday necessities most people take for granted.

While that Honor Flight trip ended, Young's commitment did not.

He kept calling. He kept visiting. He kept helping. He never left his brother behind.

“Too many veterans come home, fight their battles and eventually feel forgotten. Tom deserves more than that. This is more than raising money, it’s about making sure he knows he isn’t forgotten and doesn’t have to face his battles alone,” said Young.

What began as a chance meeting has become a lasting friendship. For nearly 3 years, Young has stood beside Dunfee through countless challenges, quietly providing friendship, transportation, advocacy, and practical support, not because anyone asked him to, but because that's what brotherhood means.

That unwavering commitment inspired those around him.

"I first met Tom through Jeremy," said Kelly Gast, co-founder of Operation Tom. "Watching the way Jeremy cared for him changed me. This wasn't charity, it was brotherhood. Jeremy never looked at Tom as someone who needed saving. He saw a fellow veteran who deserved more. Somewhere along the way, Tom became part of our family too."

Today, that friendship has grown into **Operation Tom**, a grassroots initiative dedicated to honoring Dunfee's service by restoring his independence, improving his quality of life, and reminding veterans they are never forgotten.

Young and Gast hope to raise community support to help provide Dunfee with reliable transportation following the recent loss of his truck while also creating sustainable support for his everyday needs.

But they say the mission extends far beyond one veteran.

Their hope is that Operation Tom inspires communities everywhere to look around, find the veterans who may be living alone or struggling in silence, and remind them they have not been forgotten.

"Jeremy's example proves that the promise to never leave a brother behind doesn't end when military service ends," Gast said. "I hope his compassion for a fellow soldier inspires others to adopt a veteran in need."

As Operation Tom grows, Young and Gast hope Tom's story encourages others to reach out to veterans in their own communities, because sometimes changing a life begins with something as simple as showing up.

Because the promise to never leave a brother behind doesn't end when military service ends.

Sometimes it begins with a single meeting on an Honor Flight.

Sometimes it changes a life.

Sometimes it inspires an entire community.

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About Operation Tom

Operation Tom is a grassroots initiative inspired by the enduring friendship between Army Sergeant Major Jeremy Young and fellow Army veteran Tom Dunfee. Through community partnerships, volunteerism, storytelling, and practical assistance, Operation Tom seeks to restore dignity, independence, and hope while reminding every veteran that they will never be left behind.

Watch Tom and Jeremy's story here: [Beans, Bullets and Brotherhood](#)

(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3ozlAQIfJD0&t=13s>)

The community can donate to help Veteran Tom by visiting www.gofundme.com/operation-tom-army.