

PULSE

DENNIS LECLAIR SEEKS CORPORATE SUPPORT TO RAISE AWARENESS AND FUNDS FOR CANADIAN FORCES AND THEIR FAMILIES THROUGH HIS COMMEMORATIVE CD, *TO OUR CANADIAN TROOPS*



THE RIGHT STUFF

Local musician works to thank Canadian troops

Kelowna musician Dennis Leclair has launched an initiative to raise awareness and funds for Canadian soldiers and their families through the sale of a commemorative CD, *To Our Canadian Troops*.

Leclair says he was inspired by a television broadcast in November 2008 where he saw a succession of faces. Nearly a hundred soldiers whose homecoming was met not with celebration, but with mourning.

The scene touched a nerve in a man whose association with the military spans decades. In his early years as a musician Leclair performed in legions and army-navy clubs. Later he taught officers and airmen at universities, helping them prepare for new careers. And for the past 17 years he has been counselling military families and returning soldiers through his private practice, Leclair

& Associates Consulting Ltd.

Leclair has enormous respect for Canadian troops. "They're fascinating people," he says, "extraordinarily committed, extraordinarily proud to be Canadian, with a real sense that other people have the right to be free."

The soldiers Leclair saw on that broadcast fell in Afghanistan, where hundreds more continue the mission. He says the presentation compelled him to write an open letter expressing his gratitude and support. He headed out on his motorcycle, searching for the right words and found them somewhere between Osoyoos and Keremeos, a heartfelt message titled *To Our Canadian Troops*.

Leclair enlisted help from other Okanagan musicians including the choir of Anne McClymont Elementary School and within a month the BC Dragoons were listening to the song. Retired captain Heather Davis, current music director of the Kelowna City Band, created musical arrangements

PHOTO BY DAWN RENAUD

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for full orchestra. (Arrangements for school bands are available at www.tourcanadiantroops.ca.)

In September Leclair recorded the song with the Naden Band in Esquimalt. The recordings, along with personal messages from several prominent Canadians, will appear on the commemorative CD.

Leclair has also embarked on an ambitious project to distribute a CD to 450,000 Canadian Forces members—military personnel, families and veterans. "We need people to help us do that," he says, adding that Wanda Pidwerbeski, a case manager at Leclair & Associates, has provided invaluable help getting this far, but now investors are needed.

Leclair welcomes individual purchases but he's also looking for corporate sponsors willing to buy several thousand CDs that will be sent to the Canadian Forces Personnel Agency for distribution. CDs will be pressed with company logos.

Profits go to the Canadian Military Families Fund, which provides assistance when spouses must fly to different locations to visit with injured loved ones in hospital. It also helps with home care support and other needed services. "The military is short on funds to help military families in those types of situations," Leclair explains. "This is a specific fund started by general Rick Hillier."

Hillier, Canada's former chief of defense staff, supports Leclair's project—as does his successor, general Walt Natynczyk. "Our military families are the strength behind the uniforms," Natynczyk said after a live performance of *To Our Canadian Troops* in Kelowna. "This effort recognized all the sacrifices of our men and women in uniform, but also those of their families. It's absolutely outstanding." —Dawn Renaud

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