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SPEEA collects used cell phones to help soldiers call home

WICHITA, KAN. – Wanting to help soldiers' overseas stay in contact with families and friends, the union representing technical and professional employees at Spirit AeroSystems and The Boeing Company today launched a drive to collect and recycle used cell phones.

The Society of Professional Engineering Employees in Aerospace (SPEEA), IFPTE Local 2001, is collecting used cell phones for the national Cell Phones for Soldiers non-profit charity.

"Most of us know someone who is away from home serving our country," said Donna Castaneda, SPEEA Midwest Chair and an employee at Spirit. "We want to do everything we can to help them maintain contact with friends and family at home."

Used cell phones can be dropped off from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., weekdays, at the SPEEA Wichita office in the lower Parklane Shopping Center, 973 S. Glendale Street, Wichita. Union members are collecting used cell phones at work.

Working phones are refurbished and sent overseas to military personal in Iraq, Afghanistan and other locations. Phones that cannot be refurbished are properly recycled. More than 150,000 troops are serving overseas. A number of SPEEA members who were in the reserves or National Guard were called to active duty.

The average person in the United States replaces a cell phone every 16 months. Most cell phones are never recycled. Approximately half of the cell phones collected by Cell Phones for Soldiers can be refurbished and reused. Phones that cannot be reused are recycled for materials.

"A phone call home is a vital connection when you are far from home," said Ray Goforth, SPEEA executive director. "We are proud to help our troops while they are overseas serving."

SPEEA represents 3,800 aerospace professionals in Wichita at Spirit and The Boeing Company. Overall, the professional union represents 24,200 engineers, technical and professional employees in Kansas, Washington, Oregon, Utah and California. The union also represents aerospace workers at BAE Systems, Inc., in Irving, Texas, and Triumph Composite Systems, Inc., in Spokane, Wash.

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Cell phone drop off:

Monday to Friday, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

SPEEA, Parklane Shopping Center, 973 S. Glendale Street, Wichita.

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