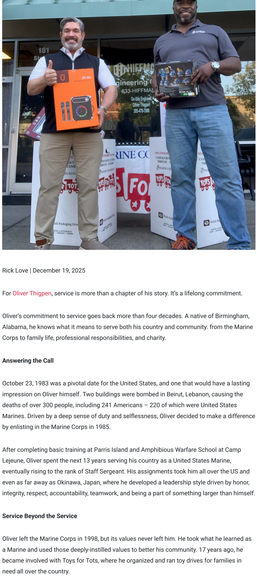
CULTURE EVENTS NEWS

DECEMBER 2025

Making Lives Easier, One Toy at a Time



Rick Love | December 19, 2025

For Oliver Thigpen, service is more than a chapter of his story. It's a lifelong commitment.

Oliver's commitment to service goes back more than four decades. A native of Birmingham, Alabama, he knows what it means to serve both his country and community. from the Marine Corps to family life, professional responsibilities, and charity.

Answering the Call

October 23, 1983 was a pivotal date for the United States, and one that would have a lasting impression on Oliver himself. Two buildings were bombed in Beirut, Lebanon, causing the deaths of over 300 people, including 241 Americans – 220 of which were United States Marines. Driven by a deep sense of duty and selflessness, Oliver decided to make a difference by enlisting in the Marine Corps in 1985.

After completing basic training at Parris Island and Amphibious Warfare School at Camp Lejeune, Oliver spent the next 13 years serving his country as a United States Marine, eventually rising to the rank of Staff Sergeant. His assignments took him all over the US and even as far away as Okinawa, Japan, where he developed a leadership style driven by honor, integrity, respect, accountability, teamwork, and being a part of something larger than himself.

Service Beyond the Service

Oliver left the Marine Corps in 1998, but its values never left him. He took what he learned as a Marine and used those deeply-instilled values to better his community. 17 years ago, he became involved with Toys for Tots, where he organized and ran toy drives for families in need all over the country.

"For me, it's about seeing those happy faces," says Oliver. "It's one of the things I look forward to the most at Christmas time. I love being able to relieve that burden on families."

And that isn't just talk. Toys for Tots has brought joy and hope to countless American families. But it has also been a source of fond memories for Oliver, one of which had a profound impact that stays with him to this day.

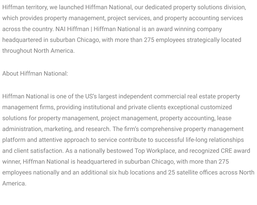
"Back in 2020, we had a family that lost their home and their possessions in a fire," Oliver recalls. "They had temporary housing but nothing else. Through Toys for Tots, we were able to make sure they had a Christmas. They had toys, a tree, decorations, food, everything. It's one of the best we've ever done."

But the hardship isn't always limited to families. The program itself has had its share of challenges, most recently this year.

"When the government shut down, we lost our main source of funding outside of donations," says Oliver. "We were really struggling and weren't sure when it would end."

Oliver didn't let that stop him. True to his values, he found a solution.

"I got together with some of the volunteers, and we kept the program running by funding it ourselves from our own pockets," Oliver remembers. "It was important to us to keep the program running any way we could."



Reaching New Heights

In November 2022, Oliver joined Hiffman National as a Building Engineer at the Patton Creek Shopping Center in Hoover, Alabama, where he currently oversees maintenance, landscaping, safety, and security for the 60 businesses that call it home.

But to Oliver, the shopping center isn't just a place he goes to work. It's a hub for giving back.

This is his third year leading the Toys for Tots program at Patton Creek and its growth has been remarkable. The numbers speak for themselves:

- **2023:** 14,840 toys collected
- **2024:** 21,212 toys collected
- **2025:** 25,147 toys collected

That's more than 60,000 donations in just three years. What started in a small space has grown into a large-scale operation supported by more than 200 volunteers, including partnerships with companies like AT&T, Mercedes, Amazon, and Texas Instruments, which donated 100 scientific calculators valued at approximately $80 each.

And this has all occurred under Oliver's direct leadership. But true to his selfless nature, he's quick to credit others for its success.

"This wouldn't be possible without Hiffman," Oliver says. "They've been incredibly supportive of what we do. It's wonderful to be part of an organization that stands behind its people like that."

Anyone Can Make a Difference

Along with being a devoted husband of 27 years, proud father of four daughters, and loving grandfather to four grandchildren, Oliver sees his professional and volunteer work as part of a bigger picture. And he encourages others to do the same.

"It doesn't cost anything to help somebody," Oliver says. "Nobody that helps someone is useless."

Through his service, leadership, and generosity, Oliver reminds us that making a difference doesn't always require grand gestures. The only things you need are commitment, compassion, and the willingness to show up.

Visit www.toysfortots.org to find out more about how you can volunteer or donate.

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NAI Hiffman is one of the largest independent commercial real estate services firms in the US, with a primary focus on metropolitan Chicago, and part of the NAI Global network. We provide institutional and private leasing, property management, tenant representation, capital markets, project services, research, and marketing services for owners and occupiers of commercial real estate. To meet our clients' growing needs outside of our exclusive NAI Hiffman territory, we launched Hiffman National, our dedicated property solutions division, which provides property management, project services, and property accounting services across the country. NAI Hiffman | Hiffman National is an award winning company headquartered in suburban Chicago, with more than 275 employees strategically located throughout North America.

About Hiffman National:

Hiffman National is one of the US's largest independent commercial real estate property management firms, providing institutional and private clients exceptional customized solutions for property management, project management, property accounting, lease administration, marketing, and research. The firm's comprehensive property management platform and attentive approach to service contribute to successful life-long relationships and client satisfaction. As a nationally bestowed Top Workplace, and recognized CRE award winner, Hiffman National is headquartered in suburban Chicago, with more than 275 employees nationally and an additional six hub locations and 25 satellite offices across North America.

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