



Holiday
SALUTE

Celebrate Military Family Members

Celebrating the holidays while a loved one is away serving their country can be trying for the family members at home. If you know a family who is without their loved one this holiday, consider making them a part of your own traditions.

SMALL GESTURES

Sometimes, it's the little things that count. If you notice resistance regarding your invitation to spend the holidays with your family, consider making these small gestures to honor their wishes.

Baked goods: Find the recipe for your favorite baked item to deliver a delicious treat they can serve at their gathering.

Make a phone call: A short conversation can help take someone's mind off the fact their servicemember is away for the holidays. Assure them you are there if they need anything and that they are in your thoughts.

Volunteer together: Find a cause the family is passionate about and donate your time to benefit their efforts.

SEND AN INVITE

If a family is interested in joining your holiday gatherings, be sure to incorporate some of their traditions. When planning your event, have a conversation about how they celebrate. This can make them feel more comfortable and less intrusive. If your get-together features a dinner, ask them to bring along a dish they typically share during their holiday meals. You may find yourself with a new tradition.



DONATE

Donate to an organization that supports military families. There are many great programs

where presents or meals are delivered to thousands of active-duty bases across the country. The charity Operation

Homefront does a great job with their Holiday Meals for Military and Holiday Toy Drive. There are also local groups that

are executing similar projects or service drives. You may be surprised by what you can find in your own backyard.

Days of Celebration

The sacrifice and risk American servicemembers endure while defending our country should be praised daily. However, there are a few major holidays dedicated to honoring military members of the past and present.

To celebrate accurately, you should know the differences between Memorial Day, Veteran's Day and Armed Forces Day. Each holiday celebrates a different phase of a military members career and life. Read on to learn a brief history about each special day and how to honor the military accordingly.

MEMORIAL DAY

Memorial Day is a time to honor those who died in active military service. It was originally celebrated each year on May 30 but is now recognized on the last Monday of May.

History

According to the Public Broadcasting Service, the holiday was originally called Decoration Day. It was first widely observed on May 30, 1868, to commemorate the sacrifices of Civil War Soldiers, by proclamation of Gen. John A. Logan. It was 1971 when Congress officially passed the Uniform Monday Holiday Act, which established Memorial Day would be celebrated on the last Monday of May.

Arlington National Cemetery commemorates the holiday each year by placing a small American flag on each grave.

VETERAN'S DAY

This holiday is dedicated to American veterans of all wars. It is celebrated annually on Nov. 11.



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The reason for the date of celebration is to commemorate the end of World War I. While the official resolution wasn't until June 28, 1919, when the Treaty of Versailles was signed, Nov. 11 is widely considered as the end of "the war to end all wars." According to the United States

Department of Veterans Affairs, an armistice between the Allied nations and Germany went into effect on the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month.

On May 13, 1938, an act was approved to dedicate a day to the cause of world peace, it

was deemed Armistice Day. It wasn't until June 1, 1954, when Nov. 11 was officially recognized as a day to honor American veterans.

ARMED FORCES DAY

This day is meant to pay special tribute to the active personnel of the United States

Armed Forces.

Until 1949, each branch of military celebrated their own individual holiday. Secretary of Defense Louis Johnson announced the creation of Armed Forces Day to celebrate the entire military and signify a unification under the Department of Defense.

Volunteer at a VA Hospital

Donating your valuable time to volunteer at a Veterans Affairs hospital is a great way to show your appreciation during the holidays or any time. Reach out to your local office to find out how your efforts can make a difference in the lives of service members.

These are a few of the common programs most VA hospitals seek volunteers for, according to the United States Department of Veterans Affairs.

VOLUNTEER TRANSPORTATION NETWORK

This important program was established to provide transportation for veterans in need of services from a VA facility. According to guidelines, volunteers are permitted to offer rides in their privately owned conveyance or government-owned vehicle, including donated autos.

If providing transportation isn't possible, you can still show your support by donating to the network.

WELCOME HOME CELEBRATIONS

Around the country, the VA sponsors Welcome Home events to celebrate returning service members and their families. These occasions are generally meant to provide information and guidance regarding health care and benefits through the Department of Veteran Affairs. Check with your local VA Voluntary Service office to learn how to get started.

STUDENT VOLUNTEER PROGRAM

Don't forget to include your



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children when volunteering! Showing them the importance of supporting the veterans and active-duty members of our military is a great lesson to share. Not only will military men and women benefit, but

so will the young participants. Here are just a few ways the Department of Veterans Affairs reports the program is beneficial:

- Exploring health care career options.

- Gain experience in a health care setting.

- Learn new skills while meeting new people.

It is also a great addition to a college application and will qualify for a nomination for the

James H. Parke Memorial scholarship.

Whichever way you choose to volunteer, know that you are making a difference in the lives of those who protect or have protected our freedom.

Hold a Fundraiser

There are many organizations that require donations to send care packages and supplies to active-duty service members. You can get the entire community involved by holding a fundraiser and donating the proceeds to an important cause.

Before beginning plans for your gathering, be sure to check with local officials about any regulations about charity drives. They will assist you in choosing a proper venue or location based on the number of attendants you are expecting. It's important to ensure all rules are being followed so the fundraiser is successful.

INITIAL PLANNING

To host a beneficial event for military members, there are many factors to consider during the planning stage. Here are some tips from the Association of Fundraising Professionals to keep in mind.

Choose your team: You will need help from trusted friends or family when throwing the event. Consider who you want on your side as an event coordinator, communications manager, operations manager and fundraising program manager. Each role is important to a successful fundraiser, so make sure to choose representatives with the same passions as you.

Find sponsors: You can also get a lot of help by soliciting local businesses to sponsor your event. Ask for donations, products to auction or for them to advertise by hanging flyers.

Choose a venue: You should choose a location that is well known in the community. Ensure it is easy to find and safe for the size of crowd you are expecting.

GET THE WORD OUT

You don't have to have a family member or loved one in the military to show your support. In fact, anyone who feels compelled to raise funds

can get involved. After the initial details are in place, it's time to start promotion. Contact local radio stations or news agencies to advertise the event. Make sure to explain which organization funds will be donated to and the importance of their cause.

Social media will be your best friend

as you can reach a large audience in seconds. Consider inviting a local hero from the military as a guest speaker. They can express how important donations are to the recipients.

CHARITIES TO CONSIDER

When choosing a charity, here are a

few great options to pick:

- Operation First Response
- Soldiers' Angels
- Operation Gratitude Purple Heart

These organizations send care packages and backpacks to wounded service members as they recover in military hospitals.



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Provide Holiday Meals

Many families celebrate the holidays with a bountiful home-cooked meal and gathering of loved ones. Our active-duty service members sacrifice this wholesome experience while they defend our country. Fortunately, you can help send a little taste of home while they are away.

Operation Homefront has been around since 2008 and has served nearly 80,000 families. According to the organization, their 2017 events raised enough donations to serve nearly 10,000 families with everything they needed for a holiday meal.

Help them raise that number even higher in 2018 by attending an event in your area or sending a donation.

THE ORGANIZATION'S HISTORY

The inception of the Holiday Meals for Military program happened by accident. In Utica, New York, a soldier, his wife and their infant child were in line at a grocery store, collecting items for their Thanksgiving feast. They soon realized they could not afford the few products they were attempting to purchase.

Luckily, Ken Ruff, an executive at Beam Global, was in the same store and offered to pay for the groceries. After talking with the family, he learned the soldier had just returned from deployment and was having trouble catching up with his bills. It soon dawned on Ruff that there were many military families in the same situation, and he wanted to help. With only four weeks left until Christmas, Ruff canceled a



CHRISTOPHER A MURRAY/WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

large order of gift baskets the company would typically deliver to their customers. Instead, he used the funding and donations from partners to provide meals for about 500 families in the first year.

Thanks to generous dona-

tions, the organization has seen a growth in the number of meals they deliver annually.

HOW YOU CAN HELP

In addition to sending donations online or by mail,

the organization has several other ways you can give back.

Homefront Hero: Become a member of the organization and pledge to donate as much as you'd like. On their website, you can set an amount and recurring time frame for the

group to take donations right from your account.

Planned Giving: This option is a way to donate during your lifetime or at death. Consider planning your contribution in will, living trust or a bequest.



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Pay Honors at a Memorial

Gather your family to honor the lives and efforts of American military members by visiting a war memorial. The United States features many breathtaking monuments meant to salute our troops and the sacrifices they made. This holiday season, spend your time memorializing the service and give thanks to the soldiers who inspired it.

Here are a few amazing places you should add to your travel list.

NATIONAL D-DAY MEMORIAL Bedford, Va.

This national war monument honors American troops who were involved in the invasion of France at Normandy on June 6, 1944. It is dedicated to the soldiers involved in the largest air, land and sea operation in history. According to the National D-Day Memorial

Foundation, the invasion included more than 5,000 ships, 11,000 airplanes and 150,000 servicemen. A total of 4,413 Allied troops lost their lives during the operation.

LIBERTY MEMORIAL Kansas City, Mo.

This 300-foot tall tower hovers over downtown Kansas City to remember those who served in World War I in defense and liberty and our country. On Nov. 11, 1926, President Calvin Coolidge said of the monu-

ment, "It has not been raised to commemorate war and victory, but rather the results of war and victory which are embodied in peace and liberty."

VIETNAM WOMEN'S MEMORIAL Washington, D.C.

If you head south from the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Wall, you'll find this stunning sculpture. It signifies the 265,000 women that served in the Vietnam war, many were nurses, caring for wounded

soldiers. The monument celebrates its 25th anniversary this year.

AIR FORCE MEMORIAL Washington, D.C.

Completed in 2006, this memorial is dedicated on behalf of all airmen, past, present and future. The Air Force District of Washington states the design was inspired by the contrails of the Air Force Thunderbirds as they peel back in a precision "bomb burst" maneuver. The awe-inspiring

memorial overlooks the Pentagon and the Potomac River.

THE PRISON SHIP MARTYRS MONUMENT Brooklyn, New York

This humbling monument was created to honor the 11,500 American prisoners of war who lost their lives on British ships during the Revolutionary War. Many of the soldiers are buried under the 100-foot tall columns the monument stands on.

Send Your Personal Thanks

With the internet and social media, sending messages to anywhere in the world has never been easier. Thank a military member this holiday season by preparing a heartfelt thank you for their service.

Whether you choose to send an email, a handwritten letter or upload a video, make sure your appreciation is clearly displayed! It is easy for soldiers to become discouraged of their lifestyle, especially if they are miles away from their loved ones and home.

You can do your part this holiday by expressing how important their sacrifice and service is to your family and the country.

BY LETTER

There may not be a more personal way to say thanks than writing out a handwritten letter. Remember these tips from Operation Gratitude when preparing a thank you.

- Begin with a generic salutation, such as “Dear Hero” or “Dear Brave One.”

- Share stories about yourself as well as interests.

- Be sure to include your return address in case the recipient chooses to respond.

- Don’t date letters, it may take months for care packages to be received after they are sent.

BY EMAIL

This type of contact is best if you personally know the soldier you wish to thank. While it may seem less personal than a letter, it’s the quickest way to get your message to a



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hero.

Be sure to include exciting news about their hometowns or interests. In addition to thanking them, ask how you can help make their time

away easier. This may mean checking in on their friends or family members or sending along pictures of their pets or loved ones. Reminding them of home can be a welcome

distraction when far away.

BY VIDEO

Record your salute and post it online. It might be hard to address one soldier when going

this route, so express your gratitude for the entire military and the sacrifices they are making.

Hopefully, your video will be widely viewed by a military audience.