

# **101** **WAYS** *To* **THANK** **A VETERAN:**

A How-To Guide for Honoring Our  
Country's Most Valuable Resource;  
Our Veterans



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## *Dedication*

101 WAYS TO THANK A VETERAN is dedicated to all veterans who have served, and are still serving to keep America strong and unwavering in the face of global insurgency which threatens our American way of life. Our beloved flag keeps flying and its colors of red, white and blue will never fail to glow as long as we continue to enlist brave men and women, like Sgt. Randy Griffin USMC who I was privileged to serve alongside with honor and commitment. For those of us who had the honor to serve with you, you'll always have a special place in our hearts-Oorah!

*“To care for him who shall have borne the battle and for his widow and his orphan.”*

- Abraham Lincoln

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## Introduction

**101** WAYS TO THANK A VETERAN is an inspirational, educational, and an easy-read for Americans who believe that all our veterans are heroes for their bravery, willingness to serve, and dedication to our nation. This book is also for those Americans that believe our veterans should be treated with utmost respect and afforded the best opportunities America has to offer.

The author Emilio Roman is a United States Marine and disabled Gulf War era veteran. He shares his personal struggles, medical challenges, and lack of knowledge in navigating the Veterans Administrations bureaucratic maze while attempting to get answers to his earned military benefits.

In addition, he also illustrates how he benefited from the kindness of others. Emilio also believes that the average citizen can help to improve veteran lives in their own community with little acts of kindness. The author invites the readers to take away from the book ways to thank our veterans that best fit their own lifestyle.

The writer through this book has managed to spotlight 101 different ways through which a veteran can be appreciated for their brave dedication and sacrifice. The importance of patriotism and dedication is also emphasized in this book.

Between the pages, you'll also discover little-known secrets (discounts) offered by retail giants like Home Depot, Dunkin Donuts, Denny's, and many other discount opportunities for veterans.

You will find Emilio's engaging and enthralling personal narratives and stories infused into this practical handbook quite entertaining and informative. The handbook is also enriched with websites and organizational contacts to help the reader serve the veteran they want to help in the best way possible.

Today, Emilio Roman serves as a "Veteran Ambassador" and involves himself with veteran-related activities under favorable health conditions. He is widely known as an advocate for veteran rights within his community and beyond.

Think about this for a moment. How many opportunities will you have to make a real difference in someone's life and be there when it happens?

This book will allow you to do just that, to witness the difference you're making in a veteran's life today.

May God continue to bless our nation and its veterans!

## Initiate a Conversation with a Veteran

One of the most invaluable and equally inexpensive gifts you can ever give a veteran is the golden opportunity to have highly spirited conversations mostly about themselves and their experience in service to our country. There is an appeal that accompanies your verbal exchange in such discussions that puts the veteran you're conversing with on a high pedestal where they ultimately feel appreciated, respected and admired. If the opportunity presents itself and you are in the presence of a veteran, feel free to initiate a friendly conversation. Most veterans already know what you're aiming at upon your very first set of questions and the curious smile that sits on your face. You don't have to say too much at first. Simply introduce yourself and proceed to confirm if the person you're meeting is a veteran. When this is confirmed, don't shy away from expressing your heartfelt appreciation and admiration. Doing this will pave the way for any other questions you might want to ask. You never can tell, your interaction can spark up a special connection which could lead to a lifelong friendship.

## Pay for a Meal or Coffee

Please allow me to be clear. Veterans are usually trained to take great pride in their appearance and under the right circumstances, veterans do not look like cartoonish hobos on the street corner. This means you need to be careful enough to avoid jumping to wrong conclusions or judging people based on their physical appearance. People often get confused as to how a veteran can be appreciated. But here is a tip on how to go about it.

For starters, you can initiate a conversation with someone sporting a service hat (Marines call them *covers*), which is typically a tell-sign they are a veteran. This symbolizes their pride of service connection. Another sign could be an American flag pin worn on the lapel, common amongst most politicians as seen in the media. Regrettably, the saddest and most obvious is the veteran on the boardwalk or outside stores seeking help; we see them daily or weekly as we go shopping for goods and services. Instead of turning a blind eye to these veterans, this is a great opportunity to offer a helping hand. A cup of coffee or a small meal will most certainly go a long way. It's best to buy them a meal instead of just giving money and hoping it would be used for its intended purpose. This way, you ensure your contributions towards the good health of the veterans.



## Offer your First Class Ticket and Sit in Coach

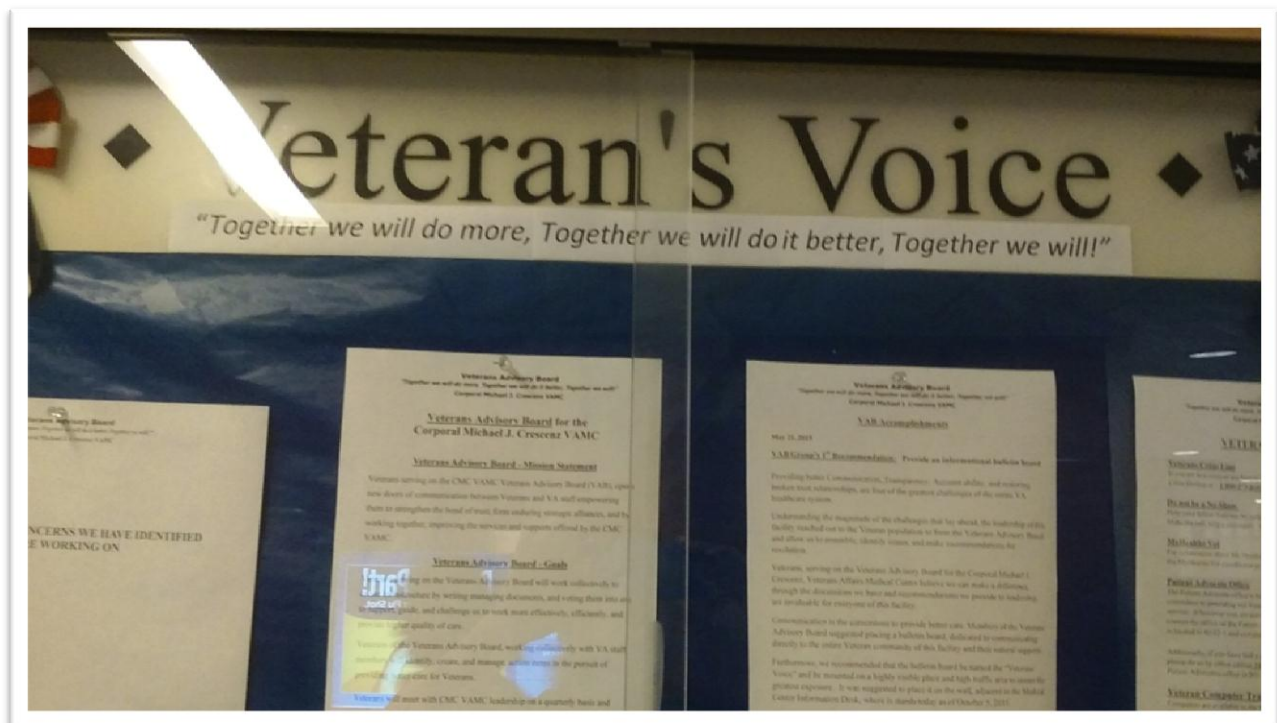
Awesome gesture! This may seem like a stretch for some but I can assure you, it happens. Just because this type of kindness doesn't make it to the front pages of newspapers or the evening news does not expunge the possibilities of its occurrence. As a matter of fact, I have benefitted from such immeasurable kindness. This happened on my flight back to New Jersey a couple of years ago. Now, as a person who doesn't really enjoy flying, this gesture did make that flight more comfortable and less stressful for me. Here is how it happened:

I was at the airport waiting in the designated area for my flight back to Jersey when a group of passengers waiting in line for the same flight, began to share small talk about the weather and traveling. On this particular day, I was sporting my Marine hat and wasn't so surprised when their conversation focused on me and my time in service. There was nothing unusual or suggestive about the conversation, until when we were about to board. The gentleman, whose name I don't recall, insisted that I take his first class ticket as a "thank you" for my service and offered to take my coach seat. I was deeply overwhelmed by this act of generosity and appreciation coming from someone I hardly knew; someone I met only a few minutes prior to that moment. That feeling of genuine appreciation was enough for me. As expected, I politely refused and thanked him heartily for his kind gesture but he would not take no for an answer.

After a few minutes of deliberations with this gentleman who was still unrelenting with his offer, I smiled and accepted. Since I had never flown first class before, I did not know how to act. I have to admit; flying first class did take the edge off of flying a bit. I am forever grateful to this unnamed person who offered me his first class ticket. The whole encounter and the series of fascinating events that followed no doubt brought a sense of pride that my military service was appreciated by a man whom I never met prior to my flight. I guess the underlying message in my story is that people can make a difference in how veterans feel about themselves and their service with just a touch of class.

## Drive a Veteran to a Doctor's Appointment

It is often said that health is wealth. As human beings, we all crave guaranteed well-being, which means veterans are no exception. Having established that, there is nothing more important to a veteran's health than making it to scheduled doctors' appointments. Some appointments are so hard to come by that they are scheduled months in advance, so, missing one can really put a veteran's health at risk. For many, the doctor's visit is their only lifeline. You will be making a big contribution towards the welfare of a veteran by helping them get to a local VA hospital or VA satellite clinic. As of this writing, most veterans are scheduled to meet with their primary doctors every six months. Being at scheduled appointments often proves more difficult for incapacitated veterans as well. You have the power to make sure a veteran has the necessary transportation to make their scheduled appointment.



## Deliver Christmas/Holiday Cards to a local VA hospital Waiting Room

Just like a host of others, I have received many Christmas cards throughout my lifetime. But if I must be utterly sincere, none has touched me more than the one I received some time ago in a VA hospital waiting room where a gentleman whom I have never met, walked up to me, handed over a Christmas card and said, "Merry Christmas, thanks for your service!" I think I remembered his complimentary remarks so well because of the weight it carried and not its conciseness. I was dumbfounded so much that I can't say for sure if I ever thanked him. While I don't recall what I said or whether I spoke at all, I surely remember how he made me feel. For a brief moment, I felt a sense of pride, respect, and a special connection with all that was good in the world. Yes, all those emotions from a simple act of kindness from someone I had never met prior to my VA visit that day and whom I haven't seen again to this day. So, yes, handing a veteran a Christmas card with no expectations of receiving anything in return can make a memorable difference for even a brief moment in the life of a veteran.

If someone had mentioned to me then that I would be writing a book about ways to thank veterans, I would have probably laughed off the idea as sheer ridiculousness, but here I am. Kindness has a way of coming in a full-circle, you just never know how it will positively affect others so pay it forward! It's never too late to start a family tradition of delivering Christmas cards to a local VA hospital. Doing this will pass along a great Christmas tradition that will outlive us all!



## Plant a Tree In Honor Of a Veteran

Kindness comes in many forms. It doesn't take much to be a Humanitarian. For some people, personally giving a gift or conversing with others may be uncomfortable as some are wary of sending the wrong messages. Whatever the case may be, honoring a veteran in your family or circle of friends by planting a tree in their name may be the best way to show your gratitude for their service to our nation. Veterans for Trees ([www.veteransfortrees.org](http://www.veteransfortrees.org)) is an organization that honors veterans while improving the environment. Planting a tree is the gift that breathes new life while remembering those that gave their lives for the safety of others.



## Invite a Veteran Over for Dinner

Sharing a meal with a veteran alongside your family is a gift you all will cherish for a long a time. Think about it; most of us look forward to family holidays for a good, home-cooked meal. Your invitation to share the same experience with a veteran can make a memorable holiday or at least, a memorable day. Many veterans stay on base for the holidays due to a lack of family ties or financial reasons. I recall a few times during holidays where I remained on base while stationed in 29 Palms, California. Despite the word “palms” after the number 29, this place is literally a desert; no water in site for miles. Anyway, my home is in New Jersey so it was not always feasible to travel cross-country to celebrate a holiday. One thing I was grateful for was churches and service organizations that recognized this fact and opened their doors for soldiers like me. There is something special about the kindness of a stranger welcoming you into their personal space that reminds you that the fellow man, despite all the negative portrayals on television and the media, is essentially good. These little acts of kindness rekindled my trust in humanity.

*“If you can’t feed a hundred people, then feed just one.” - Mother Teresa*



## Invite a Veteran to a Sporting Event

What's more American than American Apple Pie? Attending a good, old-fashion sporting event! As Americans, we hold sports dear to our hearts. To the larger audience, sporting events offer double benefits; relaxation and entertainment. Occasionally, I receive tickets to some sporting venues that I can't attend and I assume you can't too. So, instead of tossing the tickets in the waste basket, why not offer it to a veteran or a veteran organization that will appreciate and use them? Okay, let's say you don't get free tickets but you come across a discounted pair, getting them wouldn't be such a bad idea.

I do recall once receiving treatment at an East Orange VA hospital in New Jersey where I was invited to a New York Yankees game for our group of veterans for only \$25 per individual. This was hard to pass up even if you did not have the money. The package included transportation to and from the event and a box lunch from Subways. Even though I am not a Yankees fan (Go Phillies), it was one of the best professional games I ever attended. As veterans, it was only fair that we received special recognition during the opening ceremony and we all had a ball! So, keep an open eye out for sporting event opportunities that can become a blessing for those that sported the uniform of the red, white and blue. Remember, proper etiquette is imperative when the national anthem is playing.

## Send an Active Veteran a Care Package

This one takes me back. Judging from my personal experience, I can say authoritatively that nothing establishes a deeper connection between veterans – either training or deployed overseas – and their homes better than a care package full of baked goods, special treats, and mementos sent by family and friends. Many veterans do not have families that provide or understand the importance of how such a small gift can impact the morale of a veteran. A simple act of kindness like this can keep a soldier in high spirits and full of smiles for weeks.

A care package can consist of a picture or even some of the veteran's favorite candy bars. A magazine or a prestigious newspaper will also brighten their day and keep them informed about the happenings back home. For some, even their favorite shampoo will do the trick. All you need to do is put some thought behind your care package, throw in some creativity when gathering products for your package and most importantly, make sure your veteran is allowed to receive the items you have selected. This requires just a little bit of research on how the system works which you would find quite enlightening as well.

If you are uncertain about where to begin with your care package gift, you can visit [www.operationgratitude.com](http://www.operationgratitude.com) for some productive ideas you can use. I would encourage you to write these words either inside or outside the package; "Thank you for your service, sacrifice, and patriotism!"

## Send a New Recruit a Letter of Inspiration While In Basic Training

In all aspects of human endeavor, particularly in all professions, a complimentary “pat on the back” from a superior colleague to a junior staff helps to boost morale and motivation that fuels more efficient and effective productivity. This, of course, applies to those putting their lives on the line in service to our country. A properly constructed, sincerely written letter of due appreciation and encouragement is a very special way to thank a young man or woman newly committed to serving our country.

Some years back, I was approached by a young man who took notice of my Marine hat while I was waiting between classes at Camden County College in Blackwood, New Jersey. He thought it necessary to tell me that he was joining the Marines in a few months. After I expressed my excitement for his decision to serve, I gave him my e-mail address with the promise to write him if he contacted me. Several months later, I got an e-mail from his mother, asking me to write her son while he was in boot camp. As promised, I wrote him a heartfelt letter about honor, courage and commitment – the core values of the Marines. Of course, these values define how every Marine in the Corps is expected to think, act, and fight. While I never personally heard back from the young man, his mother did reply in a mass e-mail, expressing gratitude on behalf of the young man who was on his way to becoming a US Marine. I would like to think that in a small way, I was able to inspire this young recruit’s efforts at pulling through what I know to be the most challenging phase of his young life.

Here are some tips to keep in mind when writing to recruits: It is vitally important to always keep the news positive. Bring them up to speed on community events like the local team championships in high school or state levels. Feel free to share with them how proud and respectful you are of their commitment to serve our country and how you look forward to seeing them at graduation or on their return home. Recruit Training in all areas and levels of service is challenging and we can contribute our own quota towards making it better with some words of encouragement in a letter to lift their spirits and feed their determination.

[www.write2them.org](http://www.write2them.org) is an organization with a mission to improve the morale of military recruits during training. This organization thrives on ensuring every recruit gets such letters of encouragement in various deployment areas and bases. There are other organizations with like-minded missions to help support the morale of our young men and women making the ultimate sacrifice for us all. I believe sharing a heartfelt letter of hope which inspires strength is not a lot to ask of our US citizens. Another idea, make it a class project; one letter, many signatures.

## Send the Family of a Fallen Veteran a Letter

Perhaps, the reason we mourn the death of a loved one is not just because they are gone, but the mere realization of the fact that no one or nothing else can take their place in our hearts. The belongings and achievements of those we have lost suddenly become the next best thing to having them around as we cherish these materials and strive to preserve them; to build some sort of “legacy” that will ultimately immortalize them in our hearts. Though not everyone can attest to have lost a loved one at a very young age, they do seem to understand how traumatizing and devastating the experience is.

Consequently, we all deeply appreciate a well-timed condolence message, coming at one time or another. Now, take a moment and reach out to a family mourning the loss of one of our country’s heroes. Share with them that their loss is our loss too. The power of a few words of encouragement can bring comfort and healing. Offer a “thank you” to a parent who lost a child serving to protect our freedom. Obituary columns in newspapers and announcements in broadcast media stations are always sharing information of fallen soldiers.

Take this moment to do your bit as an American citizen and lift the spirits of a family in need. Be warm with your words and do not fail to remind them how moved you are about their child’s courage and unending determination which would be remembered and valued for centuries to come.

Remember...the freedom we now enjoy today was not handed to us on a silver platter. No, freedom is not free. Our beloved sons and daughters volunteered so we may live and lead lives free of conflict. We can now worship and live the American dream, whatever and however we decide to live it. It is also of great importance to note that this freedom we enjoy is bought and paid for with American lives. As it happens, another organization takes it a step further than just writing to providing quilts. Basically, the Marine Comfort Quilt Group is a non-profit organization with an objective to provide a memorial quilt of comfort to the next of kin of our fallen military.



## Support the United Service Organization (USO)

Just like other global organizations concerned with ensuring human welfare and togetherness, the United Service Organization is a non-profit organization that exists as the backbone of support for our male and female warriors both home and abroad. The primary focus of the USO is to lift the spirits of America's troops and their families. This organization provides programs, services and quality live entertainment for United States troops overseas. Whenever celebrities or comedians visit our troops abroad, it is most likely an event sponsored by the USO. As you can imagine, a lot of work, effort and money is required to organize events that provide these special services for our men and women. Your donations and contributions, either in cash or kind will be duly appreciated. It's never too late to extend an arm of help. You can visit [www.uso.org](http://www.uso.org) for more information on how you can volunteer and donate.

## Discount Opportunities

When conversing with veterans, try to share with them, the many available discount opportunities they can enjoy. It is no surprise that many veterans may not be aware of the potential discounts available, which could save them hundreds of dollars that could go into their annual savings with the use of their earned military discounts (go to [www.militarybenefits.info](http://www.militarybenefits.info) for a list of stores and services). For example, Jiffy Lube, Pep Boys, Foot Lockers, and even Old Navy, Home Depot, AutoZone, and Denny's, to name a few, offer discounts to veterans (some even to dependents). Help the veteran by providing this information to them and their families. In addition, restaurants, and movie theaters are among the participating businesses offering a 10 percent military discount off the entire bill. I for one make it a habit of asking wherever I'm spending my dollar if they offer a military discount.

Allow me to share a true story about how I helped a friend of mine save \$300 in a single transaction. Years ago, I was helping a family friend with their porch project in a small way (since I'm not mechanically inclined). We headed straight to Home Depot to get the needed supplies. While at Home Depot, the total for supplies rang up to \$3,000. I merely showed my veteran's ID and was given a 10 percent discount. Yes, he saved a whopping \$300. In fact, the \$300 savings was exactly all he needed to pay the gentleman working on the porch project upon its completion. I could tell from his facial expression that he was really happy and I was more than glad to have been of assistance by just presenting my veteran's ID. What could you buy your children or family for \$300? And don't be surprised, even Duncan Doughnuts offers a military discount as long as you have your veteran's ID card at the time of purchase. In all sincerity, there is no special fan fair like having to wait in a special line to receive these discounts.

Many companies offer different types of discounts and a military type is just one of many. Why every company in America does not offer all our veterans discounts is beyond me. So, given the opportunity for me to help a family or friend with my military discounts I do. In fact, I believe there should be a universal military discount for all those who have served to build this great country. FYI, if a company in America today is not hiring veterans or offering to support veteran organizations to make life easier for those who have fought and those still fighting to keep external conflicts away from our great country; making discounts available is the very least businesses you can do for our veterans.



## Yard Sales

I love yard sales! Yard sales are a great way to help generate income for a particular veteran/family in need. Consider selling goods that many would normally donate or throw away during spring cleaning. An attraction sign can read, “50% of all proceeds go to a veteran family.” Or 100% ...it’s your call. One thing is certain; Americans love yard sales and most will gladly support one that aims to better the lives of our veteran families.



The interesting thing is, yard sales can be had all year long! Contrary to popular belief, not every yard sale has to be done outdoors. You could use a gymnasium or church basement. I have attended many annual community yard sales in high school gymnasiums that support school functions. It is imperative to reiterate here that we are only limited by our imagination and how strong our willingness to help is.



## Adopt a Veteran for a Day, Week, or Month

This could make your jaw drop, but it's a great idea nonetheless. Since we are not oblivious to signs on the interstate that read; "Adopt a Highway", how about we have some for veterans? Think about it. Are veterans not as important as our roadways? Of course, they are, so why not invest a little of your human and capital resources to help those that unselfishly gave their best so we can live in this great country? I can assure you it would be a thrilling experience.

Adopting a veteran temporarily takes a little more planning but eventually, the rewards outweigh the efforts put into the process. Once you have identified the veteran you want to help, the next step is to make the veteran aware of your intentions. However, you must only work with willing veterans as putting a veteran in a situation where they feel unsolicited goodwill is being forced upon them will only hinder the process. Here is a usable approach;

*"Dear veteran, my family has pledged to help a veteran for a month to access medical care, a bit of financial assistance, and even help with potential employment opportunities. Do you know of anyone who may benefit from such an opportunity at this time?"*

By doing this, you would have given the veteran enough room to process the information you just provided. Once you get an answer, no matter what it is, respect the veteran's decision and move from there. They may accept your offer or give the name of a more willing veteran to help. Either way, everyone wins. I may not know one sure way to help all veterans but I do know 101 possible ways to help one veteran. A little thought and a lot of love will go a long way in communicating to our veterans, how much we really want to help them, and this would also help in bringing them closer to us.

## Thanksgiving Dinner

Everyone loves thanksgiving, literally. It's a time of the year most of us look forward to. One of the most inspiring stories regarding the power of generosity I have ever heard was told by the famous international motivational speaker, Anthony Robbins. He recalls a Thanksgiving season in his younger years when his family had financial difficulties and consequently, they couldn't put together a Thanksgiving dinner. To everyone's surprise however, an anonymous source knocked on their door and delivered a food basket to prepare a great thanksgiving dinner. Initially, Robbins father rejected the food basket because he was too proud to accept charity, but thankfully the gentleman who delivered the food was persistent with his message.

This random act of kindness made an impression on young Robbins. This single, yet huge act of kindness that came from a total stranger. Anthony Robbins today has an organization called the 'Thanksgiving Brigade' where he donates hundreds of Thanksgiving meals to needy families throughout the US. I assure you just one act of kindness can have a ripple effect in our community.

So, why not prepare a plate and deliver it to a homeless veteran or season an extra turkey and deliver it to a needy veteran family. If this seems stressful or exhausting, you could invite a veteran over for dinner and share the true meaning of Thanksgiving with them.

*"No act of kindness, no matter how small, is ever wasted." - Aesop*

## Help Organize a Veteran Welcome-Home Rally or Party

I believe our brave men and women returning home from deployment deserve a grand homecoming ceremony put in place by their respective cities or states. I remember how excited I was upon my return home after my first deployment overseas. As we entered the base at 29 Palms California, we were met with banners of all shapes and sizes held up high by our wives, families and other well-wishers who kept cheering and waving at us as our bus drove into our staging area. That was such an exhilarating feeling for me as I had not seen my wife and daughter for a substantial amount of time. Feelings of love, pride, and some level of anxiety were all in the mix as we all shed tears of joy.

I only wish all our returning veterans could experience the same joy I felt on that day. Actually, they can if you're willing to put a little time and effort into making sure our veterans get the love and respect they deserve when they return home. How do you do this? Show them your support by designing banners and putting together a small festivity in their honor. Posters or banners bearing their names and a short "welcome home" message will go a long way in demonstrating your love and support.

## Help a Veteran Seek Employment

This is the ultimate *thank you*. Most veterans are not looking for a handout, just a hand-up. They seek opportunities to showcase their skills in a meaningful and dignified way. The act of helping a veteran organize their portfolio and put his/her resume in the right order is instrumental in helping them secure a meaningful employment. How can you be of help? It doesn't take much really. You can drive to or call a local employment office in your town to make useful inquiries.

Posting a flyer at local supermarkets or on community boards will certainly get attention and this can be done without paying any charge whatsoever. A simple post on your Facebook page or other social media pages about what you have set out to do will also deliver your goodwill message at the speed of light. Come to think of it, if you were unemployed, how grateful would you be if someone assisted you in gaining employment? I believe this is the ultimate *thank you* for a veteran as you've helped to secure a means of livelihood.

## Help a Veteran with Substance Abuse Problems

If you know a veteran who has a substance abuse problem, you can move to get him/her help with their local VA Hospital or clinic. This kind gesture might just save a life. However, this is a tricky spot. Though your intentions are as innocent as it gets, you must be careful so as to avoid treading the wrong path in your approach. Make sure this veteran is one that has agreed to get help, otherwise, your invested time and concern may be looked upon as intrusive and unwelcoming.

Most veterans have available to them free VA substance abuse care and you can always make use of the internet to search and acquire the much-needed information about the nearest VA Hospital to you. Some VA facilities offer in-patient and out-patient care for the veteran. One call can make all the difference.

Throughout my adult life, I struggled with alcohol and drug abuse and I was lucky enough to have gotten help. My VA treatment facility in East Orange, New Jersey, even provided lunch and travel reimbursement. Many veterans are unaware of such benefit which means it's left to us to do the needful by getting this life changing information in the hands of our beloved veterans to afford them the opportunity to get the treatment and health care they deserve. Let's continue Abraham Lincoln's promise at his second inaugural address to our veterans;

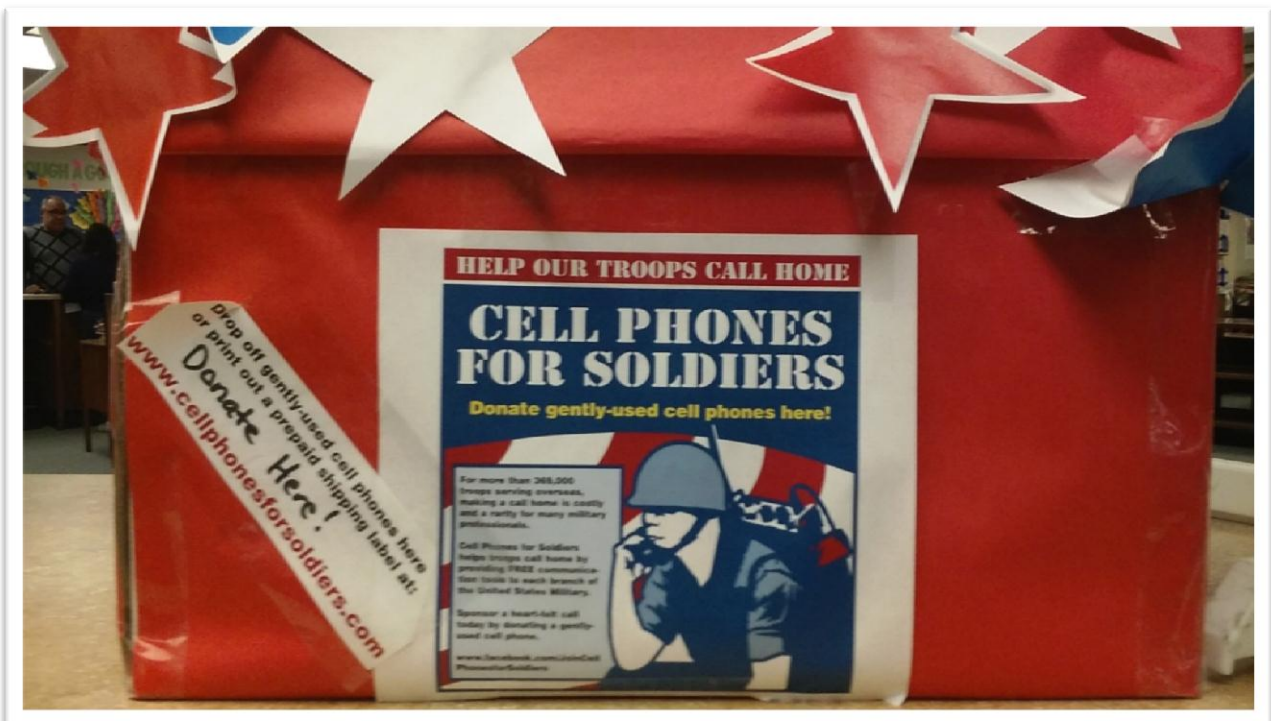
*"To care for him who shall have borne the battle and for his widow and his orphan."*



## Donate Electronic Equipment

Due to the advancement of technology, life has become more bearable and hassle-free. We now live in a world where electronics and gadgets in many cases, perform strenuous tasks with utmost efficiency. The proliferation of these electronic devices has made it possible for us to purchase more advanced appliances even at cheaper rates. But what happens to all those electronics we do not use anymore? You guessed it; they are collecting dust in a storage or closet. Giving out such unused appliances or equipment to organizations like Habitat for Humanity, the Salvation Army and Good Will Industries will see to it that these unused items reach the homes of our veterans and the community at large. Donating your unused computers, DVDs, cell phones, video games, etc., will make a difference. These items can even be picked up at your home or office.

Another organization, [DVDS4VETS.org](http://DVDS4VETS.org) is a great choice to help our veterans benefit from your unused DVDs. Contact any of the above-listed organizations today to schedule a pick-up and finally, you get to add more room in your home in the process. In fact, many of your donations are tax deductible which makes it a win-win for both parties!





## Donate a Car

Organizations like the local Purple Heart Foundation provide many great services for our veterans. As posted on their website [www.purpleheart.org](http://www.purpleheart.org), the organization was chartered by Congress in 1958. The Military Order of the Purple Heart is composed of military men and women who received the Purple Heart Medal for wounds suffered in combat. Although membership is restricted to the combat wounded, the organization supports all veterans and their families with a myriad of nation-wide programs by Chapters and National Service Officers.

However, the donation of your vehicle to the Purple Heart Foundation goes to provide for the many services offered to support our veterans and their families. Processing veteran's claims for compensation, pension, medical care, education, job training, employment, veteran preference, housing, death and burial benefits are some of the many duties carried out by this outstanding organization. In addition, if you're looking for a tax break, consider donating your car. It's tax deductible.

## Donate to a Thrift Shop

The fact is, as Americans, we are conditioned to be good consumers and it's no news that our generation buys and owns more 'stuff' than any previous generation in human history. Just take a look at our landfills to get an idea. Regardless of your socio-economic status, you own more than one coat, own more than one pair of shoes, and during the course of the year, including holidays such as Christmas, and birthdays, we receive all sorts of gadgets and goods that are only used for a certain period of time before we get bored and move on to the newest products.

Consider donating any one of your many extras whether it's clothing, electronics, unused DVDs, or sporting products to a thrift shop. Your generous donation will greatly help veteran organizations like AMVETS (American Veterans) carry out their activities. Their website, [www.amvets.org](http://www.amvets.org) will explain the easy process of donation and where their centers can be found all over the country. Many other organizations exist to exclusively help our men and women who have heeded the call to service, now it's our turn to serve them. Question is, how willing are you to be of help?

## Donate a Bike or Motor Scooter

If you have a bike or a scooter you're not enthused about riding anymore, or your son or daughter has outgrown the childhood stage and no longer rides their bicycle or motorbike, why not offer the unused bike to a veteran? Your gift could support the veteran's mode of transportation to work or for exercise. Either way, the veteran gets the benefit of transportation while you get the satisfaction of having contributed to their income or health.

If it happens that you don't have any of the above mentioned to offer a veteran but you have direct information on an organization, be it a church, police station or charity home that provides such items to needy communities, it wouldn't hurt to pass the information along to veterans and veteran organizations.

## Donate a Coat or Blazer

During your spring-cleaning, strive to put aside items like a coat or a blazer that would help in keeping a veteran warm. This way, you don't just get to help a veteran; your contributions towards keeping at least, one veteran warm this winter would bring you some indescribable feeling of satisfaction and philanthropy done right. You can either chose to present the gift yourself or drop the coat off at any of the many organizations who take care of Veterans.

## Support Events that Allocate Proceeds of Revenues to Veterans

There are companies that sponsor events with all or partial proceeds allocated to Veterans. An example of a company like this is Burger King. In fact, Burger King for many years has partnered with the VFW (Veterans of Foreign Wars) to help donate millions to the VFW's cause of helping veterans and their families. Look out for annual events sponsored by Burger King that help support our veterans.

Another great organization is The Veterans Outreach Center ([www.veteransoutreachcenter.org](http://www.veteransoutreachcenter.org)). Several organizations are found with the sole aim to cater for those who are incapacitated to do so themselves due one occurrence or the other. Subsequently, companies, firms, and even individuals have taken it upon themselves to contribute a great deal towards ensuring the safety and betterment of mankind; especially the underprivileged.



Due to my research for this book, I recently came across The Veterans Group located at 3209 Baring Street, Philadelphia, PA 19104.

The Veterans Group mission as stated on their website ([www.theveteransgroup.org](http://www.theveteransgroup.org)):

“The mission of The Veterans Group is to empower veterans and their family members to once again become productive members of society.”

It just so happens that the current director is a childhood friend of mine and Army veteran, and I not only reconnected with him but also learned about this wonderful organization that is enriching veterans lives in The City of Brotherly love via a Facebook exchange. Remember, organizations like this can only exist with the help of people like you who are caring and willing to help.

Andrew Carnegie once said; *"Wealth is not to feed our egos, but to feed the hungry and to help people help themselves."* The truth is, you don't have to be a multi-millionaire to do charitable work. It takes a little donation here and there and your unwavering support to organizations birthed to cater for such collective responsibility.

## Participate in Veteran-Sponsored Events

There are plenty of opportunities for participating in veterans sponsored events. For example, go to the [www.VA.gov](http://www.VA.gov) website and you will notice a call for this year's '2016 National Veterans Day Poster Contest' is under way. Every year the VA's National Veterans Outreach office holds a contest for the best poster which will be on display not only stateside, but also at military installation around the world. For contest specifics and more information go to [www.VA.gov](http://www.VA.gov) website.

In addition, many sporting events like walks and races, are held throughout the country in honor of veterans. Your attendance or support will go a long way in showcasing your appreciation of veterans within and outside your community. You could help by investing your time and capital resources, joining the organizing committee for such events, and possibly assist in creating unique themes that will suit the purpose of the event(s) being organized.

## Deliver a Veteran's Benefit Book to the Veteran/Family

You can pick up a Veterans Benefit book at a local VA hospital or clinic and deliver it to the veteran/family. If there is a book more important than that one you're reading now to benefit our vets, it's the 'The Federal Benefits for Veterans Dependents & Survivors.' As of this printing the cost of the book is \$8 in the US, international price is \$11.20, but you can normally find some free copies as mentioned above at VA hospitals and some VA satellite clinics, they do go fast.

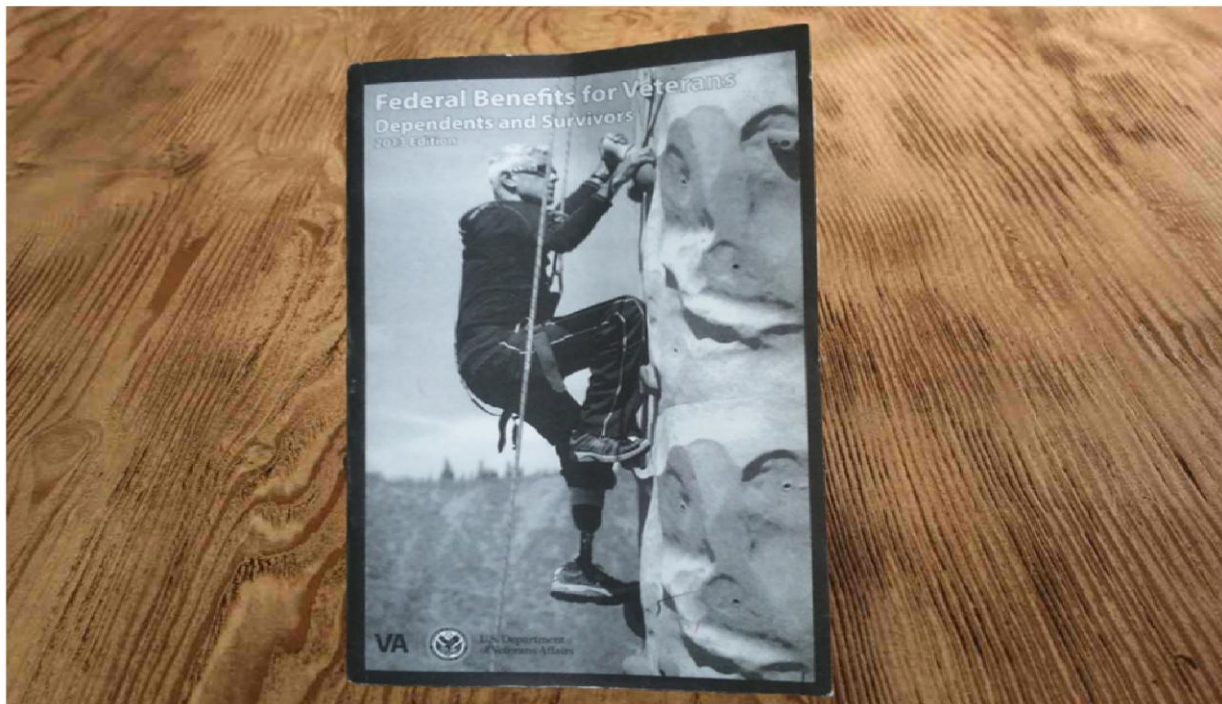
Mailing Address:

US Government Printing Office

P.O. Box 979050

St. Louis, MO 63197-9000

The pages of such books are filled with pieces of invaluable information ranging from free healthcare to how to proceed with burial benefits. In addition, guaranteed home loans, educational benefits for veterans, dependents, and the proper procedures involved in the application for more benefits for veterans and their families are also included.





The current government order website is [www.bookstore.gpo.gov](http://www.bookstore.gpo.gov). Why the government does not do a better job at providing this information to our veterans is beyond my scope of understanding. I am not too surprised when I speak to veterans about how little information they have in regards to their earned benefits. Yes, earned benefits not entitlements. As of this writing, the website listed is [www.va.gov/healthbenefits](http://www.va.gov/healthbenefits) and phone number is [1-877-222-VETS \(8387\)](tel:1-877-222-VETS). Let's get this information out to our brave young men and women in need of this information ASAP.

## Buy and Deliver a Homeless Veteran Winter Clothing

I suggested in number #24 you deliver a blazer or coat to a veteran in need. In #28 I'm suggesting you take it a step further, and provide new clothing and winter gear for our veterans. In the words of Franklin D. Roosevelt at his second inaugural address (1937); *"The test of our progress is not whether we add more to the abundance of those who have much; it is whether we provide enough for those who have too little"*. Providing any homeless individual a clean and comfortable item of clothing is not only a great gesture but a humane thing to do. You should consider buying and delivering the purchased clothing to a veteran or organization working with homeless veterans depending on the size of your wallet.

## Show your Gratitude on Social Media or Through Texts

True story... I wrote this tip not too long ago while working on this book project. I had been off Facebook for over five years now, which also translates to me losing contact with many friends over that time period. Anyway, I opened a new Facebook account and after accepting the first friend request, a message from a high school classmate read, "Thank you for your service Emilio!" You can only imagine how I felt. She put a smile on my face while I rushed to reply.

A few words of gratitude can help others uplift their attitude. You too can put a smile on a veterans face with just a few words, "Thank you for your service!" And guess what? You can easily reach out to so many people via social media. Honestly, I never get tired of hearing those words and I believe other veterans don't mind either. You can also text or put a call through to a veteran you know, asking about their health while throwing in a few words of appreciation as well.

## Buy a Dollar Lotto Ticket for a Veteran

I came across this idea as I realized that financially this year, I was unable to buy gifts for family and friends (who seem to be multiplying like Gremlins year after year). I just purchased a hand-full of New Jersey Mega Million lotto tickets whose drawing was on Christmas day. I then took the opportunity to write a heartfelt message inside the card with an inscription, "This is the BEST Christmas gift you ever received. Good Luck!" I also included the website where they could find the winning numbers. I had fun handing out the cards as everyone was exchanging gifts while I made a big deal of the gift that was inside.

As I expected, the lotto gifts became the subject of discussion that Christmas morning. Someone jokingly said, "If you don't hear from me in a month, then you know what happened!" I gave my veteran neighbor his lotto ticket and card and I could tell he was really thankful as he wasted no time in giving me a glass candy jar filled with Peppermint Patties chocolates. That was his way of saying *thank you* to me. Everybody wins: you feel good about your gift (low-budget and smart) which may bring good fortune for the veteran.



## Write and Publish a Human Interest Story

Honor a veteran by sharing their unique story with the world. Have a proper article written about them and send it to local Newspapers for publication as a human interest story. Veterans are amazing people and have an infinite amount of stories about their experience in service to share with the world. Telling these stories will allow for better appreciation of these veterans and a greater understanding as to how life in service really is.

A veteran may have received a degree after 20 years of struggling to earn one. I know this story personally because it's my story. I have shared this with many who wanted to go back to school but think it's too late. If you think your story may not make it to the pages of the newspaper or showcased on television, clear off that thought. First, understand that news media (print, broadcast or online) are always in search of special 'human interest' stories that have underlying positive and inspiring messages. This means you have to put in extra effort when writing your story.

Once you have your story completed, don't just send it to one media outlet. Increase the chances of acceptance by submitting your story to multiple media agencies. An example of a worthy news story would be a write-up about a relative or friend of yours that has received a posthumous award or medal.

Annually, many veterans are awarded honors for acts of bravery that have gone unnoticed for decades even after the death of such veterans. You can be that one person to champion this cause and help the family keep the memory of our country's heroes alive. Stories change people, and people change the world.

## Help a Disabled Veteran Secure a Service Animal

Whether we agree with it or not...pets are like family for many. It's common knowledge in today's society that animals offer great companionship. Subsequently, owning a pet dog or a cat has gross therapeutic health benefits. If you know a veteran or have a veteran friend you think would benefit from such a connection, help them through the process of securing a service animal status.

Vets Helping Heroes ([www.vetshelpingheroes.org](http://www.vetshelpingheroes.org)) is a great place to start if you're looking for information on helping to secure a service animal status. The information below came from this website, best illustrates the benefit a service dog provides.

"Assistance dogs provide independence and service 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. In addition, they are a source of much-needed enjoyment as beloved "family members" - running with children, providing comfort for spouses, and the security of knowing that they can even provide such services as predicting an oncoming seizure."

Another great resource on this subject is [www.operationwearehere.com](http://www.operationwearehere.com)

*"A Dog is the only thing on earth that loves you more than he loves himself"* –Unknown

## Encourage a Veteran to Enroll in Continuing Education Classes

There's an old saying that goes, "The more you learn, the more you earn." Make it a little task of yours to talk to a veteran into returning to school, taking an enrichment class or even earning a diploma or a college degree. You should be able to open their eyes to the many possibilities education brings and why making that decision to go back to school is a smart life choice. Take it a step further by driving him/her to the local community college where you'd introduce them to the school VA liaison. Most technical schools/colleges/universities have a VA representative that will be of great help.



## Honor your High School Classmates that Served in the Armed Forces

This is a great way to add more interest and value to your event while promoting a good cause. Honoring our veterans is a class act that never gets old. A simple act that is rewarding for all parties involved. There is no limit when it comes to the numerous creative ways you can plan to display your gratitude for service to your veteran classmates.

If the opportunity for a more special recognition, such as having engraved items with the veteran's name and branch of service distributed to attendees at the event isn't visible, then a special mention in the program will suffice.

## Sponsor a Veteran's Child for a Semester of Private School/College

Your company/organization may have money allocated for such educational pursuits, so getting the needed funds will most likely be stress-free. If you're financially upright and desire to do this on your own, be sure your donation would not have adverse effects on your personal financial status. Then, keep the veteran in-the-know about your made decision to honor him/her. When this is done, you'd find it to be such an outstanding way to honor those men and women who have served us and now need our service.

## Help a Veteran or a Veteran's Family Move

Veterans are known to relocate a lot, be it from one state to another, or one country to another. Whatever the case may be, you can offer to help a veteran/family with their moving arrangements. This can be done by mapping out time to help them move out their belongings, pack up a meal and a couple of drinks for their travel, or even supporting them financially. No matter what you do to help, your kindness will not be easily forgotten.

## Offer a Gift Card

Maybe for you, the best way to show your appreciation is through a gift card that may include a prepaid gas card, a local restaurant, or even one from the big box stores like Target or Walmart, it's a great idea nonetheless. Whatever gift card you choose, I know the gift will be appreciated.

## Volunteer with Veteran Groups

Many organizations exist to help veterans in different ways. For example, the organization for Disabled American Veterans (DAV.org) amongst other services of theirs, help to transport veterans that are unable to drive themselves to the VA hospital for doctor's appointments. Since the DAV always accepts volunteers to drive veterans to their medical appointments, this is where you come in. The [www.veteransnetwork.net](http://www.veteransnetwork.net) is a great resource site with dozens of links to organizations which can use your help.

## Buy from a Veteran-Owned Business

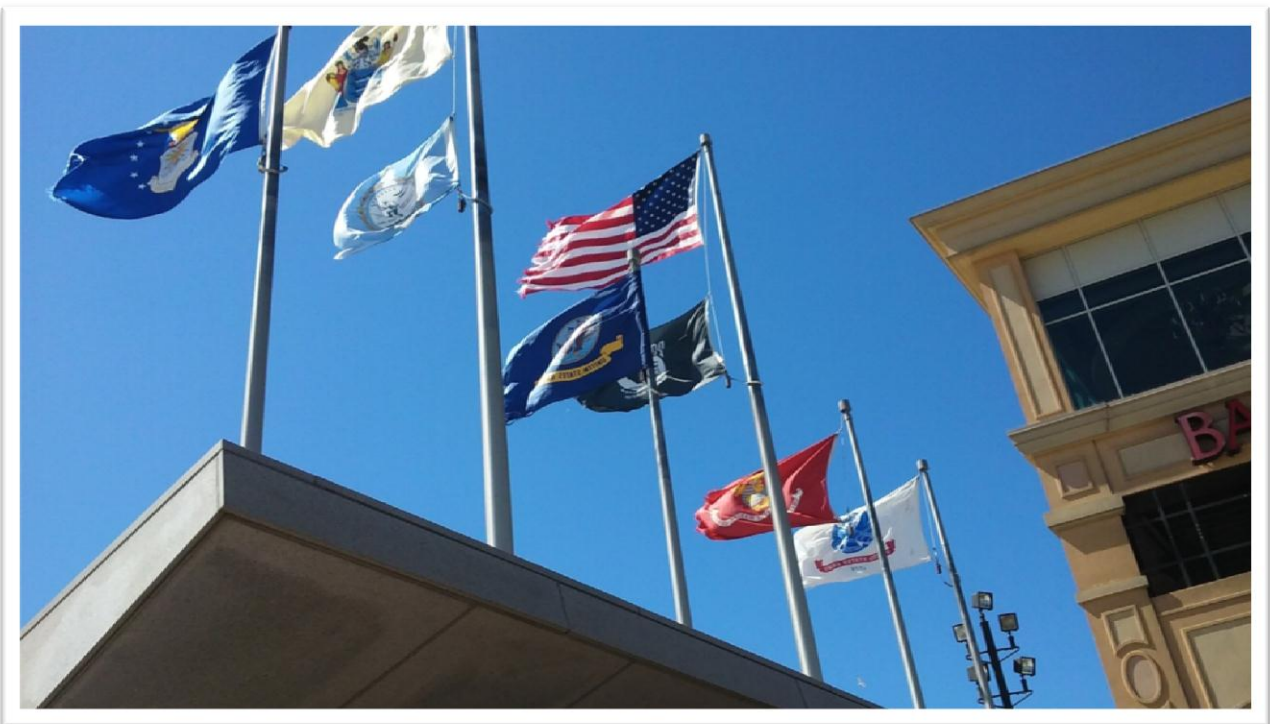
As we all buy goods from renowned malls, stores and outlets or require a particular service on a daily basis, veterans also have businesses of their own that double as a means of livelihood. Patronizing a veteran-owned business will not only show your appreciation, but also afford them the opportunity to make more profit. You should know that about 9 percent of American businesses are operated by prior servicemen. What do companies like 7-Eleven, Fed Ex, USAA, General Motors, Lockheed Martin, Proctor and Gamble, and 24 Hour fitness have in common? You guessed it; they are all founded or led by veterans.

Check out [www.veteranownedbusiness.com](http://www.veteranownedbusiness.com) to locate veteran-owned or operated businesses in your area. Meanwhile, you can visit the social media page of the American Veteran-Owned Business Association on [www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com) for more information on veteran-owned businesses.

## Respect the American Flag

Veterans are trained to value patriotism and dedication to our country. Following in these footsteps of patriotism is also another way to show respect for our veterans. For instance, if you see a flag on or about to touch the ground, provide assistance in restoring the flag to its normal position. If it happens that you can't get the flag to fly, you can fold it neatly and drop it off at a building close by; which could also be responsible for flying the flag or take it down to the nearest government agency. Be it in America or anywhere else the U.S. flag is flying, the ground has been deemed sacred. Showing respect for the flag and all the sacrifices made by our nation's veterans is vitally important.

Visit <http://www.usflag.org> for instructions and tips on how to properly salute, handle, and treat your American flag.





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## Support Legislation that Helps to Maintain or Improve Veterans' Life

Lending your voice towards ensuring the betterment of lives of veterans is instrumental to the creation of bills and approval of government policies that will be of utmost benefit to veterans all over the country. These may include better health care, free education, better pay, and impressive retirement packages for veterans.

## Show Respect for the National Anthem

As a patriotic citizen, it is required of you to suspend for a brief moment, whatever it is you are doing each time the National Anthem is played either at a professional or local sports event. Let me also reiterate that this also extends beyond sporting events. Every situation, anywhere the National Anthem comes on, endeavor to stand still in an effort to pay respects to our beloved America. This silent moment speaks volumes about your commitment to our country and her countrymen.

## Start a Blog Post about Upcoming Veteran Events

The continuous advancement in technology has made it easier to do quite a number of things with the internet. Subsequently, you can start a blog for free and use that platform to spotlight veteran-related events coming up in your local community, city or state.

What this makes you is an influential go-to person for veteran-related functions. Needless to say, you'd bring honor and virtue unto yourself and the veterans featured in your blog posts. Blogs are known to amass attention and create massive social movements regarding topical issues in the world today and you can also join in on the trend.

## Offer to Babysit for a Military Family

Yes, young people can be of service too. Obviously, this is an intimate setting so it will be most appreciated and well received by someone who knows or has a personal relationship with a veteran family.

## Subscribe to a Monthly-Fee Based Organization

There are many ways Americans can support our veterans as listed in this book. One of the most meaningful and durable ways to do this is by subscribing to a monthly fee-based organization like DAV (Disabled American Veterans, [www.dav.org](http://www.dav.org)).

As mentioned earlier, the DAV is a non-profit organization that provides many services to our country's most valuable resource; our veterans. As a matter of fact, I pledge my financial support to the DAV, it's one of my favorite veteran organizations that never fails to help veterans in need. The DAV assists veterans to file benefit claims with the Veterans Administration. They also drive veterans who do not have transportation access get to doctors' appointments.

In addition, the DAV operates a mobile transport bus which provides literature and medical screening to veterans in most major metropolitan areas in the country during the year. Another non-profit organization with a strong media presence is the Wounded Warriors Project. Their mission as stated on their website [www.woundedwarriorsproject.org](http://www.woundedwarriorsproject.org) is, "To honor and empower Wounded Warriors."

## Display your Flag at Home

Nothing communicates the joy and pride of being an American better than draping our homes with the beautiful Red, White, and Blue colors of the American flag. If you can, hoist the American flag high on your front lawn where neighbors and passersby can easily catch a glimpse of its gracefulness and continuously comprehend its significance. If your home or apartment are not set-up for such a display, consider tying a yellow ribbon around a tree to signify support for our troops. In addition, buying 'flag magnets' specially designed for your vehicle is another patriotic move.

## Pray for a Particular Veteran/Family

If you're a person of faith, this should come easy for you. Sending out positive energy into the universe with your words and great intentions has proven to be effective. Use prayers to help a veteran move forward in his/her personal and professional life. While you're at it, pray for the United States of America as well.



## Volunteer to Help Out at a “Toys for Tots” Collection Center

As stated on the Toys for Tots website;

*The mission of the U. S. Marine Corps Reserve Toys for Tots Program is to collect new, unwrapped toys during October, November and December each year, and distribute those toys as Christmas gifts to less fortunate children in the community in which the campaign is conducted.*

There is the need to have people around to wrap and pack the hundreds of gifts that sponsors of this event have provided, with the sole aim of distributing these gifts to the less fortunate, which in turn affords them the opportunity to experience a happy holiday filled with pleasant memories just like most of us enjoyed. You can volunteer to help with the wrapping, packing and delivery of these gifts to the selected recipients. Visit [www.toysfortots.org](http://www.toysfortots.org) to learn how you can play a big role in the Toys for Tots tradition.

## Have Business Cards or Design your Own “Thank You” Cards

Place an order of about 250 or more business cards from places like [www.vistaprint.com](http://www.vistaprint.com) that offer you a wide range of template designs from which you can make a selection. You could pick an American flag or eagle that reads; “Thank you for your service!” and then, throw in some creativity by putting a reminder or bits of vital information (as learned in this book) on the other side of the card that lists available discounts, services and other beneficial things a veteran may not have been aware of prior to your kind gesture.

## Pick-up FREE Literature at a Veterans Hospital/Clinic and Keep them nearby

Since we are at the halfway point it's a good time to mention that at the end of this book, you'll have an opportunity to make a special pledge to help veterans whenever the opportunity arises and completely on your own terms. No worries, we're not asking you to go fight in the front lines, but just a simple pledge which asks that you become more 'veteran conscious' during your travels. If you come across literature, flyers, or pamphlets that may benefit a veteran, please do pick them up. This is what #50 is asking of you.

Another simple yet great way to demonstrate your commitment to our veterans is to take a photo with your phone or traveling device and post a job opening for veterans, a business start-up seminar, or special housing opportunities for homeless veterans to your social media via Facebook, Twitter, or the latest in media communication site.

Whatever the information, you literally can be the first line of defense for this unique population which I wholeheartedly believe is greatly underserved by our country and communities. I feel so strongly about this that I will repeat it again, veterans are not asking for a handout, just a hand-up!

## Attend a Veterans Day Parade

I'm proud to announce that Philadelphia, PA, has conducted their first ever city-wide Veterans Day Parade. This happened on the 11th of August, 2015 and I must admit, it came as a surprise to me that this veteran celebration was not done many years sooner. After all, Philadelphia is the City of Brotherly love. Well, this goes to demonstrate that cities throughout the country have enough room to showcase their patriotic pride and love for our veterans.

Strive to attend or begin your own parade to honor our veterans. Even Atlantic City has a nice veterans parade conducted on the famous AC Boardwalk. Roy Rogers once said; "We can't all be heroes; someone has to sit on the curb and clap as they go by." My translation of this is; though we all can't be veterans by profession, the unwavering support, respect, admiration and determination that we show them makes us our own true heroes. Basically, all you have to do to express appreciation is dress up and show up!

## Hire a Veteran

Take a minute to think about the immense training and useful skills that a veteran will bring to your business or organization. Here are a few reasons hiring a veteran will be of benefit to you; first, veterans are familiar with the culture of getting things done effectively and efficiently. From the very inception of the military, young men and women learned the value of working to achieve a set goal or objective in a team environment.

Strategic planning and execution of directives are some of the veteran skill sets deemed to be the prerequisites desired in an employee especially by highly successful business owners.

Veterans have also learned to be independent and can make logical executive decisions when necessary. While in the military, they are taught that their actions have consequences hence the need for guaranteed responsibility. Veterans take pride in their appearance and stay dedicated to their work. Another important factor you should seriously consider is the prompt arrival and presence at the workplace. In regards to a company's bottom dollar, many tax benefits are provided for providing gainful employment to our veterans. So, your best bet is to always hire a veteran!

## Give a Veteran a Haircut/Make-Over

If you're a barber or a hairstylist, offer to help a veteran boost their self-esteem with a nice haircut or make-over. How do you feel when you get your best haircut? I normally feel uplifted and renewed with a sense of a stronger self-image. I believe when we feel and look better, we perform better in all areas of our lives, be it personal or professional. You have the opportunity to help a veteran look and feel better about themselves with just a haircut or total make-over.

## Purchase a Monthly Bus Pass Or Give a Ride to a Local Veteran to Work

If you know a veteran that lives in your neighborhood and probably works close to your office or workplace, you can offer to drop them off on a regular basis. If doing this isn't comfortable for you but you'd really love to help, you can purchase a monthly bus pass on their behalf. If you decide to take things a step further, you can help the veteran get a license or restore a suspended one.



## Help Tutor a Student Veteran

Many veterans coming out of the military look forward to returning to school and taking advantage of earned educational benefits such as the GI Bill and chapter 31 vocational rehab. You can help offer to tutor a student veteran by making yourself available at a local community or state college. Most campuses have a VA liaison person who works with veteran students. Contact this individual and let them know of your subject proficiency and desire to help. I always share the story of how it took me 20 years to finish up a 2-year college degree, yes you read it correctly. Finally...I was able to succeed in achieving a lifelong goal of earning a college degree program with the help of tutors. True story, I had to re-take statistics multiple times, but I eventually got it, thanks in part to a tutor. You really can make a difference by helping a veteran's dream come true.

## Help a Veteran Stay Organized

The best definition of ‘organized’ I have ever heard is ‘having what you need when you need it’. So, if you’re really gifted at being organized, you can become an invaluable person to a veteran. The simple act of getting a day planner or showing a veteran how to use a mobile phone to set reminders for VA medical appointments and other basic things that could come off as complex will go a long way in empowering a physically challenged veteran. Though not all veterans you’ll meet will possess physical limitations, some may just lack the commitment to the organization or need to be reminded how to stay organized. As with all the information in this book so far, use common sense and your best judgment so as not to offend an unwilling veteran who does not desire your help. If you recall, the beginning of this book discussed getting to know a veteran by engaging in conversations, this opportunity will allow you to build trust and rapport with the veteran.

## Become a Proxy for a Veteran's Care (Healthcare/Finance)

Many veterans, for a myriad of reasons, do not receive benefits (healthcare or financial) that they so rightfully deserve. You can be that person that becomes a champion for the veteran who may not have a family or friends to give voice to their needs.

I was going through a personal struggle many years ago and was not managing my finances well. I soon found myself making poor financial decisions which led to credit and debt problems. After giving it all some serious thought, I decided to get help. I contacted an old friend whom I respected and considered to be someone who was better at financial management. We went to my bank and I added her to my account. This authorized her to make deposits and withdrawals from my account. It took about 6 months before I started to experience a healthier financial outlook. As of today, my credit and financial resources are in the best shape in years, due to this one decision of seeking and making someone my proxy.

Ask yourself, who can I help? If you're the kind of person I described above, you can be that for a veteran in need. While the veteran may not seek help, most of us can tell when a family or friend needs our help. I'm certainly glad I asked and was met with a caring individual. According to John F. Kennedy, as contained in his 1961 inaugural address,

*"If a free society cannot help the many who are poor, it cannot save the few who are rich."*

## Drive a Veteran to an AA/NA Meeting

Driving a veteran to ensure they get the help they need is a noble act. While in active duty and as a civilian, I talk to veterans on a constant basis. As it is set-up today, anyone with a drunk-driving offense is almost always recommended to attend AA/NA meetings.

A loss of license is the standard punishment unless you're fortunate enough to have a provisional license to work and attend meetings. In any case, if you can become the person to help a veteran meet their court obligations due to a court suspension of driving privileges, this will help the veteran in need tremendously stay on track to license restoration and assure they get the help they need with substance abuse.



## Take a Veteran to School Day

Schedule an appointment with the management of a school and reach a consensus on a particular day you can take a veteran over to share his/her story with students and teachers. First, you need to inform the veteran about your plans and when you receive an affirmation of their willingness to share their story, write to or visit a school to brief the administration about what you intend to do.

We all remember and cherish those times speakers came to our schools to share their life changing stories and here is our chance to make these students feel the same way. More importantly, we'd be imbibing the culture of patriotism in them. So, this is an opportunity for teachers and those working in a school environment to invite a veteran to share their military experience.

## Offer to Clean a Veteran's Yard

Every human needs a clean environment for good health and safety. Many older or physically challenged veterans often find cleaning their environment to be very difficult. However, a kind gesture like offering to clean a veteran's yard can make a big difference in their lives. How do you find a veteran who can benefit from your help? You have many resources to get information out today like social media, posting a note at your church or work bulletin board, or simply asking your circle of family and friends. For some reason as I write this, the timeless quote "No man can become rich unless he enriches others!" enters my headspace. I believe a simple act of kindness like this will certainly enrich the lives of veterans struggling to keep a safe and working environment.

## Hire a Spouse/Family Member of a Veteran

When a company hires a member of a veteran's family, they are lessening the burden on that veteran. This is the case especially if the veteran is disabled and the spouse, who is the primary breadwinner, has been hired by your company. This lends credence to the words of Robert South that go thus; *"If there be any truer measure of a man than by what he does, it must be by what he gives."*

## Respect the Uniform

Bear in mind that the military uniform signifies decade upon decade of rigorous training, combats, self-sacrifice, genuine patriotism, strength and perseverance of our brave fighters who have struggled to keep our country alive. The least we can do as civilians is to honor these patriots by giving their uniform the respect it deserves. Be respectful by not wearing an official military uniform if you did not or do not serve in the military.

Though it is understandable that your respect and admiration for the military may prompt you towards wearing a uniform, you can help preserve the honor and prestige the uniform carries by leaving it to be worn solely by the military personnel and veterans.





## Know the Difference between Memorial Day and Veteran's Day

Learning the difference between these two special occasions will allow you to fully appreciate the meaning and celebration each event represents to our nation's heroes-our veterans. Note that the Veterans Day is a day set aside to honor those who serve our country and are still with us. On the other hand, the Memorial Day is celebrated to honor those who have served our country but are no longer with us.

## Visit a Recruiting Office

You can visit a recruiting office to thank the soldiers for their service and even offer a home-meal or coffee. Recruiters play a crucial role in helping to select and qualify future service men or women to serve and protect our beloved USA. This would also be a good time to provide a good lead of a potential candidate who has expressed interest in joining America's finest armed services. I always encourage young men and women who do not have a firm idea where or what they want to do in life to consider to serve our country. The experience and benefits they will attain in such a short-time period will last a lifetime.

## Visit a War Memorial

When planning your next holiday or vacation, endeavor to bring flowers to a war memorial honoring our veterans. While you're at it, take a photo and post it up on your social media pages with very interesting captions. For instance, you can use the tag line, "Thanking those who served!" If you're ever in Atlantic City, New Jersey, make sure you make your way to the Korean War Memorial right on the boardwalk. Here you'll find soldier statues as tall as a building as you pose for a respectful picture.



## Display a Yellow Ribbon on your Car/Tree

Tying a yellow ribbon around a tree is an easy and awesome way to show support for our country's heroes. If you don't have a tree on your property or somewhere nearby, you can buy a magnetic yellow ribbon and place it somewhere in or on your car.

## Grant a Wounded Warrior's Wish

Granting a veteran's wish does not necessarily mean doing something extravagant. As a matter of fact, no veteran would wish for the impossible or feel comfortable putting you in a tight spot. In most cases, such wishes border around basic needs, some of which have been highlighted in this text. You can visit [www.hopeforthewarriors.org](http://www.hopeforthewarriors.org) for better understanding.

## Save Expired Coupons

Save your expired coupons and send them to a military base overseas (NA stateside). Expired coupons can still be used for up to six months after its expiration date at military installations. So, instead of throwing them in the trash, why not make them serve a more useful purpose. Many military families are living off of one income, mainly the veteran.

I believe 'couponing' is just one of the coolest things we can do for our veterans and families overseas. You can get your youth group, church group, or school involved in this project. For information on how to participate, check out these sites [www.Grocerysavingtips.com](http://www.Grocerysavingtips.com) and [www.Coupsfortroops.org](http://www.Coupsfortroops.org)

Remember when you help a military family, you indirectly lessen the burden on the veteran you want to help.

## Sport a Set of Custom Dog -Tags with the Name of a Veteran

You can sport a set of custom dog tags with the name of a family member or friend who has served or still in service. Doing this will endear them to our hearts, and keep the memories of those we have lost alive. Such that each time we see these dog-tags, we'd be reminded of the many sacrifices our veterans have made and are still making to ensure the safety and security of our country. Just Google search 'custom dog tags' to find a website or visit a local Army and Navy store in your area. Call first since not all stores will have an engraving machine on the premises.

## Send Prepaid Calling Cards to Veterans Serving at Home or Overseas

While I was in the Marine Corps, calling cards were the equivalent of gold. My buddies and I always saved up our pennies to buy some cards or begged other guys to allow us use some of their call-card time to contact our family and friends.

These days, I have come to realize that even in this social media-infused world, calling cards are still in high demand. Since communication is an integral part of human life that facilitates healthy interactions and dialogues, securing a link between a veteran on deployment and his family is instrumental towards boosting the morale of such soldier which then breeds more focus and psychological readiness for combat. You have an opportunity here to either help an organization (like the USO.org) that is already providing this type of assistance or to create your own calling card initiative program for veterans.



## Flag Ceremony

If you're traveling to or near Cape May, NJ, make sure you visit and witness the 40-year old tradition at Sunset Beach that begins from the month of May and goes on till September in the evenings. The flags that are made to fly are brought by families from casket funerals of veterans. Watch old glory come down as taps play in the background. I encourage you to Google search your state or local to see if 'flag ceremonies' like this are available to you. If not, then you have the power to initiate one in your community.

## Gift a Military Hat

Buying a military hat for a veteran friend or relative is just another way to show appreciation. These hats can be gotten at an Army Navy store or a local VA hospital store. If locating these stores proves difficult, you can go the easy way by placing an order on an online store. This way, you can take the time to choose the one you deem most appropriate from a wide range of choices made available on the website. You can compare prices and if possible, sizes as well. You'll also discover many covers (hats) with special symbolism for a particular branch - Army, Navy, Marine, Air force, etc. I'll advise you to get a little information about the veteran you have chosen to give a gift. This will guide you towards making the right choice.

## Educate yourself About Veteran Challenges

When you make attempts at engaging veterans in discussions with a considerable level of understanding, bear in mind that these veterans may be faced with certain challenges that could have adverse effects on their general outlook towards life and in some cases, exert greater influence on the way they interact with other people. These could be emotional, mental or physical disabilities - like PTSD. In such situations, the best you can do is remain patient and mild in your approach. Reading up on how to manage such relationships is also of utmost importance.



## Give an Hour

Whatever your professional background or particular skill set is, consider offering your talents to a veteran in need with just about an hour of your time. These problems are most likely related to your field of expertise. For example, if you're an attorney, you may give a free consultation or help a veteran with a legal issue by writing a 'demand letter' on behalf of the veteran with a bill in question. If you're a handyman, you may be able to help a veteran family or disabled veteran with a home plumbing or other small home repair issue. We all can help by providing an hour of our best work to support our veteran population.

## Volunteer at a Veteran's Crisis Hotline

Statistically 22 veterans a day commit suicide.

What the Veterans Crisis Line does is connect veterans alongside families and friends who may be in crisis with qualified and properly trained responders at the Department of Veterans Affairs through a confidential toll-free hotline, online chat, or text.

You can volunteer to work at the center to ease the burden on other workers and most importantly, help those in crisis. Veterans and their loved ones can call 1-800-273-8255 for help.

## Visit the Gravesite of a Veteran

This is an emotionally rewarding experience. Upon your visit to any graveyard in the country, you will inevitably come across a veteran tombstone or plaque. After you read the inscription, close your eyes and take a few minutes to meditate. Then, open up your heart and say a prayer for the departed. While you do this, say a silent but heartfelt “thank you” to the veteran and their family for their service.

What this gives you is a sense of gratitude towards those who have sacrificed their lives to bring you the freedom you now enjoy. Remember, a price was paid for us to be free. The least we can do is honor those who fought and still fight for it.

## Provide a List of Food Pantries

Every major city has food pantries for its needy community. Compile a list of available food pantries and their locations and share it with the veteran community. For example, in Atlantic City, NJ, when you seek food assistance, they provide you with a list of their churches and charitable organizations in the Atlantic City area. Basically, this shows that a little research can go a long way in helping our veteran community.

## Make a Toast

This is another wonderful way to acknowledge our men and women in the armed forces by honoring them with a toast. Since we Americans love to wine, dine and travel, this is the perfect opportunity to take a moment and utter some words of gratitude.

For example, if you're at lunch with co-workers, take the initiative and make a toast. It doesn't take much really. You can say, "Before we chow down, let's take a moment to honor our great men and women who make our freedom at this gathering today possible!" Then clank your bottles or glasses and make merry.



## Take a Picture with a Veteran

When presented with the opportunity, take a picture with a veteran. You can have the photo framed and given to the veteran as a gift. If you want to get fancy, include kind words like; "Thank you for your service!"

## Fit 22 Challenge

Here is an excellent way to get in shape while bringing awareness about veteran's suicide (22 daily) caused in part by PTSD.

I challenge you like I challenged my nephew Raymond to perform 22 Push-ups for 22 days to bring awareness to the number of veterans who commit suicide daily.

Take a pic or video of you (group) performing the Push-ups at home, work, or near a Veterans Park throughout the country. Make sure you have situation awareness and conduct yourself always in a respectful manner. Your bringing awareness to the struggle of our dying veterans and the message needs to be approached with respect and dignity.

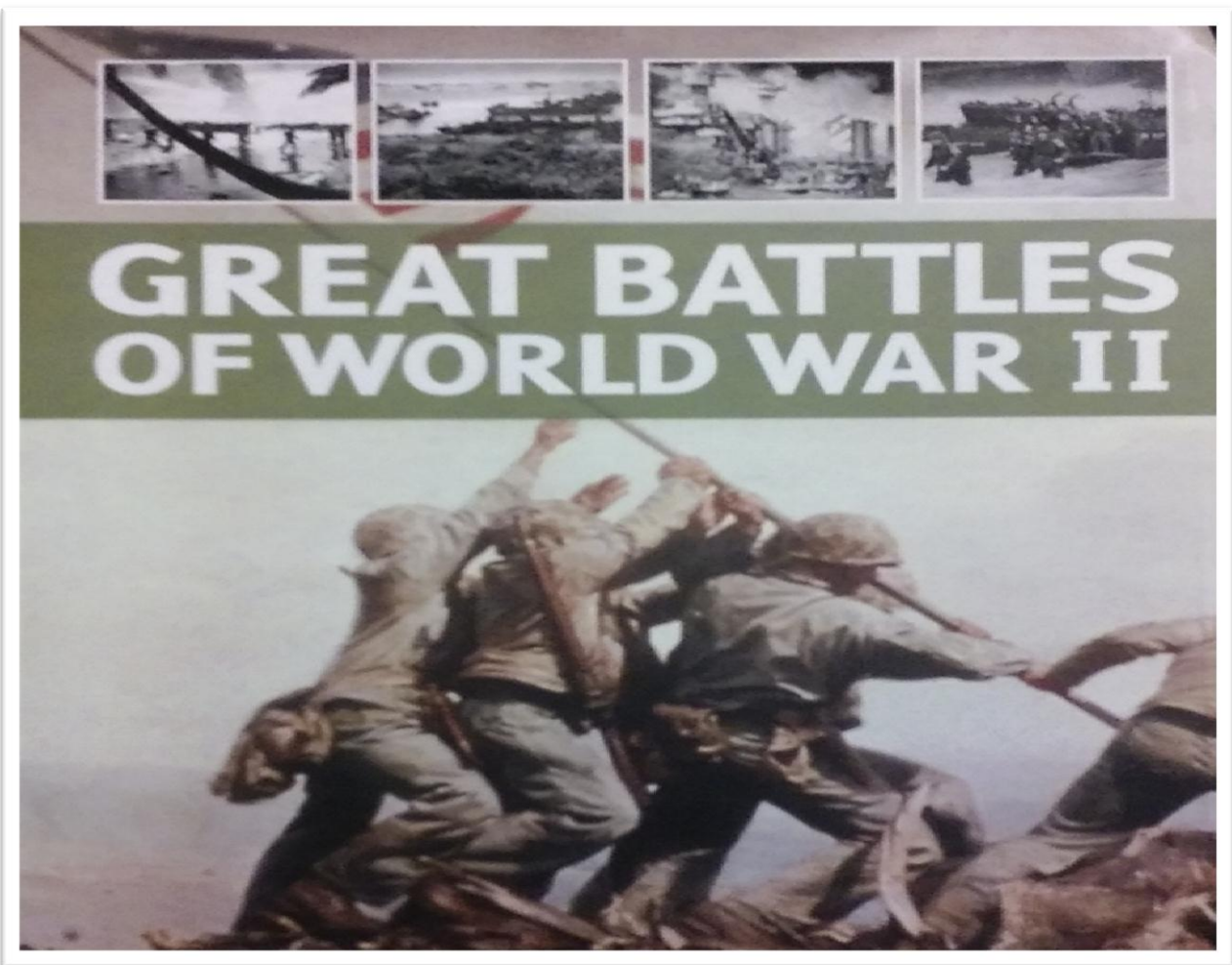
Post your pic or video on social media with the inscription, 'Helping our Heroes End the Struggle!' or whatever message you feel is appropriate. It's a win-win scenario. You get to have a reason to jump-start your day for 22 days of fitness, and our American Heroes get attention spotlighted about their personal struggle which ultimately will lead to better care, better prevention, and ultimately saving more lives within our veteran communities.

The 22 Push-ups is not new concept, in fact, I encourage you see how others online are bringing awareness to this great cause so you can better position your pics and videos- OoRah!

## Give a Veteran a Book of History

Nothing captures, documents or narrates a series of chronological events as well as a good book does. A book detailing America's history, for instance, will include both old and recent photos of the personalities and events that contributed to shaping our country, paving the way for what she is today; the Land of Freedom. These photos are properly captioned while the remaining pages are laced with texts that tell the American story.

Subsequently, a book of military history makes a great educational gift for veterans as it reminds them of the honor that accompanies patriotism and dedication to one's country. These books are filled with memorable dates, events and personalities that are dear to a veteran's heart.



## Learn a Little Military History

Gathering more knowledge about the workings of the military will help you get rid of incessant doubts and the misuse of basic terms adopted by the military. A Marine is a Marine while an Army veteran is not a Marine.

There are times when my family and friends, misidentify me and say; “This is my uncle who was in the Army!” Of course, I smile, and then make the correction by telling them I was in the Marines. Some people think it should not bother me but it does. If you’re going to introduce someone, introduce them correctly.

Under normal circumstances, you would not introduce the Pope as the pastor of the Catholic Church, so, make every effort to become acquainted with the veteran’s service history, including their branch of service. This goes a long way in building rapport and trust with the veteran.

## Give the Gift of a CD/Movie

Everyone enjoys watching movies and listening to music, the fact is they function as a sure means of relaxation and quality entertainment. Make it a little assignment to find out what a veteran's favorites are. If it is a great music collection you happen on, carefully wrap the CD and include a "*thank you*" note before presenting your gift to them. Same goes for movies. The note could read, "Appreciate all that you have done for our country. Thanks for your service!" Simple and sweet. If you are great with words, you can add a couple more. Either way, ensure your words bear a positive message.

## Give them Flowers

You don't have to worry about the sex of the veteran when presenting a bouquet of flowers. If your veteran is male, there's absolutely no problem. We like flowers too. Although it does not have to be anything like roses or carnations, I am quite partial to Spider flowers as I've always appreciated their beauty.

It has also been well documented today that nurturing flowers or animals is healthy for those involved. Giving a veteran a flower demonstrates a great gesture of appreciation on your part. In addition, the veteran recognizes they must do their part in order to maintain the beauty of this gift.

## Give a Genuine Compliment

One of the greatest human desires is to feel appreciated and giving a genuine compliment is a great way to do this. When complimenting a person or a particular activity, ensure your statements are true. The whole essence of giving compliments is to acknowledge the existence of someone doing something worthy of admiration or appreciation. Telling half-truths or lies in a bid to win the hearts of people doesn't qualify as making compliments. It's flattery in its entirety. If you must give a compliment, make observations to discover the areas worth praising in a person.

Here is an example; "Mr./Mrs. (enter veteran's name here), I noticed your lawn is always so well-manicured. You do a great job keeping it nice all the time." Simple. When it's genuine, the recipient of your compliments knows this and you can see the glow on their face.

*"Kindness in words creates confidence. Kindness in thinking creates profoundness. Kindness in giving creates love."* - Lao Tzu, Ancient Chinese Philosopher & Poet

## Help a Veteran Plan an Engagement/Wedding

If you are a wedding planner, you will be of indescribable blessing to a veteran couple planning a wedding but utterly confused as to where to begin preparations. Since you may have resources and experience that will prove to be invaluable to such couple, announce your desire to help at a local church or create a post on social media about it. The moment you put yourself out there, the right people will connect. I would also bet your kind gesture will not go unnoticed and it could even draw the attention of potential customers.



## Make a Banner/Sign

Put up properly designed banners, flyers, and posters that carry appreciative messages in public places or largely populated areas like a school, church, or business center. These banners could be of various shapes and sizes. It's your call. Make the wordings on your banner free of ambiguity and if you will be printing out these materials, ensure the selected font is large enough to avoid any reading difficulty. Be careful with punctuation marks, spacing and alignments as well.

Most importantly, be very precise and concise with words. If you'll be designing your banners, flyers or posters with color pencils and cardboards, legibility is key. Actually, the wordings may be as brief as "Thank you for your service", but you can do better. You're only limited by your own creativity. You can choose to make the message more personal. For instance, it wouldn't be such a bad idea to include the name of the veteran; "Sgt. (Enter veteran's name here)...Thank You for Your Service!"



## Give a Pair of Movie Tickets

I really appreciate the efforts movie directors and producers put into film projects to birth quality, thought-provoking and equally entertaining movies that attempt to mirror the happenings in our society. These days, seemingly unending stories often perceived to be boring can now be relayed to the audience in a totally different way.

In the same vein, our screens have also been graced with movies detailing historical events and personalities that tend to provide more information while entertaining us at the same time. For example, there are tons of movies detailing the happenings in a military system. Purchase a pair of movie tickets to see such movie with a veteran you know. Movie tickets are a great low-cost and great way to say thank you.

## Drive a Veteran to Vote

The 2016 U.S. Presidential election is fast approaching and while Americans march to different voting centers, many veterans who are unable to drive or move about easily will not have the opportunity to vote even though they are registered. Check-up on local veterans and since you will be heading out to vote anyway, why not pick-up a veteran or two in your town who is really interested in voting.

## Produce a Poem or Song in Honor of Veterans

As a writer or singer, one of the most precious gifts you can give a person is to write and produce a song in their honor. When the song you've written has been produced and completed, you can upload the media file for the world to listen and enjoy on [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com) or any other social media platform. On the plus side, your song could fetch you the superstar status in no time depending on the reception of your work. Everyone has a story to share with the world. Use your talent to bring the story of a veteran to life with your unique, divine gift.

## Start a Special Savings Account for your Veteran's Project

Whether you want to provide clothing or food to help support a particular veteran organization which could be yours, starting a bank account to fund your project is a great idea. Opening an account under a registered name will speak of your commitment to the project, to those whose support you're looking for. Nothing speaks volumes about your project or idea like being organized.

## Organize a Raffle

Sell 100 or 1000 tickets and have the proceeds go to either a veteran organization, a veteran in need, or a veteran's family. The opportunities to serve are limitless. Like any worthwhile endeavor, find out what legal commitments or laws need to be followed to ensure a successful outcome for your raffle event.

When you abide by the laws regarding the organization of such an event you will most likely engender the help of those who are just waiting to be asked for their support. People can only volunteer to help with certain projects that have been certified legitimate.

## Register a Veteran's Name for Free Sweepstake Drawings

As your gratitude and respect for veterans increase, you will undoubtedly come across some veterans that will grow on you. Free Sweepstake drawings can change everything, especially when it turns out good. Try to sign-up a veteran for such free prize possibilities.

## Begin a Podcast

Carve a niche for yourself in the diverse world of modern-day communication through the use of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) by starting a podcast series on the internet. The platform you have created can be used to reach out to a large number of veterans to enlighten them about available discounts and other benefits accruable to them. Your podcast can also spotlight and discuss issues that either directly or indirectly affect the well-being and lifestyle of veterans across the country.



## Wear a Custom-Made T-Shirt

Have a custom T-shirt made with a picture of a soldier in salutation. Have the words, “Thank you for your service” inscribed somewhere on the shirt where it can be seen. Get creative. Wear the shirt occasionally too. It will serve as a great conversation starter.

## Establish a Veteran Welfare Committee within Your Community

What is a Veteran Welfare Committee? A committee of like- minded citizens within your community who advocate for the better treatment of veterans and pursue their needs on a larger scale. Causes you may champion are better medical care, better pay, better transportation for wounded warriors and disabled vets, and even equal housing opportunities for disabled veterans. Whatever need you see within the veteran community, fill it.

Anyone can start one, all you need are individuals who are committed and willing to follow the rules and regulations you have laid out in order to achieve the goals of the Veteran Welfare Committee. As the cliché goes, “You’re limited only by your imagination.”

Again, this of course calls for a lot of commitment as contributions will be made in terms of human and capital resources.

Before you commence activities, ensure you follow the laid down rules and regulations that guard the establishment of such committee under the law, most especially the dos and the don'ts. Make sure the committee you have found is legally protected. You must also incorporate a set of rules to put the activities of your committee members in order. Since you will be doing this for veterans, it's required of you to inform them about your plans while stating the numerous benefits to be enjoyed.

## Name a School, Museum or Park after a Veteran

You can follow the global trend by naming a school, museum or a park in your community, city or state after a notable veteran. Doing this will etch in our minds, the memories of those who served our country with dignity and pride and at the same time, function as some sort of encouragement and motivation for younger recruits in service. When I travel, I'm always attracted and in awe of veterans parks that are well maintained and functional for the community. The Veteran's Park in Hamilton, New Jersey located in central Jersey is one of my favorites. At this particular park you have miles and miles of trails and markers with military names and even aircraft replicas on display. Become educated on the process of honoring a veteran in your town or state. Call your local government or City Hall to find out what all is entailed in such a noble endeavor.

## Stage a Play in Honor of Veterans

If you are talented or skilled in the arts, your involvement in putting a stage play together will be of great use. You can script a play about the life and service of veterans and gather your cast and crew to help you on the project. If you'd love to appeal to your audience, who mostly will be members of your community, get kids to play the characters. This would also pass a strong message about patriotism across to the audience.

You can sell tickets to see the play and give the proceeds to a fully-functional veteran organization you know. Either way, with your stage play, you have brought honor to veterans within your community and across the country.

## Design/Manage a Website for Veterans

By designing or managing a website dedicated to the welfare, education and enlightenment of veterans, you will have contributed a great deal towards ensuring the betterment of the veteran community. Through such a website, timely updates on events that are of direct concern to veterans are made available. In fact, companies like Yola.com help individuals with little to no knowledge of websites begin their own for personal or business. If you can click and drag, you can start to build and manage your own veteran website for pennies on the dollar. Who knows, a project like this may just inspire you to launch a veteran's non-profit organization that reaches far and wide to our veterans all over the world like the USO.

*"Who do you think you are not to be GREAT? You're playing small does not serve the WORLD!" - Nelson Mandela*

## Run Errands for a Veteran

Due to old age, some veterans often find it difficult to move around for considerably long periods of time. Consequently, running errands translates to a physical breakdown waiting to happen. You can help preserve the health of a veteran by offering to run their errands. For instance, when you're going to get groceries, you can stop by at a veteran's home to obtain a list of products they need, which you will buy and drop off on your way back. As stated earlier in the book, most veterans are not looking for a handout, just a hand-up!

## Pay a Veteran a Courtesy Visit

Paying a veteran or a veteran's family a visit in the comfort of their homes portrays kindness and warmth. This time, you make it possible for the veteran to treat you to a nice cup of tea or a beer. While in a veteran's home, there's a higher chance you get to learn more about them and what they do. Make it a hobby of yours to visit a veteran occasionally or even join them for a bite to eat. Before knocking on a veteran's door, make sure you have informed them ahead of your visit. You can only stop by unannounced if the veteran you're visiting is a close relative or friend.

### **Take the Veteran Ambassador's Pledge Today**

I (insert name here) pledge to help our country's veterans whenever the opportunity best allows for my service. I will do so in a manner that is both respectful of the veteran, my personal resources, and for the ultimate good of our nation's communities.

Our veterans take a pledge to protect our country, you now have an opportunity to pledge to protect our nation's most valuable resource-our veterans!

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