

Veteran's Day

A KidNews Special Edition



Reflections on Veterans Day

By Al Weiss

Veterans' Day was originally created to recognize the men who fought in WWI...which was supposed to be the last war...that's how much they knew about human nature in 1918. Now, for many, including myself, Veterans' Day is a day of reflection and to remember those who fought and LIVED...the elderly man packing groceries or the homeless middle-aged man living in a cardboard box is how we see our veterans today.

Today wars are fought in won in hours...yesterday the wars that created our living veterans went on for years; and postwar treatment for mental health issues which have arisen from these experiences, for many, has come too late.

I would love to see the future Veterans of America come to understand that war is not healthy for humans or any other living thing, and create a society which uses pen and ink to fight their battles and uses the negotiating table as the battlefield. That the ranks of Veterans we acknowledge each November never be added to...that the membership of the VFW will eventually be gone and never started again. See these Veterans, men and women, have given a piece of themselves, be it body parts or a portion of their memory that will forever be filled with memories of death and destruction, memories so vivid that at times one can smell the death all these years later, as the living reminder of what should never be again.

In regards to gratitude, children should know that each time they turn on the TV, read a newspaper, go to the library, go to school, walk in the door of their home and feel safe: all these things and more are because some man or woman gave a portion of themselves so these basic freedoms are the children's. Basic freedoms, like taking a vacation with their family, going across state lines without fear of being turned back because they aren't letting people from Florida into Georgia that day. Always maintain an attitude of gratitude for all you have, because as soon as you start to take it for granted, it will be gone.

By Al Weiss, US Navy SEAL, retired.

Our friend Al wrote this for KidNews in 1999. A retired SEAL and Viet Nam Veteran, he serves today as a volunteer for Southeastern Guide Dog School, children's charities, and as an inspiration to all who know him.

Since 1999, KidNews Today has run Al's column each November. This year we are putting together a 2-page special edition in honor of Veteran's Day. Al's column will not run in the regular November issue.

Special
Edition:

Veteran's Day
2011

HELP A MILITARY FAMILY BY...

Keep on inviting the spouse and kids who are stateside! Too often spouses end up feeling like a "fifth wheel" and are left out.

Offering to help with tasks around the house, babysitting or providing a parent's day off. The parent on the home front has 24-7 duties and his/her best friend is a half-world away. A half-day or short evening off would be greatly appreciated!

Just listen: don't try to minimize concerns.

When the family is reunited, continue to include your friends' children in your family activities. The couple will need time to get to know one another without the kids, but may naturally tend to emphasize family time.

A Time for Reflection: What Warriors Do for Us

Most of us can sleep securely at night. We do not fear mortars flying over our back fences; we find stories of violence and mayhem shocking -not the norm. We have freedom of speech, freedom of the press, freedom to worship. All these privileges are ours because men and women have given their all. These warriors and their support systems in the military did these things not for individual glory, or money, or power, but because they believed it was important that their families, children, grandchildren—and the children of others, should all benefit from these freedoms.

Encourage children to think about the things around them and the activities of their life that come from American freedom. Let them include some of these items as the things for which they are grateful when they write cards and letters to soldiers, sailors, airmen, marines and veterans.

CONTACT THE VETERANS' HOSPITAL IN YOUR AREA AND FIND OUT ABOUT SENDING HOLIDAY CARDS!

Contact AmVets at 1-866-294-4488 in Pinellas, Pasco, Hernando and Hillsborough Counties to donate used clothing, toys and household goods. AmVets will pick up items at your home and sell them at their thrift store.

www.uso.org: The USO has ways to purchase care packages (\$25) or contribute to care packages as well as support the work of the USO.

www.hhv.org: Help Hospitalized Veterans was founded in 1971 to provide therapeutic arts & crafts kits to hospitalized veterans as well as volunteers to assist veterans in using art and craft projects for a variety of therapeutic reasons.

Visit www.woundedwarriorproject.org for information about donations and volunteer opportunities to help wounded veterans and their families. There is also information for veterans and active-duty military, families and friends.

The Guide Dog Foundation has a special project called VetDogs, which provides guide dogs and service dogs for wounded veterans. Find them at <http://www.guidedog.org/>.

Don't be embarrassed or hesitant to wave and say "thank you!" to anyone in our uniforms!

RESOURCES FOR MILITARY FAMILIES:

Free counseling services: www.giveanhour.org. Professional therapists volunteer their time for OEF and OIF veterans and their families.

DO NOT...

...Ask a soldier if he had to kill anyone. No one goes to war to "kill someone." They go to protect us.

...Ask military personnel family members how they can sleep at night. This is not helpful.

...Tell a family with one parent deployed to let you know if you can "do anything." Offer something specific: free babysitting on a Saturday, help with household tasks, or running errands.



Minimize exposure to negative news reports on the war and military. This is especially important for children, who may believe that what they see and hear on the news is the absolute truth. Children may also believe that things they have seen five times actually happened five times, increasing the traumatic effect. Children and teens are well aware that their parent or sibling is in danger.