



Showing Appreciation for our Military Personnel — Past and Present

By Marilyn Loeser
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May is Military Appreciation Month and there are lots of ways to show your gratitude to veterans and the men and women currently serving our nation at home and abroad.

If you want to personally thank a member of the military, there are numerous websites to guide you along this path. The most complete list of websites can be found on americasupportsyou.mil. Once on the site, click on America Supports You Homefront Groups on the right hand side of the home page.

The link will take you to a list of ways to help from donating frequent flyer miles and phone cards to veteran service organizations.

Also on this page is the link Letters and Messages. Here you will find dozens of websites to help you connect with military personnel.

Amillionthanks.org, for example, encourages individuals as well as schools, churches and businesses to enlist students, church congregations and co-workers to write a letter or sign a card of thanks and drop it off at an official collection site — or mail the cards and letters inside a larger envelope to the collection site. Drop off points are listed on the website by state.

The cards and letters are then forwarded to service men or women, either active duty or retired, through the websites many contacts. Messages are also delivered to USOs and Veteran's Hospitals for distribution.

AnySoldier.com lists military personnel deployed overseas by military branch and name. When you click on a name, you can see what the unit this soldier is representing is in need of. If you send a package, its contents are shared with the entire unit. And make sure and send along several letters with "Any Soldier" written on the envelope and use the salutation "Hello." You don't know who the letter will be given to and want it to be as personal as possible.

Write your name, address and e-mail address at the bottom of your card or letter in case the soldier wants to correspond with you.

The last few care packages I sent led me to four pen pals. They all sent me letters and e-mails. I really got to know Olivia, Maria, Maria and Rich. Thankfully they are all safe and back in the United States now.

When sending care packages, the best value is the Postal Service's Priority Mail Large Flat-Rate Box. Measuring 12-1/4 inches by 12-1/4 inches by 6 inches, the large flat rate box costs \$2 less — \$11.95 — when sent to an APO/FPO address than if it is being sent to any other address in the United States.

The great thing about these boxes is it doesn't matter how much they weigh, the price is still \$11.95.

Community celebrations

Special celebrations are being held across the nation in honor of veterans and active military personnel.

In Fayetteville, North Carolina, the community is celebrating 31 Days of Glory to honor soldiers, veterans and their families.

Chester Biggs discussing his years in China as a POW, family-friendly hands-on activities like creating Blue Star Banners for wartime military families, military re-enactments, concerts, author readings, parades and art exhibits are all part of the month-long celebration.

"We invite the world to do what we do every day – show our enthusiastic appreciation, respect and support for those who have, and are, putting it all on the line for us," said Mayor Anthony Chavonne.

Intended to be an annual event, 31 Days of Glory is the result of the collective vision of the Fayetteville Area Convention and Visitors Bureau, USO North Carolina, Fascinate-U Children's Museum, Museum of the Cape Fear, Fayetteville Downtown Alliance, Fayetteville Symphony, Cumberland County Public Library and Information Center, Fayetteville Museum of Art, Airborne & Special Operations Museum, Fayetteville Independent Light Infantry, 82nd Airborne Division War Memorial, The Arts Council, Fort Bragg MWR, Fayetteville Area Transportation and Local History Museum, Cape Fear Botanical Gardens and J.E.B. Stuart Chapter 483.

For all events, dates and times visit 31daysofglory.com.

And, don't forget to fly the American flag, not just during the month of May, but every day.

<http://www.fedsmith.com/article/1973/>