

Honoring all who served

Hometown Heroes



HISTORY OF VETERANS DAY

SERVICE DOGS MAKE A DIFFERENCE

OVERVIEW OF MILITARY BRANCHES



Aging veterans deserving of additional support

Increasing social interactions and a helping hand can make a difference

According to data from the Department of Veterans Affairs, surveys from the Pew Research Center, and the U.S. Census Bureau, there were more than 18 million living military veterans in the United States by the end of 2023. Seventy-two percent of those veterans are age 50 and older, and many served during wartime.

Military personnel make significant sacrifices to protect the freedoms Americans enjoy each day, and it's vital that those efforts are never forgotten, even if it's been decades since service personnel have been on active duty.

Thirty-seven percent of living veterans are age 70 and older, and these brave individuals must face the challenges of aging as well as some - including chronic injuries - that might be traced to their time in the military.

That makes helping aging veterans an especially worthy endeavor, and those interested in doing just that can consider the following ideas.

• **Offer your expertise free of charge.**

Working professionals can help aging veterans by providing advice or services free of charge or at steep discounts.

For example, accountants can offer to prepare and file aging veterans' tax returns free of charge or, if the returns are complicated, at steep discounts.

Financial advisors can visit a local veterans hall or home and speak to members or residents about managing money after retirement.

• **Invite veterans over for special events or gatherings.** The Department of Veterans Affairs reports that veterans who served in the last 30 years make up the largest number of living veterans.

Though there are still plenty of veterans



Helping aging veterans is an especially worthy endeavor, and those interested in doing just that can consider several ideas, from helping them around their home to including them in gatherings.

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who served prior to 1994, they may no longer have extensive social networks, as more and more aging veterans pass away. Social connections are vital to long-term health, and researchers at the Center for Healthy Aging at Penn State University found that adults between the ages of 70 and 90 who reported more frequent, pleasant social interactions exhibited improved cognitive performance in the ensuing days.

Individuals who want to help aging veterans can invite them over for special events, such as game watches, holiday gatherings or even weekly family meals.

• **Pitch in around the house.** Whether they suffered injuries during their time in the service or not, many aging veterans face the same physical limitations as others approaching or past retirement age.

Offer to help aging veterans around the house. Mobility issues can make it

hard to mow a lawn, tend to a garden, or clean the interior of a home. Such tasks are made much easier when others pitch in, and these gestures can be a great way for families to show their appreciation to the brave individuals who protected the freedoms Americans enjoy each day.

There's no shortage of ways to help aging veterans, many of whom could use a helping hand as they navigate their golden years.

(METRO CREATIVE)

THERE ARE MANY WAYS TO SUPPORT VETERANS

Sacrifice is a big part of serving in the United States military. Active-duty personnel spend significant time away from their families, and many who have served overseas return home with injuries that affect both their physical and mental well-being.

As the nation commemorates Veterans Day, individuals and organizations can take steps to honor the sacrifices millions of veterans have made on behalf of their families, friends and neighbors who call the United States home.

• **Encourage a veteran to share their story** – Individuals who know a veteran can encourage that individual to share his or her story about serving. This can reassure veterans that others care about the sacrifices they made and let veterans know that their sacrifices and service to their country were not in vain. Individuals who ask veterans to share their stories also benefit, gaining valuable insight into what is required to protect their freedoms.

• **Provide a free restaurant meal** – Offer to take out a veteran for breakfast, lunch or dinner. If you see a veteran eating in a



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restaurant, anonymously pay the bill for that person.

• **Send care packages** – Communities can gather resources and chip in to make care packages for veterans who live in town, and even to send to troops stationed elsewhere. Include foods and comforts from home.

• **Buy from veterans** – Seek out veteran-

owned businesses in the area, then make purchases from their retail stores or utilize their services.

• **Volunteer at a VA hospital** – Spend time with veterans where they receive care for current health needs or past injuries suffered in combat.

• **Decorate cemeteries** – Honor fallen veterans by placing flowers or flags by their gravesites.

• **Participate in a parade** – If your town hosts a Veterans Day or Remembrance Day parade, find out how you can volunteer or be a part of it. Oftentimes, parade officials enable youth groups, such as high school marching bands or scouting troops, to participate in the parade.

• **Begin an oral history project** – Oral histories are invaluable resources because they are told through first person perspectives. This is similar to encouraging veterans to share their stories, but documentation takes things one step further and lends a sense of permanence to veterans' experiences and accounts of their service.

When speaking with local veterans, ask them if they would like to be recorded.

Advancements in technology have made oral histories easier than ever to compile, and individuals can work with local veterans groups and universities to identify veterans who served and want to share their stories on the record.

• **Visit local memorials** – Spend time visiting memorials nearby and paying homage to the veterans who devoted their time, or even their lives, to service.

• **Work with 'We Honor Veterans'** – We Honor Veterans is a program sponsored by the National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization that is designed to help organizations serve veterans in their communities.

The program was initially designed for hospice providers but has since expanded to welcome other community-based health organizations. The program aims to provide the highest quality of care to military veterans. Organizations can learn more at wehonorveterans.org.

Community members have plenty of opportunities and ways to give back to veterans.

(METRO CREATIVE)

The history of Veterans Day

While people thank veterans throughout the year, this day is special

The month of November is a special time for the nation's veterans. While Memorial Day honors fallen soldiers and service people, Veterans Day - which takes place each November - is an opportunity to commemorate the efforts of all who have been in the armed forces, with a special emphasis on living veterans.

While people are encouraged to thank veterans throughout the year, Veterans Day is a particularly poignant time to show your appreciation for the people of the military.

It began with Armistice Day

Veterans Day is a byproduct of the end of World War I, when Germany and the Allied Nations signed the Treaty of Versailles, formally ceasing fighting and establishing terms of peace.

On Nov. 11, 1919, the first anniversary of the signing of the treaty, the first Armistice Day events were held. Armistice Day was initially a legal holiday to honor the end of World War I only, states History.com.

The United States Congress passed a resolution in 1926 for an annual observance, and Nov. 11 became a national holiday starting in 1938.

However, in 1954, after the country had been embroiled in both World War II and the Korean War, Congress amended the Act of 1938 by renaming the commemoration "Veterans Day" to honor veterans of all wars.

November date signed into law

According to Military.com, for a short time - thanks to the Uniform Holiday Bill, which in 1968 established three-day weekends for federal employees by

celebrating national holidays on Mondays - Veterans Day was moved to the fourth Monday of October, the first being Oct. 25, 1971.

However, many people did not agree with this decision, continuing to honor the holiday on the original date. In 1975, President Gerald Ford signed a new law that returned Veterans Day to Nov. 11 beginning in 1978.

Since then, parades, memorial events, volunteer efforts, and other celebrations revolving around veterans have been held on Nov. 11.

Veterans around the world

Many countries, including the United States, celebrate veterans on or near Nov. 11.

America's neighbor to the north, Canada, commemorates veterans on Remembrance Day (also Nov. 11), as does the United Kingdom. Britain also has Remembrance Sunday, which is the second Sunday of November.

Remembrance Day also is called Poppy Day, when people of the Commonwealth member states wear a red poppy flower in honor of military members who have died in the line of duty.

Paying tribute

There are various ways to honor veterans on Veterans Day and Remembrance Day. Federal government closings, educational efforts in schools, parades, and visits to military hospitals or cemeteries may take place. In Europe, it is common to observe two minutes of silence at 11 a.m. every Nov. 11.

Veterans Day and its sister holidays mark the honoring of veterans of all wars, with a particular focus on living veterans. It's a day to celebrate the dedication and selflessness of hardworking military men and women.

(METRO CREATIVE)



This Veterans Day, people can consider several ways to honor the veterans in their community, from attending related events and making a donation to hiring them for a job.

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Consider these ways to honor veterans

Attending Veterans Day events is one of many ways to show respect

Millions of people make considerable sacrifices to protect the freedoms of their fellow citizens. According to the Pew Research Center, data from the Department of Veterans Affairs, and the U.S. Census Bureau, there are currently more than 18 million living veterans in the United States.

The term "veteran" refers to a person who served in the active military, naval, air service, or space service and was discharged or released under conditions other than dishonorable.

In the U.S., there are actually five types of protected veterans, according to the Vietnam Era Veterans' Readjustment Assistance Act of 1974. Under VEVRAA, a veteran may be classified as a disabled veteran, recently separated veteran, active duty wartime or campaign badge veteran, or Armed Forces service medal veteran.

Veterans deserve respect and admiration all year long, but also get their own holiday each November. Veterans Day celebrates veterans' patriotism and willingness to sacrifice and serve.

This Veterans Day, people can consider these eight unique ways to honor the veterans in their community.

1. Attend events. Organize or participate in local Veterans Day celebrations, such as parades and ceremonial events.

2. Get involved with veterans' affairs. Support veterans by volunteering with organizations that assist them, such as the VA, local veteran's groups, VA hospitals, or charities dedicated to veteran services.

3. Petition for veteran speakers.

Reach out to schools, scout troops, or other groups and arrange opportunities for veterans to share their stories and contributions. Learning about the sacrifices these people made can heighten individuals' appreciation for veterans.

4. Support the families of veterans.

Reach out to veterans' families, who also must make sacrifices and concessions. Anything from shopping, babysitting, doing chores, or making a meal can help the families of veterans.

5. Make a donation.

If finances allow, make contributions to reputable charities that provide services for veterans like those that offer mental health counseling or job placement services. If there isn't a charity that fits with your vision, begin one.

6. Hire veterans to work.

If you are a business owner or hiring manager, consider hiring veterans for open positions at your company. It can be challenging to re-enter the workforce after service, so make it known that your firm welcomes veterans.

7. Offer personal acknowledgements.

Take the time to speak to veterans and thank them for their service. If possible, when dining out, ask the server if you can pay for the meal of a veteran who also is dining that day.

8. Don't forget the fallen veterans.

Although Memorial Day is designed to honor those who lost their lives through military service, people still can honor the fallen veterans on Veterans Day by sharing stories or placing flags at veteran cemeteries.

Veterans Day is celebrated on Nov. 11, marking an opportunity to express one's gratitude and support for the scores of veterans who have served honorably.

(METRO CREATIVE)



Veterans Day, which takes place each November, is an opportunity to commemorate the efforts of all who have been in the armed forces, with a special emphasis on living veterans.

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Veterans Day 2024

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Service dogs make a difference for veterans

Canine Companions places service dogs with military veterans and veterans with disabilities entirely free of charge. Service dogs can assist veterans with a variety of physical, auditory, and trauma-related disabilities.

The organization's expertly trained service dogs can perform physical tasks to enhance independence, including retrieving dropped items, opening doors, picking up prosthetics, and alerting a veteran with hearing loss to important sounds in their environment, according to the website.

With the increase in military veterans returning with post-traumatic stress disorder, Canine Companions launched a program in 2018 to directly place service dogs with veterans with PTSD.

"Dogs are trained to identify each veteran's unique stressors and perform tasks that directly disrupt escalation of symptoms, thus enhancing their quality of life. Tasks may be performed for anxiety, hypervigilance, and generalized fear," the website states.

"The dog supports their handler in crowded public situations by creating barriers and distance that might provoke anxiety for an individual with PTSD.

Additional tasks, such as nightmare interruption, turning on lights, and retrieving items, are taught to support the veteran's daily life," it states.

Applicants for the PTSD program at Canine Companions – which has provided hundreds of service dogs to U.S. war veterans across the country – must be United States Armed Forces veterans.

Recognizing the need

"With the increase in wounded veterans who could benefit from a service dog, we want to do more. For a veteran starting to put their life back together from an injury, a service dog can provide the help they need to regain independence," the website states.

Canine Companions recognizes the urgent and growing need for programs that provide support to veterans with disabilities. Many of the brave people returning home from combat with disabling injuries – visible and invisible – experience a litany of new challenges.

Often, they face difficult transitions back to civilian life, as well as uncertain futures with new disabilities. Canine Companions service dogs can empower veterans to regain physical independence, pride, and hope.

"Beyond much-needed physical



Canine Companions places service dogs with military veterans and veterans with disabilities entirely free of charge. The dogs are trained to assist in a variety of ways, from retrieving items needed to helping those struggling with PTSD.

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assistance, the love, loyalty, and positivity of a canine partner can make a profound, lasting impact on someone dealing with difficult emotions that are hard to communicate," it states.

One veteran, Charlie, said his service dog, Devon, has had a positive impact.

"Just having someone with me to help do things that are difficult for me really affects my life positively," he said.

Canine Companions is the first service dog organization to be accredited by Assistance Dogs International and has provided service dogs to over 7,400 people with disabilities.

The dogs can be trained to perform a variety of tasks, and we place our dogs in teams that will utilize their training and celebrate their spirits.

One of the ways the organization assists veterans is through a program that focuses on training and matching service dogs with veterans based on their needs.

To support veterans with PTSD, dogs are trained in tasks including anxiety and nightmare interruption, turning on lights, retrieving items, and supporting their handler in crowded public situations that might provoke anxiety for individuals with PTSD.

Victor, a veteran, talked about what a blessing his service dog has been to his



life.

"She's the best thing that ever happened to me. Violet is amazing and so well-trained," he said.

Gaining independence

Stories shared on the website support the difference service dogs make for veterans.

As a result of his service in the U.S. Air Force, Josh Gage developed post-traumatic stress disorder, severe back injuries, and neuropathy. Upon his retirement, it was up to his wife Sarah to care for his every need.

"We didn't communicate, Josh didn't want to talk," Sarah recalls. "Josh didn't go anywhere."

Josh says he was at a low point in his life. "I was super depressed thinking I'd never be able to do anything ever again." Then he found Canine Companions.

Josh was partnered with Service Dog Maverick, trained in tasks to assist with Josh's physical disabilities and PTSD. Sarah knew that Maverick would provide a benefit to Josh, but she didn't anticipate the true scope of Maverick's impact on their whole lives.

"Maverick reconnected us – we do everything as a family now."

On Victor Prato's first mission to

Afghanistan, a suicide bomber blew the doors off their armored vehicle, leaving Victor with significant injuries.

Victor received a Purple Heart and a service dog from Canine Companions. Since then, Service Dog Barbossa has helped Victor regain independence. Barbossa is trained in tasks that include picking up items and pulling Victor's wheelchair.

"Having Barbossa is one of the few things that has panned out the way it was supposed to following my injury," says Victor. "He encourages me to interact with the world in a way I otherwise wouldn't. We support each other."

Tracy Claudio was diagnosed with PTSD while still in the Navy after witnessing traumatic events.

"My PTSD symptoms were getting worse – I was jumpy and afraid to come home because it was dark," Tracy says.

A Canine Companions service dog named Hannon would make all the difference. Hannon assists Tracy with her symptoms of PTSD. She's not scared to go home now. Hannon turns on the lights and even decreases her nightmares. He also makes sure Tracy doesn't let her anxiety and depression keep her shut away.

"I worried that having a dog would make people look at me differently. It did, positively. Thanks to Hannon, I can finally talk about my PTSD."

How you can help

There are numerous ways to support Canine Companions including donating specifically to the program they offer that helps veterans.

"Let's honor and support our veterans who served our country—it is our time to give back. With a large population of veterans with physical and mental disabilities as a result of their service, Canine Companions supports our servicemen and servicewomen through our Veterans Initiative program," the website states.

Statistics shared on the website reveal that 18 veterans die by suicide every day, 30% of veterans experience PTSD, and there is a 50% higher suicide rate for veterans vs. non-veterans.

However, with a service dog, 100% of veterans experienced increased independence, 95% noticed a decrease in the severity of PTSD symptoms, and 89% reported feeling happier, according to the website.

For more information, visit canine.org.

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There are many ways to help

Support active military troops and their family members

The nation's military is comprised of millions of brave soldiers who stand for the country's freedoms by serving domestically and abroad. Whether during war or in peacetime, the military plays an important role in protecting the nation and its interests.

Many seek to offer support to deployed military troops and their families, and there are many ways to lend a helping hand.

Deployed military

Deployed military personnel face numerous and notable challenges. Every deployment is different, but community support can make deployment easier on military personnel and their families.

With that in mind, the following are some ways anyone can help deployed military personnel and their loved ones at home.

- **Send care packages.** Care packages provide some of the comforts of home to deployed troops. They also let troops know that they are being thought of even if they are thousands of miles away.

To facilitate the process of sending care packages, work with an organization that routinely delivers items to troops. One option is to donate money to the USO, which can send care packages on your behalf.

- **Check in when you can.** Some deployed troops have the ability to check in through video chats. Set aside regular times to touch base, even if it's inconvenient. Seeing a familiar face can be a huge pick-me-up.

- **Offer a listening ear.** Venting to a judgment-free ear can help reduce the stress of deployment. It's not necessary to provide feedback. Sometimes getting thoughts out and just having a supportive shoulder to lean on can help mitigate stress and worry.

- **Send cards and letters.** Any correspondence can be a welcome change for deployed personnel. Whether you have a service member deployed or not, you can contact someone and provide assistance and support.

Many troops miss huge life events with



their families or may have no family back home. So even one letter or card can make a world of difference.

- **Set up resources.** Once deployed military return home they may need certain services, such as qualified counseling or assistance finding a home. Having a list of people and resources at the ready can make assimilation back into domestic life easier.

Family support

- **Care for the families left at home.** Deployed troops may be able to rest more easily if they know their loved ones are happy and safe and that people are looking out for them.

Individuals can offer to babysit, run

errands, do chores, share meals, or engage in other supportive acts with parents or spouses of the deployed.

Charities

The support Americans have for their armed forces is evident in how much they donate to charities with military-related missions.

According to Charity Navigator, Americans donate more than \$2.5 billion annually to charities with missions dedicated to the military.

Individuals who want to donate to a charitable organization with a military-related mission may not know where to start, and that can be daunting given the number of organizations that fit the criteria.

Charity Navigator indicates there are more than 40,000 American charities with military-related missions, which underscores how difficult it can be to find one to support. Charity Navigator provides donors with free access to data, tools, and resources to guide their philanthropic decision-making.

The organization has also curated a list of highly rated organizations that provide a variety of services to military members and their families.

The following is a brief rundown of that list that can serve as a solid foundation for prospective donors. The full list can be found online at charitynavigator.org.

Wounded troops

- Air Warrior Courage Foundation (airwarriorcourage.org)
- DAV (Disabled American Veterans) Charitable Service Trust (cst.dav.org)
- Fisher House Foundation (fisherhouse.org)
- Higher Ground (highergroundusa.org)
- Homes for Our Troops (hfotusa.org)
- K9s for Warriors (k9sforwarriors.org)

- Operation Second Chance (operationsecondchance.org)
- Wounded Warrior Project (woundedwarriorproject.org)
- Yellow Ribbon Fund (yellowribbonfund.org)

Military social services

- AMVETS National Service Foundation (amvetsnsf.org)
- Hire Heroes USA (hireheroesusa.org)
- Honor Flight Network (honorflight.org)
- Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America (iava.org)
- Operation Gratitude (operationgratitude.com)
- Operation Healing Forces (operationhealingforces.org)
- Soldiers' Angels (soldiersangels.org)
- The Mission Continues (missioncontinues.org)

Military family support

- Army Emergency Relief (armyemergencyrelief.org)
- Blue Star Families (bluestarfam.org)
- Children of Fallen Patriots Foundation (fallenpatriots.org)
- Folds of Honor (foldsofhonor.org)
- Operation Homefront (operationhomefront.org)
- Our Military Kinds (ourmilitarykids.org)
- Travis Manion Foundation (travismanion.org)
- VFW National Home for Children (vfnationalhome.org)

Support for military currently deployed and once they return home and their family members can make things a little easier on soldiers and their loved ones as they cope with the challenges that life in the military can present.



There are ways anyone can help deployed military personnel, those who return home and their loved ones. From care packages and cards to a listening ear, support can go a long way to help make the military life easier on those directly affected.



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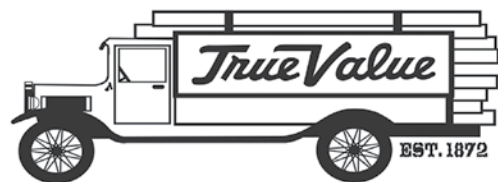
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A closer look at military roles, branches

Reports from the United States Central Intelligence Agency indicate our country has the third largest active military in the world.

As of the fall of 2023, the U.S. military consisted of just under three million people, more than two million of whom are military personnel (nearly 800,000 are civilian employees).

The U.S. military is made up of seven branches: Army, Marine Corps, Navy, Air Force, Space Force, Coast Guard, and the National Guard.

No two branches of the military perform the same functions, and there are various leadership positions within the branches.

The following rundown of various military positions can help Americans gain a greater understanding of the individuals who work to keep the country safe each day.

• **Secretary of Defense:** The Secretary of Defense is a unique position in America, as laws designed to ensure civilian control of the military mandate that the Secretary of Defense cannot have served as an active duty commissioned officer in the military in the preceding seven years (10 years in the case of a general).

The Secretary of Defense is the head of the Department of the Defense and the secretary's authority over the military is second only to the President of the United States.

• **Chief of Naval Operations:** The Chief of Naval Operations is the highest-ranking officer in the United States Navy. The Chief is an admiral and a member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, which is the body of the most senior uniformed officers within the Department of Defense.

Though the Chief of Naval Operations is a significant position, the person in the role does not have operational command over naval forces.

• **Four-star General:** General is a title familiar to civilians and armed forces personnel alike.

A four-star General in the U.S. Army is a senior level commissioned officer who typically has more than 30 years of experience and service.

General is the highest rank normally available in the U.S. Army, though a General of the Army may be named in time of war where the commanding officer must be equal or of higher rank than individuals commanding armies from other nations.

• **General (Air Force):** General also is the highest rank in the United States Air Force.

According to Executivegov.com, four-star generals in the Air Force take charge of command positions in NATO, Numbered Air Forces, and the Chief of Staff.

• **Commandant of the Marine Corps:** The Commandant of the Marine Corps is the highest-ranking Marine Officer and is



Knowing the different military positions can help Americans gain a greater understanding of the individuals who work to keep the country safe each day.

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reason why it maintains amphibious and ground units for contingency and combat operations.

The Marine Corps. is divided into four groups: the operating forces that fight, the headquarters for leadership, the supporting establishment that provides logistical support, and the Marine Corps. Reserve.

Navy

The Navy protects America at sea. Despite its massive land mass, the United States is a maritime nation, which underscores how important a strong Navy is to the safety of the country and its residents.

The Navy works alongside American allies and partners to keep the seas open and free.

Air Force

The Air Force has five core missions: air superiority; global strike; rapid global mobility; intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance; and command and control.

The Air Force defends the country and its residents in air, space and cyberspace and is capable of delivering forces anywhere in the world within hours.

Space Force

The existence of the Space Force may come as a surprise to many Americans. Organized under the Department of the Air Force and established in 2019, this branch of the military organizes, trains, and equips space forces in order to protect the interest of America and its allies in space.

Coast Guard

During peacetime, the Coast Guard is part of the Department of Homeland Security. In times of war, it operates under the Navy.

The Coast Guard provides law and maritime safety enforcement as well as environmental protection.

In addition to promoting national security, border security, and economic prosperity in the maritime environment, the Coast Guard saves those in peril on the sea.

National Guard

The National Guard is comprised of the Army National Guard and the Air National Guard. The National Guard has a diverse array of responsibilities that range from supporting combat missions to responding during domestic emergencies to assisting in humanitarian efforts and more.

The U.S. military is made up various branches, each with its own unique missions and responsibilities. Veterans Day marks the perfect occasion to celebrate the many individuals who have served and continue to serve in the U.S. military.

(METRO CREATIVE)



also a four-star general.

The Commandant of the Marine Corps is on the Joint Chiefs of Staff and reports directly to the Secretary of the Navy. The CMC transmits the plans and recommendations of the Marine Corps to the Secretary and advises on those plans.

These are just a handful of the influential positions established to ensure the U.S. military can effectively fulfill its mission to keep the country safe each and every day.

Military branches

Each November, people across the United States and its territories honor the brave people who serve and have served in the various branches of the country's military.

Veterans Day is observed annually every Nov. 11 and honors the service of all U.S. military veterans. The day should not be confused with Memorial Day, which is celebrated each year in May and honors

all military personnel who have died in service.

Veterans Day is an ideal time for anyone to learn more about the various branches of the U.S. military.

Army

The U.S. Department of Defense notes that the Army is the largest and oldest service in the country's military. The Army provides the ground forces that protect the United States.

Members of the Army are trained to defeat enemy ground forces and to seize and control enemy lands and resources. Army also are trained to control and interact with the general population in countries where members are stationed.

Marine Corps

It might surprise some to learn that the Marine Corps. is a component of the Department of the Navy. That's one



The U.S. military is made up various branches, each with its own unique missions and responsibilities. Veterans Day marks the perfect occasion to celebrate the many individuals who have served – and continue to serve – in the U.S. military.



Why veterans make great hires

Honoring members of the military means not only reflecting on their exemplary service, but also appreciating the talents and skills of veterans in the civilian workplace.

Shining a light on how military skills transfer to corporate America is Brian Armstrong, a Marine Corps veteran who now serves as Wells Fargo's head of military recruitment.

Having led the safe transport of equipment and security protection forces, on top of serving as a small unit leader overseeing the well-being of fellow Marines, Armstrong acquired skills that easily transfer to everyday business during his military career. And this experience is not unique to him, but shared amongst the hundreds of thousands who transition out of the military to civilian careers each year.

"In the military, you have to be able to think on your feet," Armstrong said. "We [veterans] span the breadth of the United States, and we can leverage our unique, diverse perspectives to react and deliver under pressure. Add this to the soft skills we gain during service, and I think veterans are an extremely attractive

demographic for employers."

In fact, many companies in recent years are catching onto the value veterans bring to the workplace, with veteran employment rates trending upward over the past 10 years, according to Department of Labor Statistics.

Nevertheless, veterans do face unique workplace challenges, particularly during the hiring process, from employer bias to dealing with the culture shift of post-military life.

Where military recruitment is concerned, Wells Fargo is a good example of a corporation aligning its actions with its words. For more than 170 years, the company has supported military service members and veterans.

In addition to initiatives like home and car donations, grants, and supporting veteran-owned businesses, its dedicated Military Talent Sourcing Team is committed to helping veterans effectively navigate the transition to civilian life. The company's Military Talent Liaisons are committed to recruiting, counseling, and advocating for military job seekers.

According to Armstrong, other companies can benefit from similar

initiatives. The team's programming includes military-specific hiring events, corporate fellowships, apprenticeships through the Department of Labor, and intensive training programs.

"It's not just about supporting veterans, it's also about how veterans can help a company. Their ability to thrive in differing environments and circumstances makes them agile and serious-minded in their endeavors," Armstrong says.

"Obviously we're not in a military situation in our typical workplace, but

I suspect many veterans, like I do, take their corporate roles seriously, the same way they'd get prepared for a mission," he added.

To learn more about Wells Fargo's military recruitment initiatives, and its more than 170 years of supporting military veterans and their families, visit wellsfargojobs.com.

To learn more about why veterans' backgrounds make them great leaders, visit <https://stories.wf.com/why-veterans-make-great-leaders>.



Brian Armstrong (left) and colleague David Smith are shown at a Veteran Bridge Home talent panel. Employers can reflect on how making their workplaces more inclusive to veterans can help both their community and their bottom line.



VA awards nearly \$16 million in grants to help Veterans, service members participate in adaptive sports

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs announced the award of \$15.9 million in grants to fund adaptive sports, recreational activities, and equine therapy for Veterans and service members living with disabilities.

VA's Adaptive Sports Grant Program will provide grants to 91 national, regional, and community-based programs for fiscal year 2024 across all 50 states and the District of Columbia, Guam, and Puerto Rico. The programs will collectively provide life-changing opportunities for more than 15,000 Veterans and members of the Armed Forces.

These grants help advance the Biden-Harris Administration's Unity Agenda for the nation through advancing Veterans' wellbeing and opportunities. Adaptive sports are competitive or recreational sports and activities customized to fit the needs of Veterans with disabilities, including paralympic sports, archery, cycling, skiing, hunting, rock climbing, and sky diving. These activities allow Veterans to rehabilitate through recreation and encourage an active and fit lifestyle.

"These grants give Veterans life-changing opportunities to participate in adaptive sports in the communities where they live all across the country," said VA Secretary Denis McDonough. "We know adaptive sports and recreational activities can be transformational for Veterans living with disabilities, improving their overall physical and mental health, and also giving them important community with fellow heroes who served."

Marine Corps Veteran Jataya Taylor – who competed in wheelchair fencing at the 2024 Paralympics – was unhappy and struggling with mental health issues until she began participating in adaptive sports with an organization supported by the VA Adaptive Sports Grant Program. She touts adaptive sports as a gateway to a new community and essential to her mental health.

"Getting involved in adaptive sports was a saving grace for me," Taylor said. "Participating in these programs got me on the bike to start with, then got me climbing, and eventually it became an important part of my mental health to participate. I found my people. I found my new network of friends."

By participating in adaptive sports and equine therapy, Veterans can enhance their physical health, boost mental well-being, gain independence, and foster a strong sense of community. Grant awardees include various organizations, including Veterans Service Organizations, city and regional municipalities, and other community groups.

VA has awarded over \$119 million in grants through the Adaptive Sports Grant Program during the last nine years. This program is one of VA's many initiatives dedicated to improving the lives of those who have served.

Information about the awardees and details of the program are available at www.va.gov/adaptivesports and @Sports4Vets.

Movember aims to raise awareness about men's suicide

Each year, men across the globe grow mustaches throughout the month of November. For some, the decision may be a spontaneous gesture designed to give their faces a new look.

But millions more do so in support of Movember – an annual event that aims to raise awareness of various issues pertaining to men's health, including suicide.

Men's suicide may not garner many headlines, but men are far more likely than women to take their own lives.

According to the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, men died by suicide 3.85 times more than women during the period of a recent year.

Veterans Day also occurs in November, and the month is a good time to point out that rates of suicide among men who served in the military also are a cause for concern.

According to the 2023 National Veteran Suicide Prevention Annual Report, the unadjusted suicide rate of veteran men was 35.9 per 100,000, which marked a 3.5 percent increase over the previous year.

The suicide rate among veteran men was markedly higher than the rate among non-veteran adults in the United States.

Suicide rates among non-veteran adults were 16.7 per 100,000, which is less than half the rate among veteran men in the same year.

November can be a great time to raise awareness about men's suicide, and individuals and groups looking to do so can utilize events like Movember and Veterans Day to draw attention to the issue.

(METRO CREATIVE)



Movember is an annual event that aims to raise awareness of various issues pertaining to men's health, including suicide. Rates of suicide among men who served in the military are also a cause for concern, and with Veterans Day falling in November, it's an ideal time to raise awareness of that issue at the same time.

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