

How to show your appreciation

Civilians who join the military find their lives change forever upon entering the service. The armed forces shape a person, teaching discipline, humility, bravery, and many other life lessons. Joining the military often means making substantial personal sacrifices, as servicemen and women are typically called away from their families and the comforts of home.

Many grateful men and women want to show their appreciation to those who risk their lives to defend their country, but they may not always know how.

The following are a number of ways you can show your appreciation to members of the military.

Thank a service member

If you see a person in uniform, thank them for

their service to the country. Use the person's title if you can identify rank, or simply use the respectful terms of "sir or madam." Though a simple gesture, a verbal token of gratitude can go a long way toward brightening a soldier's day.

Volunteer with a veteran's association

Volunteering is another way to show veterans and active service members how much you appreciate the sacrifices they have made. Volunteer at a veteran's hospital or help to organize an event that's commemorating the efforts of local veterans and active service members.

Propose an event to honor local service members

Petition a town council for a special parade to honor your community's

military personnel, including veterans and active duty members.

Raise funds

Fundraisers are another way to show military members how much you appreciate their service. Collect money for a military-based scholarship, asking a local high school or university to establish the scholarship in the name of a local veteran or active duty service member.

Provide a forum in which a serviceman or can share his or her story

Soldiers can offer unique insight on issues that affect civilians, and the community can benefit from servicemen and women who share their stories. When hosting a community event, ask a soldier to be a keynote speaker.

Send gifts to active military

Make care packages or write cards and thank you notes to stationed troops. Organizations like the USO, Military-Missions.org or AnySoldier.com can ensure your packages make their way into the hands of soldiers.

Help an active duty service member's family

Spouses of active duty military personnel often must handle all of the chores that come with managing a household on their own. To show how much you appreciate a service member's efforts,

offer to lend a hand around his or her house. This can make life easier on a service man or woman's spouse, and your companionship may provide a world of good. You can even go the extra mile by organizing a military spouse appreciation night at a nearby church or recreation hall. Offer free babysitting and provide refreshments and entertainment.

Publicly display your patriotism

Active duty service members and veterans joined the military to defend our way of life,

and you can show pride for your country and appreciation for their efforts by hanging a flag outside of your home.

Pick up the tab

Surprise a person in uniform by paying for his or her meal at a restaurant. It's a simple gesture, but it shows how much you appreciate that service member's sacrifice.

Gestures that show military personnel how much you appreciate them need not be lavish. Any and all expressions of gratitude can make a world of difference.



SD State Representative Mike Stevens



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