



How to help veterans who've returned home from service



(BPT) - In wartime, members of the armed forces often face dangerous situations. President George Washington recognized this, when he created what is now known as the Purple Heart medal in 1782, to honor combat wounded veterans. Since then, an estimated 1.7 million Purple Hearts have been awarded by the military to soldiers, sailors, Marines and airmen.

The Purple Heart medal is awarded to men and women in uniform who have been injured or killed in combat or captivity. Medal recipients who return home can join the Military Order of the Purple Heart, an organization that supports veterans and their families with many nationwide programs. Volunteer and financial assistance is

needed year-round to continue these services. If you're interested in looking for ways to help veterans across the country, consider the following ways you can assist:

* Say "thank-you" – On Memorial Day, Veterans Day, Purple Heart Day and every other day of the year, telling a vet, "Thanks for your service," is a great way to honor their sacrifice. If you own a business, you can also offer veterans a discount on your products or services as another way to show your thanks.

* Volunteer for a veteran service organization – Veterans often need assistance in many different areas of life, including financial, career, educational, health and social. If you are interested in volunteering your time, contact the Purple Heart Foundation at www.purpleheartfoundation.org/foundation/get-involved to determine the right service organization that will best match your talents and availability. By volunteering, you not only will be helping service members adjust to civilian life, but also gaining valuable expertise in the field of your choice.

* Donate your vehicle or gently used household items – If you're considering holding a garage sale this summer, you can save time and energy by donating clothing, furniture, thrift goods and even cars to the Purple Heart Foundation, a nonprofit organization that supports all veterans and their families. Visit www.purpleheartfoundation.org/donate to learn more about how your donation can be picked up from your home, and how you can declare the donation on next year's income taxes.

* Make a financial donation – Veterans organizations are always in need of financial donations to continue the services they provide. Keep in mind that any monetary donation you make to a registered nonprofit organization can be declared as a deduction on your federal income taxes. The Purple Heart Foundation has made it easy for a person to donate \$10 toward veterans causes supported by the Military Order of the Purple Heart by texting PURPLE to 20222.

"The Purple Heart medal represents courage, sacrifice, commitment and 'heart,'" says Jim Blaylock, president of [Military Order of the Purple Heart Service Foundation](http://www.purpleheartfoundation.org), and a Vietnam veteran who earned three Purple Hearts. "The Purple Heart Foundation celebrates the heart of every veteran by providing emotional, physical, educational and financial support for veterans and their families. They earned our support with their sacrifice."

Since 2008, the Purple Heart Service Foundation has invested more than \$42 million in programs and services to help veterans and their families with suicide prevention, Post-Traumatic Stress, brain injury, women's health issues and to get claims approved. Join the millions of Americans helping veterans returning home after service. To learn more, visit www.purpleheartfoundation.org.

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