

# Holiday SALUTE



# Sell Your Things for a Good Cause

You likely have things laying around that go unused. If you're looking for an opportunity to clear your clutter and donate to a good cause, our country's soldiers can benefit.

An old-fashioned garage sale is an efficient way to draw in your community members, as is listing the items in your local newspaper classified section. Modern technology also offers a way to reach a worldwide audience. Consider the most efficient avenue depending on how much you must sell, the types of products and the amount of attention your sale can gain locally.

With the right strategy, your sale can raise a substantial amount to donate to an organization who gives back to our troops.

## IN THE COMMUNITY

If you plan to limit your sale to a local event, getting the word out to your community can set you up for success. One efficient way to gain a lot of attention is by posting signs in highly visible areas near bus stops, four-way stop signs and on bulletin boards inside local businesses.

Try to choose a time and date which appeals to the largest audience. The experts at Consumer Reports suggest

holding the sale on Friday or Saturday and early in the morning. This gives your guests a chance to stop by on their way to work or after dropping their kids off at school.

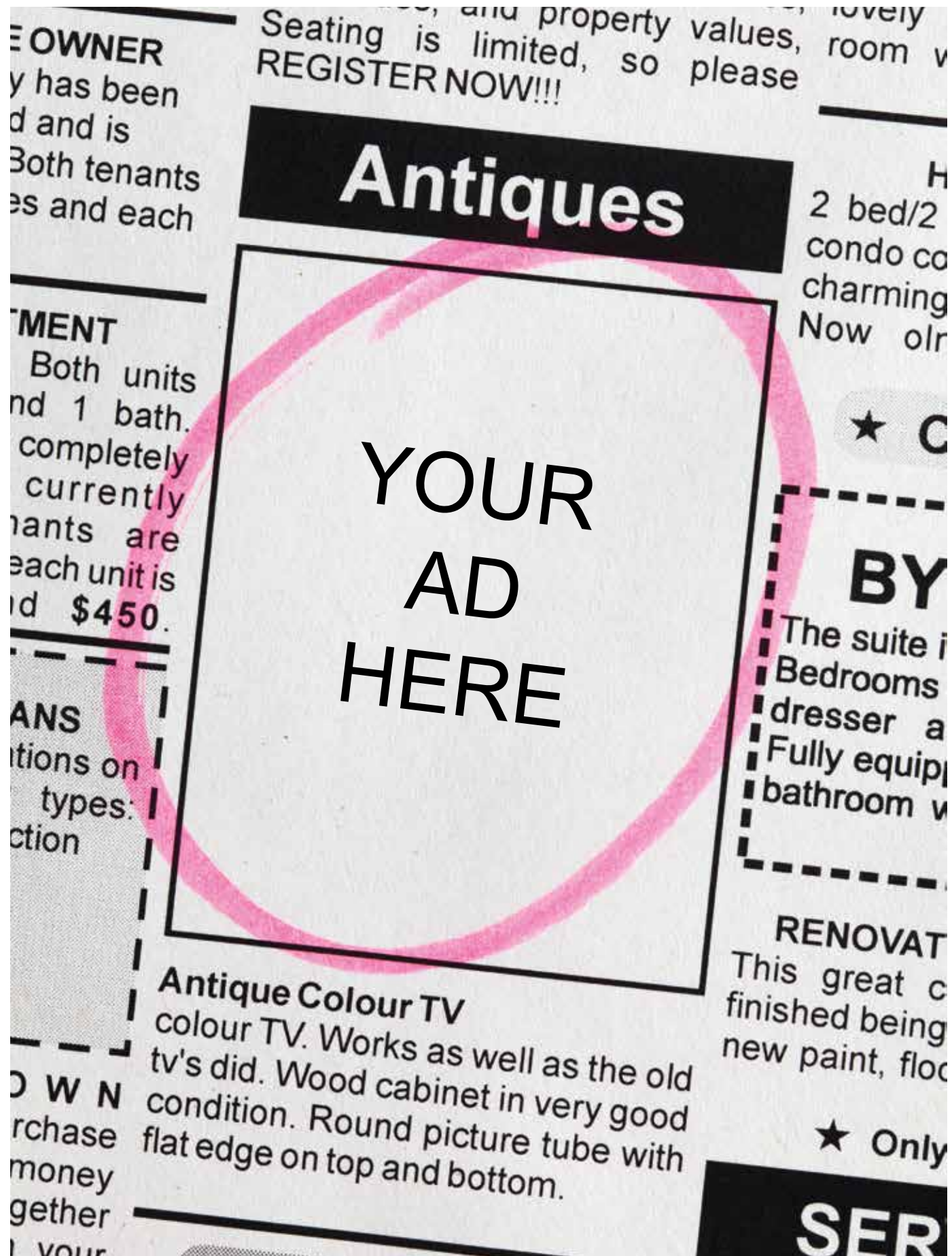
To avoid complications, ensure with the property owner or governing land officials that advertising on its premises is allowed. You should also make your mission of donating the earnings to military causes clear on your advertisement.

## SELLING IN PRINT OR ONLINE

If hosting a yard sale doesn't fit into your schedule, you can offer your goods and gain more attention by listing in your local newspaper or online.

Your newspaper's classifieds section is a great place to reach potential buyers for everything from collectibles and household goods to automobiles or real estate.

Consider the type of products you must sell and seek the right audience. For instance, if you have a collection in a niche that only speaks to certain type of collector, you may spend time researching how to find a buyer. A good place to start is by searching online forums related to the subject. For general use items, you can list your items on a community social media outlet or an e-commerce marketplace. Keep in mind, to use these services, owners of the website may charge a commission once a deal is made.



# Connect with a Deployed Loved One

While spending the holidays apart from a loved one who is serving their country can be difficult, there are ways to ease the strain for both parties.

A virtual get-together may feel like a poor substitution for a holiday gathering, but families can gain a sense of normalcy as they await a reunion.

## CONSIDER VIDEO CHATS

Take advantage of video chats or phone calls is an innovative way to share the festive time of year together. Plan with your soldier to ensure they have ample time for a call so you can enjoy their virtual companionship.

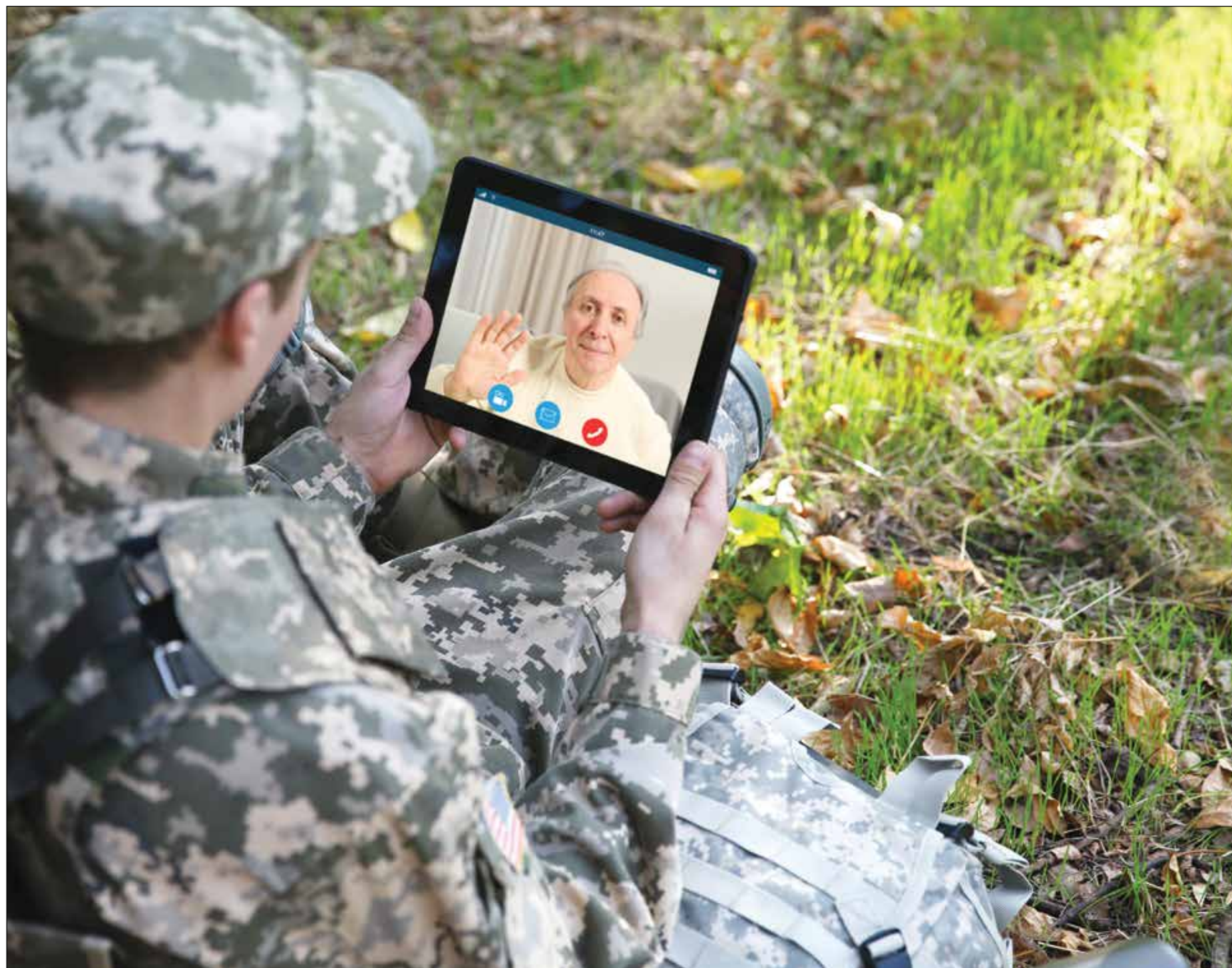
And with today's technological advances, there are more virtual meeting programs than ever before.

Here are some things to do during a digital conversation.

## DECORATE TOGETHER

If your family has a tradition of choosing a Christmas tree together, bring along a smart device to your favorite store or tree farm. Give your loved one an opportunity to participate in picking the perfect tree through a video call.

After you get your centerpiece home, you can maintain a connection while you hang your favorite ornaments, lights and of course, the tree topper. Providing a chance to



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be a part of a holiday tradition can be a wholesome experience for everyone involved.

## SING CAROLS

Maybe your family has a tradition of caroling around the holidays. With a fast-streaming video confer-

ence platform, you can invite your overseas loved one to participate in singing this season!

Send them the lyrics to any new songs you are caroling this year so they can have them in front of them as they sing along across the airwaves

with you and your family.

## GIFT EXCHANGE

Another common practice for families is the gift exchange. While you may not be able to ship the ideal present to your soldier, they have an opportunity to witness the

joy from their children, spouses and other family members as they unwrap their gifts.

A fun game you can play prior to the exchange is coordinating a Secret Santa project. Everyone should randomly choose a person to make a purchase for.

# Donate to a Military Family

Some of the most honorable citizens in the country struggle financially to give their families the holiday celebration they deserve.

You can say thanks and show support to their sacrifices by supporting a notable charity who distributes your donations responsibly to those in need.

If you're unsure how to go about finding an organization and the right way to donate, here are a few charities to consider.

## OPERATION HELP A HERO

This organization offers all-around support for serving military members, veterans and their families. A part of their mission is to connect with servicemen and service-women year-round. Around the holidays, Operation Christmas Spirit is their unique way to offer relief, gifts and support throughout the season.

Their website makes it easy to do your part in supporting their cause and the military. Whether you make a financial donation or volunteer your time to operate a charity event or coordinate a gathering, the organization is always in need of volunteers.

## SOLDIER'S ANGELS

This nonprofit group pro-



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vides comfort to military members through numerous charities. Two of their holiday focused chapters include:

Adopt-A-Family offers gifts for military children and provide parents with grocery store gift cards to create a delicious holiday meal.

Holiday Community members coordinate the sending of cards, letters and stockings to service troops and veterans.

According to the organization, donations have helped contribute to these impressive statistics.

- More than 120,000 items provided to veterans at their VA Medical facilities in 2017.
- 851,000 care packages sent to deployed service members over the last 15 years.
- More than 22,000 veterans were provided with food

assistance throughout the country in 2017.

## TOYS FOR TOTS

Established in 1947, the Toys for Tots program was developed by Marine Corps Reserve Maj. Bill Hendricks, whose wife handcrafted dolls to give to children in need. Hendricks was unable to find an agency to help distribute the toys, so they decided to start their own

service. Today, the Marine Toys for Tots Program is attributed to distributing an average of over 18 million toys to seven million less fortunate children annually. Donating to the cause is easy, as most businesses participate in collecting gifts over the holidays. If you can't find a donation center in your area, urge local companies to take part in the giving tradition.

# Give the Gift of Military Education

Throughout history, there were numerous accomplishments made by our soldiers which shaped the America we know today.

If you're looking for a great holiday gift for the veteran or service member in your life, consider purchasing them informational books or videos that break down significant historical military events.

One such event is D-Day. On June 6, 1944, the D-Day Invasion occurred and is credited as changing the course of World War II. The invasion included over 156,000 Allied troops who stormed the beaches in Northern France to overtake German forces.

The invasion would be so effective that Germany would sign an unconditional surrender less than a year later, on May 7, 1945.

Here are some facts about the event you may not have known, as reported by The History Channel. Bring them up at your next holiday party to see if you can help educate your friends and family members on this historical importance - and consider purchasing multiple books or materials related to D-Day for those in your network who are interested in military history.

## YEARS OF PLANNING

President Franklin Roosevelt



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and British Prime Minister Winston Churchill understood how a massive intrusion into the mainland of Europe would cause significant relief from the Soviet army battling Nazi forces.

While the initial plan was to begin the invasion in 1943, the duo decided to invade Northern Africa and begin their

battle through Italy.

## ACTS OF DECEPTION

To catch enemy forces off guard, the Allied army held a deceptive campaign to hide their true intentions.

Through false radio transmissions and even creating a phantom army commanded by American General George

Patton, the strategy was performed to trick the Nazis into expecting an invasion on the closest French coastline to England, Pas-de-Calais.

## THE ATLANTIC WALL

Under their expectations of an impending invasion, Nazi forces fortified the French coast with a defensive strategy.

The "Atlantic Wall" was constructed under the guidance of Field Marshal Erwin Rommel and included a 2,400-mile line of bunkers, landmines and beach and water obstacles to hinder opposing troop's progress.

It's estimated the wall included four-million landmines along Normandy beaches.



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# Wreaths Across America

If you're looking for a unique cause to stand behind this holiday season, Wreaths Across America is an organization who honors fallen soldiers with memorable wreath-laying ceremonies.

Annually, in December, Congress designates a Saturday as National Wreaths Across America Day. In 2019, that day is Dec. 14.

Today, the group coordinates ceremonies in 1,600 locations in cemeteries and at sea around the world. Whether you volunteer your time or contribute a monetary donation, the cause is a wholesome movement to support.

## A BRIEF HISTORY

In 1992, Morrill Worcester, owner of Worcester Wreath Company, found his company with a surplus of wreaths as the holiday season ended. As a child, he visited Arlington National Cemetery after winning a trip to Washington, D.C. The experience would stick with him and ultimately lead him to donate

his extra product to an older section of the military cemetery that was receiving fewer visitors and attention for the buried soldiers.

The wreath-laying ceremony in Arlington went on silently until 2005, when an image of the adorned stones spread across the internet and went viral, prompting the movement to become a registered nonprofit. In 2014, the group met their amazing goal of covering the entirety of the Arlington National Cemetery with 226,525 wreaths.

Today, with the help of volunteers and donations, the group distributes wreaths to all 50 states and offers

learning tools to teach younger generations about the significance of our military members.

## HOW TO DONATE

You can make a monetary contribution by sponsoring wreaths to be used during ceremonies. It is a passionate way to say "thank you" to a fallen soldier who sacrificed their lives for our country's freedom. Another unique donation they accept is assistance from trucking companies to trek their wreaths across the country. The Honor Fleet is made up of generous truck owners who distribute the symbols throughout the nation.



# Think Poppies this Holiday Season

Looking for a unique gift idea this holiday season that can greatly impact veterans around the world? Introduced in 1921, the American Legion Auxiliary Poppy Program was adopted to recognize the sacrifices and service of military members.

On Memorial Day and Veterans Day, millions of red crepe paper poppies — all handmade by veterans as part of their therapeutic rehabilitation — are distributed across the country in exchange for donations that go directly to assist disabled and hospitalized veterans, according to the American Legion Auxiliary.

Typically, you can help their cause by purchasing a flower on Memorial Day and Veterans Day, but their significance should be commended year-round, including during the holiday season.

Call your local American Legion to see if there are ways you can help in planning and executing this special program. You can make a big difference in carrying on this long-standing tradition with your help during the holidays.

Read on for more information on the Poppy Program and how big of an impact the American Legion is making on our veteran population.

## **PROGRAM BASICS**

The movement of respecting the poppy is one of the American Legion Auxiliary's most prolific programs. Each year, the organization distributes millions of handmade poppies throughout the country in exchange for donations to impact disabled and hospitalized veterans.

Last year, the group estimates that \$2.1 million was raised to directly assist those in need.

## **PROGRAM HISTORY**

A memory soldiers brought home from World War I was the barren land-

scape of their battlefield being overtaken by wild poppies. The red fields soon gave military members a sense that their fallen comrades spirits would live on. "In Flanders Fields" is a wartime poem, penned by Lt. Col. John McCrae who was inspired by the funeral of a friend and fellow soldier.

McCrae's composition had such an impact on Moina Michael that she led a campaign to adopt the poppy as the national symbol of sacrifice.

## **GET INVOLVED**

Visit <https://www.alaforveterans.org/Poppy/> to learn how you can get involved in the program. Your financial and volunteer support is always needed when it comes to pulling off this unique, far-reaching program every year.

# Distinguished Medals



Your beloved serviceman or servicewoman is likely humble about the medals they were awarded during their careers.

When you're sitting around the table this holiday season, be sure you're up to speed on the various military medals and what they represent. You can make a big difference during the holidays by showing that you appreciate and understand the sacrifices your favorite veterans have made in their careers.

One way to do so is learning more about medals, including the Medal of Honor and The Purple Heart.

Here are some of the most impressive medals a military member can receive and what it means to earn one, as reported by the Pearl Harbor Visitors Bureau.

## **MEDAL OF HONOR**

Regarded as the highest military decoration to be awarded by our government, the Medal of Honor is presented by the president of the United States and recognizes a service member's gallantry and intrepidity for their risk of life while engaging an enemy force.

The first medal was introduced in 1861 as an award for the United States Navy. The Army followed with their own reward the following year, and the Air Force Medal of Honor

was adopted in 1965.

There are three distinct versions of the award used to represent the different branches of military – one for the Army, another for the Air Force, and one shared by the Navy, Marine Corps and the Coast Guard.

## **THE PURPLE HEART**

The Purple Heart metal is typically given to soldiers who were wounded in combat. Eligible service men and women have served in the military on or after April 5, 1917 when the United States joined the Allied forces in World War I. It is also common for families of fallen troops to receive the award on behalf of their soldier's ultimate sacrifice.

## **DISTINGUISHED SERVICE CROSS**

Introduced on Jan. 2, 1918, the Distinguished Service Cross is awarded to soldiers who engaged in conflict with forces that threaten the United States. Here are three of the most common.

**Navy Cross:** Most likely awarded to servicemen and servicewomen who were present during the Pearl Harbor attack. Congress created the medal on Feb. 4, 1918.

**Air Force Cross:** Established on July 6, 1960, has been awarded to more than 190 Air Force members for their distinct service.

**Silver Star:** The third-highest honor awarded to military members recognizes a soldier's level of bravery. It was introduced in 1932 and used to replace the Citation Star which was created by Congress in 1918.