

# TAKING ACTION

FOR THOSE WHO ACT FOR US



## MEMORIAL DAY

Memorial Day has its roots in the Civil War when surviving family members decorated soldiers' graves. The first national observance took place at Arlington National Cemetery on May 30, 1868. After World War I, observance expanded to include armed forces members who died in all wars. Because the National Holiday Act of 1971 shifted Memorial Day from May 30 to make it a federal holiday and three day weekend, many feel that the meaning of the day was lost in the transition.

We can recover Memorial Day's purpose if we take time to think about what others have given up for us through their military service: their youth, precious time with family and friends, or career plans. Some returned with life-changing wounds while others made the ultimate sacrifice; they gave their lives for our future. We can honor their memory with our gratitude. Thank all who have served and pledge to support those who now protect us and others around the world through service in the United States Armed Forces.

Take action for those who act for us.

### REMEMBERING

Visit a **military cemetery** near you. Attend scheduled ceremonies or just walk on the grounds. You can **locate the grave of a loved one** or friend who served in the military if they were buried with a government grave marker.

1. Visit and thank the fallen for their service in your own way.
2. Conduct the **Freedom's Feast Memorial Day ceremony** at a quiet place in the cemetery, or at any other time this holiday that best suits you.
3. Recite a memorial prayer from your faith tradition.
4. Read a poem fitting for the occasion. Try **this collection**.

Participate in the **National Moment of Remembrance** at 3:00 pm. Wherever you are, pause for a minute. Thank those who have fought to defend our freedoms. Think of the families who have lost loved ones in service to our country. Play **Taps** to accompany your observance.

View a **youtube video** that captures the meaning of the holiday and discuss it.

### LEARNING

Many of us have family members or know people who serve or have served in the military. We can learn important lessons about dedication and sacrifice by hearing their stories. These questions may help:

1. Name, rank, branch of service, years served?
2. How long were you away from home? Did you miss big family gatherings? If so which ones? What did you miss most from home?
3. In what countries did you serve?
4. What was the most interesting assignment? Who did you help?
5. Were you ever scared?
6. What was the food like?
7. Can you tell me about a friend in the military with whom you served?
8. Do you have any part of your uniform or souvenir from your days in the military?
9. What was the most important thing that you learned from being in the (name branch of service)?
10. What did it mean to you to serve your country?

### TAKING ACTION

**First, say thank you** to those who are serving.

There are many sites and many ways to do it but here are two:

1. **Write a letter.** "Let's Say Thanks" provides postcard templates, sample texts and sends the postcard for you.
2. **Show your gratitude** to our men and women in uniform whenever you see them. They'll appreciate it. This video shows you how.

**Send packages and provide needed services.** Hundreds of organizations provide opportunities for helping veterans and active members of our armed forces.

1. Visit **A** and **B** for a wide range of options.
2. Since 2003, **Any Soldier** has served nearly 2,000,000 troops who don't get letters or packages from home. **Major Stuart Adam Wolfer Institute**, founded in memory of a loved one KIA (killed in action), partners with **Cellphones for Soldiers**. **Operation Welcome Home Maryland** has welcomed over 100,000 troops at BWI Thurgood Marshall airport since March 2007.

**Remember the families of our military personnel. They are serving too.**

1. This excellent **toolkit** developed by the National Military Family Association has easy actions and resources for families, educators and others to support military families in your community.
2. Visit this inspiring **site** created by a 21 year old military widow to help other widows. Thank them. Make a donation.

**Teach your children about the meaning of military service and sacrifice.**

Show them by your example that you respect citizens who have made this choice. Though members of the armed services are always at risk for combat, many provide essential support to civilians throughout the world during crises. The books below are suggested by the Children's Library of the Enoch Pratt Free Library of Baltimore. Look for them at **Amazon**, **Barnes and Noble** or your local library. Send us your favorites on **Facebook**.

*Stars above Us* by Geoffrey Norman

A little girl's father helps her overcome her fear of the dark as he prepares to go off to war. The stars painted on her bedroom ceiling will remind her of him while he is away. Ages 3-6

*While You Are Away* by Eileen Spinelli

Three children from different families list all the ways they will miss their parents, each of whom come from different branches of the service. Ages 4-7

*100 Days and 99 Nights* by Alan Madison

Esme counts down the days until her father returns from his military tour of duty. As she introduces all her stuffed animals from A-Z, her family's military life and the impact of her father's deployment become clear. Ages 8-10

*Off to War: Voices of Soldier's Children* by Deborah Ellis

Children of military personnel stationed in Iraq and Afghanistan give voice to how their parent's deployment has impacted their lives. Ages 10-14

Enjoy your holiday and taking action for those who act for us.

*Thanks to CMOM, our **Raising Citizens** partner.*

*Please go to [www.freedomfeast.us/memorial-day/taking-action.pdf](http://www.freedomfeast.us/memorial-day/taking-action.pdf) for hyperlinks if you received this as a print-out.*

*Please visit us at [www.freedomfeast.us](http://www.freedomfeast.us) to celebrate other holidays.*



INDEPENDENCE DAY



LABOR DAY



THANKSGIVING



MLK DAY



PRESIDENTS' DAY