

**General Topics :: Veterans Day and Hidden Heroes****Veterans Day and Hidden Heroes - posted by AbideinHim (), on: 2022/11/11 8:29**

Veterans Day and Hidden Heroes

Today I have asked Jennifer Ostan, a family friend and wife of a veteran, to share with us. Jennifer begins:

“Veterans Day is upon us.

“A former Congressman once said:

“On this Veterans Day, let us remember the service of our veterans, and

let us renew our national promise to fulfill our sacred obligations to our veterans and their families who have sacrificed so much so that we can live free.”(1)

“We have an opportunity each November, to renew our national promise. We can pause to take a deeper dive into understanding the unique challenges our veterans face and learn how to support them and their families all year long. It’s a reminder to reprioritize how we care for veterans, so our promise to them can flow into the fabric of our everyday lives.

“Today I want to address those of you who are veterans, and those who want to know how to support veterans, their caregivers, and families.

“First, to our veterans: You took a sacred oath to defend this great nation – today, we honor that single act of courage that shaped your life forever. Thank you, dear sir or ma’am, you answered a call that few have chosen, and you were willing to lay your life down for your fellow Americans. Whether you’ve come out on the other side of your service – whole, wounded, or somewhere in between, we know you’ve paid a price - and that does not go unnoticed.

“We say to you today that we value your service, we honor your selflessness, and we salute you for your sacrifice. As President Truman so aptly stated:

“Our debt to the heroic men and valiant women in the service of our country can never be repaid. They have earned our undying gratitude. America will never forget their sacrifices.”(2)

“We echo those words as we renew our national promise – you have our undying gratitude, and we will not forget your sacrifices!

“Now, to those of you who have not served in our military, today is about the veterans, but it is also about how you can communicate your gratitude and convey value for their sacrifice. In preparation for this post, I asked several veterans for examples of ways they feel honored. Here are their answers:

I don’t need much, a simple thank you and a smile goes a long, long way.

It’s the little things that make me feel proud – a handshake on the street, a stranger buying my coffee, or a text from a friend.

I love seeing the hometown parades and people coming together to cheer us on! It’s a stark contrast from the days of Vietnam.

It means so much when children come up and shake my hand – I love it when they ask me about my service. I hope they continue to teach this kind of honor to the kids.

“Clearly, your simple act of acknowledging veterans’ service as valuable goes a long way in making them feel honored. The next step is being intentional to teach children and grandchildren to do the same – this way our national promise can remain unbroken.

“Now, bear with me as I shift our focus beyond the veterans themselves. Imagine, for a moment, the loved ones that

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stand behind each and every one of those veterans, especially those wounded or are ill. These are the ones who hold down the fort or take care of the home-front, so to speak. They did it during those countless hours of military training and endless cycles of deployment, and they do it now through the excruciating journey of caring for the wounds of war, both visible and invisible.

I want to shine a light on these caregivers the hidden ones the ones for whom each and every day is Veterans Day because the needs of their particular veteran are front and center, hour by hour, moment by moment. I've mentioned in a previous GiveHim15 post that the caregivers to these wounded warriors are referred to as Hidden Heroes.

I've had the privilege of getting to know many of these incredible Hidden Heroes and the stories they so bravely share. When I asked them what they most want or need in support of their veterans, these were some of their answers:

Day to day, I need friendship, patience, and help with the little things like mowing the lawn or making a grocery run. If we are in crisis mode, we may need meals, help with childcare, texts to check in on us, and a listening ear.

I just want understanding without judgment or comparison every veteran responds differently to their injuries or illness.

I would love for someone to come run the vacuum take a chore off my plate once in a while. Last year, my friends helped me decorate for Christmas it was priceless.

I wish people would take time to ask questions and understand, especially since my veteran's wounds are invisible.

I'm not always great at asking for or accepting help so just go for it! I would love a coffee, a meal, or someone to play with my son, so I could take a nap.

A listening ear, and an act of kindness. Think about what you are good at and offer that.

On the heels of that reflection, I want to draw your attention one layer further today. There is a new generation of caregivers we want to bring out of the shadows we call them Hidden Helpers the children of our wounded warriors, who day in and day out are heroes in their own right. We often miss the fact that the wounds of war extend down to the kids as well, requiring them to grow up far more quickly than their peers, handling tasks and emotions far beyond their years.

My purpose in letting the light hover over these Hidden Helpers is to make sure we also think of them when we remember the veterans. For the children, it was not a role they volunteered for, but one they were handed - without warning or preparation. There was no training for their mission, no voluntary raising of the hand to take an oath yet they show up every day to continue the fight.

These Hidden Helpers need us to know they exist. We must make sure they get all the resources they need to navigate their unique challenges. I happen to have two Hidden Helpers in my life who recently spoke on their experience. When one of them was asked how their friends and community show support, she answered as follows,

Well, they don't actually know that I help care for my Dad. I don't really talk about it with anyone. It is hard to explain and they probably wouldn't understand anyway.

This answer actually shocked me. As I dug deeper, I realized the reason they are hesitant to share is because they do not have vocabulary for what they are experiencing, and outside the home, they long to experience childhood along with their peers free from the burdens of caregiving.

Thankfully, as our nation is improving its support of veterans, there is a national conversation taking place surrounding the next generation. We are furiously studying the effects of caregiving duties on the children of veterans. The number one need is mental health services they need someone to talk to, and access to counseling. They need help putting their complex circumstances into words. Beyond that, they need to be able to just be kids.

It reminds me of the saying: You begin to truly see someone the moment you begin to truly listen.

Do you want to support the child of a veteran? Start by asking them questions. Then listen. Better yet, do it over coffee or ice cream!

In closing, to our Veterans - I hope you feel honored and valued. As a nation, we are learning that the cost of service extends to your families as well. To those who seek to support our Veterans, come alongside them, their caregivers, A

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ND their children.

â€œI challenge you, over this next year, to be extravagantly generous with your time or resources - however you feel led. Prayerfully consider what you can do to serve, bless, or give towards a specific veteran. After today, if you realize that you have Hidden Heroes and Helpers in your community â€” reach out to them and ask how you can serve their family â€” or donate to an organization that serves their needs. I can promise that when you care for the families of Veterans, the Veterans themselves feel honored in the process.â€œ

Pray with me:

Heavenly Father â€” please give us eyes to see and ears to hear. We want to see the heroes among us, listen to the ways we can honor and care for them, and continue to place value on their sacrifices. Help us find meaningful ways of teaching the next generation what it means to honor our Veterans, so they grow up with a commitment to do the same. Father, alert us to the moments of opportunity where we can come alongside our Veterans or their families as a show of support.

Give us creativity in how to reach the hidden helpers so they know they are not alone in their journey. Give us wisdom to prioritize our time and resources so those who stood up to serve are treated with dignity in the land they fought to preserve and protect. Thank You, Father, for the freedom we enjoy in this country, we do not take it for granted. We ask your continued protection over our military servicemembers and their families.

In Jesusâ€™ Name, Amen.

Our decree:

We declare that today, we are renewing our national promise to honor and care for our Veterans and their families.

Bio: Jennifer Ostan is an Elizabeth Dole Caregiver Fellow for the State of South Carolina. She spent 12 years as a military spouse before her husband was medically retired from the Army and she began her role as his caregiver. Their 12-year old twin daughters are just beginning to share their experiences as Hidden Helpers, and they seek to inspire others to find joy amidst lifeâ€™s challenges. In addition, Jennifer and her husband, Will, run a non-profit that advocates for Wounded Warriors. You can read more of their story here.

Click on the link below to watch the full video.

<https://youtu.be/zwK4NwbztPE>