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**Subject:** A Day of Thanks for Our Veterans and Their Families

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What can you do on Veterans Day to show your appreciation?

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## A Day of Thanks for Our Veterans and Their Families

Those of us who know military families know that we should be thinking about service members and veterans all year long. We owe them, and their families, a debt of gratitude for keeping us safe and secure.

But many Americans simply do not know someone in the military. In a 2011 Pew Research Center survey, more than three-quarters of adults ages 50 and older said they had an immediate family member—a spouse, parent, sibling or child—who had served in the military. The number dropped to only one-third among those ages 18-29.

That “military-civilian gap” Pew describes means that Veterans Day may have a direct meaning to far fewer Americans than in the past, and so it is important for us to infuse this day with meaning, to reflect “pride in the heroism of those who died in the country’s service and with gratitude for the victory...” as was proclaimed when the holiday was established after World War I.

What can you do? **Give thanks.** Call someone who serves, or someone who used to serve, or someone whose family member served, and tell them you appreciate their sacrifice. If you don’t know someone personally, **volunteer your time.** Check your newspaper or do a quick Google search. Many local organizations organize volunteer activities for Veterans Day.

Or do something to help those often forgotten: **help a military caregiver.** Since 9/11, more than 2.5 million have served, and more than 50,000 have been physically injured in action. An estimated 1 in 5 return with post traumatic stress or major depression, and more than 300,000 are estimated to have a traumatic brain injury.

They require serious—often full-time—care when they return, and their caregivers really are the unsung heroes behind our heroes. They are usually young spouses and aging parents, and caring for a spouse or child is not necessarily what they expected to be doing with their lives. It is a huge job, and often the caregivers sacrifice their own health and well-being to ensure the care of their loved one.

If you know caregivers who could use a bit of help, please let them know about **Operation Family Caregiver** (OFC). Through community-based organizations, OFC provides free and confidential support to the families of those who have served our nation, helping them learn how to overcome

the obstacles they face and to manage any challenges that might come along. It has been proven to help caregivers become more satisfied with their lives, have fewer health issues, and generally become more prepared to take care of their families.

Learn more about [Operation Family Caregiver](#) or [Contact Us](#) to find support.

With much appreciation,

Dr. Leisa Easom  
Executive Director  
Rosalynn Carter Institute for Caregiving

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