

Quite possibly my favorite program of the Sons of The American Legion and definitely the one I am most involved with is Veteran's Affairs and Rehabilitation. In my mind there is no better way to attempt to repay a debt of gratitude, than serving those that have served this country in the Armed Forces. There are numerous ways to help out our Nation's Veterans, from providing the much needed services they require, to ensuring they receive the benefits they were promised.

Do you enjoy the "hands on" approach of working with people, one on one or in group settings? Then volunteering in a Veteran's Home, Veteran's Medical Center or other Veteran's facility might be right for you. These facilities are always looking for volunteers to conduct BINGO games or other activities, assist with outings, push wheelchairs and provide escorts. Members at these facilities are eager to share their stories with someone that will just sit and listen. Many have little or no family and greatly appreciate any time you can spend talking with them, but more importantly just listening. If you don't have a Veteran's facility in your area, check out a local retirement home, elderly housing complex or even your own neighborhood. Assist a Veteran with home repairs, yard work, provide them with a meal or invite them over to have some coffee and conversation.

Conversation can be a great therapy tool for many of our Veterans, don't try to analyze, just sit and listen. Many Veterans have experienced events that we may only be able to imagine and they need someone to confide in and purge some of those ghosts that haunt them on a daily basis. Be cautious though, let them bring up the subject, when they are ready and feel safe sharing their experiences. Comfort them and let them know that you care. Remember we are not professionals, if they appear at risk suggest they seek help from the V.A. facility staff or local Veterans Service Officer.

Maybe you just can't find any spare time to volunteer one on one, but you do have a few spare minutes throughout the day, and still feel the need to assist our Veteran's. How about becoming a Veteran's Advocate? It's easy, go to www.legion.org/legislative or sign up to receive the Legislative alerts at <http://capwiz.com/legion/mlm/signup/> . Follow up by contacting your elected Representatives by email or phone asking them to support various Veterans issues. You can easily take it a step further by contacting your friends, neighbors and co-workers, asking them to help show support of pending legislation concerning Veterans.

The months of November and December provide us with many opportunities to serve our Veterans and various Veteran's programs, such as assisting with your American Legion Post Veterans' Day Ceremony, Dollars Days, Gifts for Yanks, and assisting a local Veteran in your community with fall clean up. How about providing a meal for a Veteran and their family during this Holiday season? A simple act of kindness can bring a smile to their face and make the day special.

Get out, Get involved and Be seen!

Danny Smith
National Commander
Sons of The American Legion