



Military Appreciation Month
With Volunteer Editor: Jeanette Wojcik
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The month of May brings the hope of warmer, sunnier days and the start of the “summer” season with Memorial Day. For many, Memorial Day is the time to get out the grill and outdoor furniture and take life a little easier. But, for others, Memorial Day has a deeper meaning, and, in recent years, has grown into a month-long celebration to honor all those who have served in our country’s military – living, deceased, active duty and retired.

According to the [History Channel](#), Memorial Day dates back to the Civil War. More than 620,000 soldiers lost their lives in this conflict. After the war, Major General John A. Logan, called for a nationwide day of remembrance. May 30, 1868 was designated as a day to honor those who had died in the Civil War by “decorating the graves” of the fallen. The day became known as Decoration Day. That first event was marked by General James Garfield with a speech at Arlington National Cemetery with more than 5,000 people attending. These people then decorated the graves of soldiers with small American flags. By 1890 every state had made Decoration Day an official state holiday. In 1887 Congress declared “Memorial Day” to be a federal holiday for all government employees. However, it wasn’t until 1971 that Congress declared Memorial Day a federal holiday.

In 1999, Senator John McCain introduced a resolution in the Senate to establish [Military Appreciation Month](#). May was selected because there are more military observances during May than any other month. McCain’s goal was to give these holidays a focus other than a three-day weekend. Military-related celebrations in May include Loyalty Day, Silver Star Service Banner Day, Public Service Recognition Week, Victory in Europe Day, Military Spouse Appreciation Day, Children of Fallen Patriots Day, Armed Forces Day, Memorial Day, and Month of the Military Caregiver.

In a story for MSN, [Rebecca Burgess](#), Ph.D., senior fellow with the Yorktown Institute, explained why we set this month aside to honor those who have served in the military. She quotes from the language of the bill introduced by Senator McCain in her comments, “Preserving and fostering the honor and respect that the United States Armed Forces deserve is the key to those military forces preserving the freedoms and liberties that enrich the Nation by their active supporting of the Constitution.”

Burgess goes on to say that the principles of the Constitution and Declaration of Independence require an awareness that is vibrant and alive, beyond the lip-service sayings and theatrical displays. Citizenship, she says, is an active rather than a passive verb. She says that citizenship is based on an affection or attachment that we traditionally call love of country or patriotism. “This is why the purpose of Military Appreciation Month is also to inspire greater love of the United States and to instill in the youth of the United States the significance of the contributions made by US military members and their families.”

What can you do to honor our military? The answer is easy. Put aside the politics. Fly the U.S. flag. Visit and honor the graves of those who have served in the military. Say “thank you” to a veteran – and their families. Show respect and honor to those who have served and who have worked to build our nation. [President John F. Kennedy](#) said, “As we express our gratitude, we must never forget that the highest appreciation is not to utter words, but to live by them.”