



Veterans Group

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Veterans Day, every day of the year

Having celebrated Veterans Day in November, we are reminded how many special events take place to honor and show appreciation to those who have served in the armed forces. The day was marked with celebrations all across our country, from humbling parades with participating uniformed veterans spanning many generations of service, to recognition events with distinguished speakers. But the sacrifice of our American veterans is not just honored on Veterans Day.

For instance, this past October, the famed Marine Corps Marathon was once again hosted in our nation's capital, Washington, DC. This marathon is one of the most well-known races in the United States. From a spectator's vantage point, it becomes quite evident that the participants, along with those on the sidelines, share a common thread—unwavering admiration, respect and appreciation for the service and sacrifice of our veterans.

As mentioned in the November issue of *The Postal Record*, 2016 Humanitarian of the Year Brad Gentz planned to run in the Marine Corps Marathon in October. Gentz is a letter carrier from Mason City, IA, Branch 471, who was recently honored by the NALC as the 2016 Humanitarian of the Year for befriending Ryan Hemann, a teenager on

his route, who is confined to a wheelchair due to spina bifida. Brad proposed pushing Ryan in a special racing wheelchair, allowing them to share the thrill of distance running. They have run several races and half marathons together but chose the Marine Corps Marathon as their first full marathon.

To Brad, an Army veteran, Ryan's attraction to the marathon was obvious. He wanted to honor his best friend and running companion. With the support of runners Tracie and Heather, who are both special education teachers, Brad and Ryan completed the grueling marathon. Brad said this race was "the coolest thing—all the supporters and volunteers—it was humanity showing its face in the purest form."

Lynne Pendleton, member of Branch 1091 and a regional administrative assistant in the Marine Corps Marathon in 2015. Although not a veteran herself, a big reason she ran this race was that it supports Marines and all veterans. For her, it was a patriotic expression. She said running past the impressive monuments and memorials was moving and inspiring. She described the "Blue Mile" at mile marker 12, where the sides of the race way were lined with the pictures of fallen service members, killed in the line of duty. "It



really hits home that others are giving their lives in order that we all live free," she said.

Lynne and Brad are just two of the many letter carriers who have run this historic race. It was their shared interest in expressing their respect for veterans, along with their love of a challenge, that prompted them to enter. They are like so many other members of the NALC, connected to their chosen cause through active participation.

Veteran events are great unifying forces. They muster the respect and admiration of us all and provide countless opportunities to take action over mere words and show compassion and respect—every day throughout the year.

Veteran or not, you can always give your time, energy and support in a veteran event. There are several links to veteran organizations at nalc.org for you to find your experience. Don't see anything that fits? Step out and create your own—maybe an NALC Veterans Group member in your branch will join you.

