Each year, Americans take time to honor military veterans on Veterans Day, Nov. 11.

Nearly one in four NALC members served in the armed forces. These veterans traded their military uniforms for letter carrier uniforms, continuing their service to their nation and their communities.

Veterans don’t always receive expressions of appreciation beyond Veterans Day. Even when they do, the gratitude, while sincere, may not extend beyond “thank you.” The NALC Veterans Group was created in 2015 to recognize these members’ service. In addition, the group provides them with access to information and tools specific to veterans’ rights and benefits, both related as well as unrelated to their careers as letter carriers in the U.S. Postal Service. Upon joining the NALC Veterans Group, all members receive a lapel pin as a symbol of gratitude for their military service and membership in NALC.

In this issue, we list the names of the more than 12,300 members of the NALC Veterans Group to thank them not only for their military services and the sacrifices they made, but for continuing to serve the nation in new ways. NALC also wishes to thank all of our military veterans, whether listed or not, for the sacrifices they have made on behalf of liberty and democracy.

The newest resource the Veterans Group is providing to its members is an NALC veterans’ guide, a handbook full of valuable information for active and retired carriers with past military service and those currently serving in a reserve component of the U.S Armed Forces or in the National Guard. The guide, which will be available soon, contains information about topics such as obtaining credit for military service for the purpose of retirement “buying back time,” the rights of federal workers who are veterans, disability and on-the-job injuries, and paid military leave for absences related to military service (see the September issue of The Postal Record for more information).

Letter carriers should download the NALC Member App on their Apple or Android device so they will receive notifications once the guide is available. Instructions for downloading the app are available on the NALC website at nalc.org/app.

At the 2018 national convention in Detroit, the NALC Veterans Group held an inaugural service project. It was no surprise that hundreds of convention delegates who were veterans responded to the call to service, assembling more than 2,000 care kit bags for Detroit-area homeless veterans. Next August, the Veterans Group will once again sponsor a special service project for NALC members who are veterans to serve the local community at the national convention in Honolulu.

Veterans Group members also may purchase exclusive merchandise from the NALC store. All products are union-made in the USA. To buy these products, go to nalc.org/store to download a mail-in an order form or call 202-393-4695 to order by phone.

“We’ve only begun to explore the ways to involve and honor our military veteran members through the NALC Veterans Group,” NALC President Fredric Rolando said. “They exchanged one
uniform for another, never forgetting to put service first.”

Membership is open to any NALC member with past or current military service. To join the NALC Veterans Group, fill out the form and mail it to: NALC Veterans Group, National Association of Letter Carriers, 100 Indiana Ave. NW, Washington, DC 20001-2144. The form—along with useful information and news of interest to veterans—also is available on our website at nalc.org/veterans.

The following highlights the extraordinary expressions of the continued commitment veterans have to each other as well as their communities.

**Brad’s Blessings**

Letter carriers who served in the military never forget their mission of service. For Jerry Giesting, that means giving back to the community after his son Brad Giesting, an Army veteran like his father, died of brain cancer.

“We didn’t want his memory to die,” Giesting, a member of Cincinnati Branch 43, said of his son, who passed away in 2016 after a long struggle with liposarcoma, a rare form of brain cancer.

Brad served in Iraq as part of the 101st Airborne from 2005 to 2006.

 Brad Giesting (c) and his parents

While in Iraq, he was exposed to burn pits used for garbage disposal. Burn pits involve open-air incineration of waste, including potentially hazardous material such as chemicals, paint, medical and human waste, munitions, petroleum products, plastic and rubber. Some veterans and health professionals suspect that the exposure has led to health problems for veterans who served in Iraq and Afghanistan, including the cancer that took Brad’s life.

“It’s basically another Agent Orange from Vietnam,” Giesting said.

After returning from Iraq in 2006, Brad married his high school sweetheart and had two daughters. He was diagnosed with cancer in May of 2013, and despite 70 rounds of chemotherapy, 30 radiation treatments, six surgeries and a last-hope clinical trial, Brad succumbed to the cancer on Oct. 22, 2016.

Despite his enormous health problems, Brad managed to maintain a positive outlook. “He kept the family laughing throughout his ordeal,” Giesting said. “He had a huge sense of humor and tried to keep people on a high note, even when he was struggling.”

To honor Brad’s memory, his family promoted a “Random Acts of Kindness Day” each year on Oct. 22, the anniversary of his death, to urge people to spread love. They also established a foundation, Brad’s Blessings, to give back to the community.

“We started the foundation to help other people who are going through cancer. We tried to find, in particular, families of veterans who served in Iraq and Afghanistan who were exposed to the burn pits,” Giesting said.

Brad’s Blessings’ activities include scholarships and gifts of supplies for students at both grade school and high

Jerry Giesting helped set up the Bradley M. Giesting Kindness Scholarship to assist a student from a veteran’s household.

school levels. The Bradley M. Giesting Kindness Scholarship is awarded to a student from a veteran’s household with financial need. The first scholarship helped a student pay tuition to attend Archbishop McNicholas High School in Cincinnati, where Brad attended school. Also, three McNicholas graduates who are headed for military careers after graduation received gifts to help them as they moved to a new chapter in life. The foundation plans to help more students this way.

And in the spirit of Brad’s humorous nature, fundraising and promotion events for Brad’s Blessings include an annual comedy show.

True to its name, Brad’s Blessings has allowed his family to turn a tragedy into service to others with similar challenges.

“It’s a terrible thing to have happened,” Giesting said, “but we know there are a lot of people out there like him suffering—that’s why we want to keep his memory alive and try to help those who have served.”

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has studied the burn pit exposure issue, but currently does not recognize
it as a general service-related health issue. The VA continues to collect data from veterans about their exposure to burn pits, and it may grant disability benefits on a case-by-case basis. For more information, go to publichealth.va.gov/exposures/burnpits.

NEVER FORGET

Northeast Florida Branch 53 member Clarence Hollowell ensures that the gravestones of veterans remain fresh and clean, no matter how long ago the veterans were laid to rest.

An Army veteran who served from 1977 to 1980, Hollowell has painstakingly cleaned the headstones of hundreds of veterans in cemeteries. In more than two years of cleaning, he estimates he has brightened 700 grave markers.

Using a special cleaning solution, he gently brushes and washes the stone to remove grime and growth. The process of cleaning the stones without damaging them can take weeks or even months of repeated applications of water, cleaning solution and brushing.

Hollowell began his project when he delivered mail in Wilson, NC, before transferring to Jacksonville Beach, FL. In Wilson, his mail route included Maplewood Cemetery.

“I just noticed that a lot of the veterans’ headstones were blackened with age and dirt,” Hollowell said, “so I thought to myself, ‘There has to be a way to clean it and keep the integrity of the stone.’ ”

He did some research and learned how to clean a stone properly without damaging it. Armed with this knowledge, cleaning supplies and permission from the cemetery, Hollowell began cleaning the headstones of veterans in several cemeteries in North Carolina. When he transferred to Florida, he resumed his work at Jacksonville’s Old City Cemetery.

Working on his days off, Hollowell cleans headstones of veterans, and sometimes of non-veterans whose family members ask for the service. The special cleaning solution—the only kind approved for national cemeteries—costs him $40 a gallon. Cleaning some of the stones can involve multiple visits to repeat the application of solution, scrubbing and rinsing.

“It can be a long process,” he said. “Some take maybe two weeks, and then some have taken six months to get it where you want it to be. I’ve had some that were over 100 years old and are [now] brand-new looking.”

Hollowell takes before-and-after photos of each gravestone he cleans. But he does more than honor each fallen veteran by cleaning the headstone. He also researches the life of the person buried with it.

“When you see somebody’s name, it’s not just somebody’s name,” he said. “It was an actual life.”

The following pages list members of the NALC Veterans Group as of Oct. 11, 2019.
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John R. Bahr
David F. Baker
Robert J. Berhorst
Jacob S. Brown
Gerald L. Crenner
James B. Owens
Branch 139, Sedalia
David C. Katamem
Johnny R. Persinger
Danny L. Price
Branch 195, Saint Joseph
Wesley H. Bland
Richard L. Gann
Ronne E. Hamilton
Owen B. Holmes
Ronald C. Hoyt
Alma R. Ruark
Saundra L. Sarnovski
Seth S. Shank
Branch 203, Springfield
Gareth J. Campbell
Thomas B. Carter
Warren O. Cooke
Jared D. Cooley
Frankie L. Dandor
John B. Hensons
James W. Huliff
Robin R. Kennedy
Curtis G. Lewis
Sheri L. Long
Mary Grace D. Mendoza
Benjamin P. Poole
Daryl E. Sexton
Lawrence B. Vine
Cynthia M. Wright
Branch 291, Hannibal
Zacary L. Garner
Branch 335, Moberly
Duane E. Bash
Timothy A. Luntford
Michael D. Spillman Jr.
Branch 343, Saint Louis
Terry W. Ackman
David O. Agnew Sr.
Kevin S. Ahlers
Palmer C. Ash
Emil J. Bahr
Jennefer K. Beck
Joseph A. Beard
Gary L. Arnold
Branch 366, Southwest MO
Randy P. Adams
Stephen M. Arduiser
Gary F. Betz
Joseph A. Beard
Jennifer K. Beck
Kevin C. Beck
Roy E. Cochran
Gary L. Greenwood
Jim D. Holbrook
Ricco C. Johnson
Nicholas P. Kranz
Branch 511, Chillicothe
Etham O. Case
Branch 763, Columbia
Thomas M. Baslee
Earle W. Bredlove
Charles L. Burgett
Plummer R. Collins
Creston L. Dennis
Ronald J. Hodges
Mitchell D. Jackson
Edward N. Schumaker
David L. Stewart
Gale L. Wade
Noel D. Wilkins
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Charles E. Brecker
Wayne H. Fraser
Branch 1015, Cape Girardeau
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Daniel J. Caffey
Richard C. Hall
Sharron L. Hardy
Dennis W. Hoch
Marvin A. Lehard
Clarence L. Mattingly
Rebecca R. McCain
Bradley D. Norman
Buck D. Nun
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Branch 3442, Montgomery City
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Branch 3606, Vandalia
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Branch 4050, Crystal City
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Branch 4826, Palmyra
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Branch 4474, Elsberry
Bucky D. Miller
Branch 4839, Florissant
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Richard E. Decker
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Timothy E. Hartsfield
William J. Keatman
Walter O. Kaiser
Randolph L. Rogers
Branch 5050, Batline
Katherine G. Buentler
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Kevin M. Holm
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Branch 650, Great Falls
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Marcus L. Delgado
Richard D. Desjardins
George B. Heisler
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Michael D. Severson
Claudia C. Weinmaster
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Branch 815, Billings
Donald Lee
Branch 948, Kalispell
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Branch 1028, Bozeman
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Branch 1016, Glendive
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Branch 5387, Libby
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Branch 1020, Norfolk
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John J. Mathews
Boyd L. Mayhew Jr.
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Hee S. Koo
Carl W. Barr
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Bennie C. Siples

Branch 1729, Greenville
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John R. Furey
Wendell Wilson

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Telly Vestal

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Arambland James C. Braden
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Neal J. Cobeznit
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Richard T. Phillips
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Neil J. Rickard
Mitchell Rivais
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Adam M. Sabel
Gerald A. Sanders
Paul J. Savetski
Scott M. Schindler
Hule. Screen
Charles P. Shy
William H. Sinderal
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Brian A. Stine
Andre P. Stubbs
Lloyd G. Swart
Leroy Thompson
Bennie L. Toney
Manorie J. Vandesande
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James B. Durham
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Dennis E. Estdridge
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Bena K. Gnomigre
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Bruno T. Fowler Jr.
Brian D. Gouriell
Robert A. Green
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Tyler A. Heath
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William E. Dorn
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Robert G. Friedman
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Pamela A. Harris
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Herbert J. Starnfeld
Donald W. Shepherd
Robert Shepard
Charles R. Snyder
Brenda L. Stidams
Jeffrey L. Swanson
Charles C. Trott
Michael W. Tunstall

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Richard D. Atkinson
Richard S. Blakeman