

Why is Veterans Day Necessary? By Riley Jennings, Lakeside Jr. High

The author G.K. Chesterton wrote, "The true soldier fights not because he hates what is in front of him, but because he loves what is behind him." Our military members and veterans have a love and commitment to their families, our country, and our American way of life, and that is why they choose to serve. Veteran's Day is celebrated on November 11th to thank those who have served in the United States Armed Forces, both living and deceased, for their patriotism and sacrifice. Veteran's Day is necessary because our nation should honor and remember the sacrifices of our military, to explain to Americans the history of those who have protected our country, and to remind Americans of our own responsibility to protect our freedom.

As a military kid, I personally know about the sacrifices made by a military member and their family. My dad is getting ready to deploy; I will not see him for at least six months. During his last deployment, he was away for almost a year. I know he will worry about me, my mom, and my little sister. It will be hard not seeing my dad for six months; he will not be there to encourage me in school or cheer me on in sports. Not only do military members forfeit time with their families, many also sacrifice their health, and even their lives. Military members serve because they want to protect their country. This is the highest form of patriotism.

Veteran's Day is a time to remember the history of our military who have fought in wars to not only defend our nation, but also to defeat evil. World War II saw the rise of the Nazis and fascism. My great-great-Uncle Ralph was a paratrooper during this terrible war. He parachuted behind enemy lines during the Battle of the Bulge. Also called the Ardennes Campaign, it the largest, bloodiest, and costliest battle fought by the U.S. Army in World War II. Uncle Ralph later became a teacher and an awesome football coach, but he would never share stories of his experiences during the war, only quietly saying that it was too horrible to retell. My great-grandfather, Jack, fought in the Korean War. He was wounded at least twice, and with that pain and metal in his body for the rest of his life. It did not stop him from being a loving family man, and a great teacher. At his funeral, generations of students, as well as fellow sailors crowded into the church, where stories of his bravery and selflessness were told. My great Uncle Ron was a brave marine during the Vietnam War. He fought "in-country" in the jungles. Because of his exposure to Agent Orange, he had bladder cancer, and has other health problems. However, he is still proud of serving his country. These are just a few of the sacrifices our military has made in the past. It is important to remember their history on Veteran's Day.

Lastly, Veteran's Day reminds Americans of our own responsibility to protect our freedom. When my grandmother was telling me stories, she remembered all of the young men she went to high school with going off to Vietnam; many never made it

home. She said, "I did not serve in the military, but I will always honor those who have. I can honor them by serving in other ways, and remembering their sacrifices." One way Americans can be responsible is to educate ourselves on issues important to our freedom, as well as make our voices known when we vote. I am not an adult, but I can help our nation by paying attention in school, standing for up for what's right, and helping out at home when my dad is deployed.

In conclusion, it is important to honor Veteran's Day by appreciating our current military and their families, honoring our history, and remembering our responsibility to protect our nation's freedom. As for me, I hope to follow in the footsteps of my father, and join the United States Navy when I grow up. I can think of nothing more important to do with life than to serve my country.