



STILL SERVING

Veterans' group bridges gap for disaster victims

Wednesday is Veterans Day. It seems the United States has been in the business of creating veterans ever since the signing of the Declaration of Independence. We are a warring nation that has been involved in armed conflicts with distant nations, our neighbors, Native Americans, pirates, drugs, terror — and even ourselves — almost nonstop since our inception.



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InSites

It seems only fitting that we should set aside a day to honor the millions of men and women who have fought in all of these battles.

World War II gave us the most veterans, with more than 16 million serving in the most horrific war to date. Our current war in Afghanistan is our longest war at 15 years and counting. It beats No. 2, Vietnam, by five years and WWII by more than 11 years. Despite its length, the number of veterans from Afghanistan and Iraq is about the same as Vietnam, at around 2.7 million, and thankfully, the number of casualties is much lower.

We've gotten much better at protecting our troops in battle and taking care of the wound-

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ed. Better equipment, armor and technology help to reduce the number of grievous injuries. Wounds that would have been fatal in prior wars can often be treated thanks to quick evacuation, advanced first aid and well-equipped and staffed field hospitals.

Despite all of our experience creating veterans, and advances in keeping more of them safer on the battlefield, we still struggle with taking care of them when they're done fighting. Problems with the Veterans Administration failing to provide necessary care for vets have been in the news for years, as have stories of higher suicide rates among vets than civilians.

Taking care of their own

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TeamRubiconUSA.org is the website of an organization started and staffed by vets. Its goal is to give returning service members a sense of purpose similar to what they felt while deployed. The group's mission is to send veterans as emergency first responders after disasters such as tornadoes, floods or blizzards.

Small teams of trained vets quickly deploy to disaster areas to offer relief while waiting for conventional aid organizations to respond. The teams conduct search and rescue operations, clear debris, provide logistical support, medical care and more.

Team Rubicon takes its name from Julius Caesar's crossing of the Rubicon River to attack Rome. Once he crossed, there was no turning back, thus the phrase "crossing the Rubicon" has come to mean committing yourself to a

bold course of action.

The organization got its start when a group of eight veterans led a team into Haiti after the massive earthquake in 2010. They gathered funds and medical supplies and traveled to troubled areas that other aid organizations weren't prepared to go into.

Team Rubicon's website is a slickly designed, multi-purpose tool. It serves as an advertisement, an information portal, a recruiting tool for volunteers and a fund-raising platform. There are sections on the mission, history, operations, training opportunities, volunteering, donating, a store and more.

The content provides a good mix of information, story telling and attitude bordering on over-confidence, which probably isn't a bad trait for someone plunging into a disaster area.

The site makes good use of photos, video and graphics to tell its story in an engaging fashion. The navigation is logical and intuitive. The typography is unified and has a clear, organized hierarchy.

We should help veterans for the sacrifices they've made, but let's not forget, they can help us, too.

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