

Grace for Vets Makes National Push

By Michael E. Mountz
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Editor's Note: The Grace for Vets program was launched by Cloister Wash & Lube as a way to thank U.S. military veterans and service personnel. Through the program, participating carwashes offer a free carwash to vets and active personnel on Veterans Day, Nov. 11.

Starting the Grace For Vets program in 2004 was important to me because I have personally witnessed some of the sacrifices that fellow Americans have given when fighting for our country. While in the military, I was hospitalized in the Valley Forge military hospital in 1969. I was one of only a few non-amputees out of thousands of men and women. Their courage inspired me to want to give back to all the wonderful Americans who have given so much for our magnificent country and our freedom.

Grace For Vets is just a small token of appreciation, one day each year, in which we can show our gratitude to these freedom fighters!

Since its inception, the program has grown tremendously through the participation of enthusiastic operators across the nation. Still, we remain short of our goals. Let us work together in harmony to glorify all of our service personnel — not limiting our efforts to those who live in the vicinity of a few participating carwashes.

Honoring those who have fought for our country should be enough for everyone to want to participate, but some operators understandably have reservations about offering a day of free washes. I can reassure you, from a business standpoint, there are few programs that we have participated in as a company that have provided as huge returns as Grace For Vets.

The community views it in such a positive light that even though it is just one day a year, customers talk about it throughout the year with tremendous affection. Not only does the program demonstrate a carwash's community support and awareness, it also helps build employee enthusiasm.

I have asked local and national operators to join in on the program. Grace For Vets is not about Cloister; it is about doing what is right for our service personnel. We have been blessed with some great operators who have supported the program from the beginning.

The beauty of the program is that every carwash segment can participate. Even if you don't have an automatic tunnel but have hand bays, self-serve bays, self-serve vacuums, a pet wash, or even a motorcycle wash, you can participate in Grace For Vets. Simply position an employee at each of the areas where you want to offer free services. The attendant can provide the veterans with free time

by turning the bay or vacuum on. Now that's personalized customer service!

Take part in this opportunity to give back by joining ranks with fellow operators and support Grace For Vets. Our goal for the industry is to wash 1 million veterans' cars!

It is easy to participate. In fact, everything you need to get started is available at www.graceforvets.org. Materials include logos to use on any Veterans Day material, advertisements for radio and newspapers, and signage for your lobby, waiting area or any local veterans' administration office or willing neighborhood business. In addition, there is a sample press release, letterhead and even stock photos you can use on promotional posters. We have even outlined how to structure a successful program and provide tips for generating awareness and support from local vets and media outlets.

Please join us in participating in this wonderful event and help us rally other operators to do the same.

God bless America. God bless the carwash industry. God bless our vets

Michael Mountz is president of Cloister Wash & Lube. Visit www.graceforvets.org to learn more about the program and discover how you can get involved.