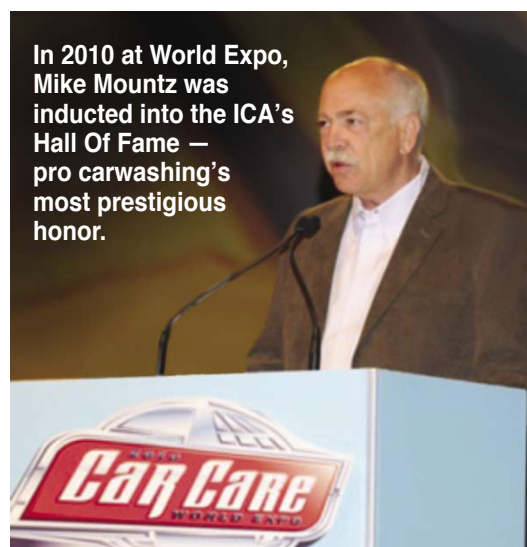


## 'Grace For Vets' Grows

The Veteran's Day promotion, "Grace For Vets," keeps growing. The promo was begun in 2004 by Mike Mountz, owner of the four Cloister Carwashes in Central Pennsylvania. Mountz honors our military vets by giving them a free wash "on the 11th day of the 11th month". Some other carwash owners around the country have been doing something similar. Grace For Vets, however, was envisioned by Mountz as a way to unite carwashers "under one banner" — as is so very well defined and declared by the theme: "United We Stand, United We Wash" — making a positive statement about the industry and having an overall effect that is greater than the sum of their previously independent parts.

In 2009, there were over 250 washes in 44 states that participated under that GFV banner, "gracing" more than 60,000 vets with a complimentary vehicle wash. The goal for 2010 was 100,000, which was met and then sizably exceeded with a total of almost 111,000 receiving a free "Thank You For Your Service" wash at 504 carwashes in all 50 states.

"This day is not about the carwash operators who are providing the free washes," Mike Mountz emphasizes, "it's about honoring and recognizing those that have and are serving and protecting our country." Mike is first to say and has always said GFV is in no way about him. But to not acknowledge his personal story does something of a disservice to this patriotic, unifying mission. It began when he was a young man who enlisted to serve his country. While stateside, Mike was very seriously injured and spent 2 months in a full body cast. He was then sent to the Veteran's Hospital in Valley Forge, Pennsylvania for therapy. There he saw himself as being fortunate ... and grateful. All his fellow patients were severely wounded amputees from Vietnam.



Mike was profoundly touched by the spirit and bravery of these soldiers and Marines. So he vowed that some day he would find a way to express gratitude to the men and women who

give so much to serve and protect our country. And so, what began 6 years ago as Mike's very personal "thank you", has been evolving into an industry-wide/nationwide statement. And so it grows. (Go to [www.GraceForVets.org](http://www.GraceForVets.org) to see how you can best participate in 2011 and beyond.)

Mike has demonstrated his special leadership, innovation and inspiration in a numerous ways over the years — which have been acknowledged by the International Carwash Association's awarding him The Community Service Award in 2000, The Leadership in Innovation Award in 2005, and his being inducted at this year's World Car Care Expo into the ICA's Hall of Fame — carwashing's most prestigious honor.

If you're looking for some more inspiration, check out the Cloister Carwash website ([www.CloisterCarWash.com](http://www.CloisterCarWash.com)). The SSCWN also did an all too brief profile of this exemplary and very innovative operation in the Industry News section of our Spring 2009 issue.

(More "News" Continues On A Following Page)

## Flying The Colors - Big Time!

An online newspaper, *The Press Of Atlantic City*, ran a story this summer about about the Platinum Carwash, an exterior express in Pleasantville, New Jersey. The focus of the piece was the huge American flag the wash's owner, **Thomas Collins**, has been flying since July 2008. The flag has become a regional landmark. It's 30 by 60 feet and flies atop a 100 foot flagpole. At night when it's illuminated, it can be seen from the top floors of some casinos in Atlantic City over 6 miles away! It may be the largest flag in the Atlantic Region.

"Our country's flag always meant a lot to me growing up," said Collins. "I've always been patriotic ... and the flags I have here are American-made." Collins will not allow the flag to be flown worn or torn. They cost \$1,600 and come from a company in North Carolina, which replaces the flag every 8 to 10 months. "If there are any winds over 15 mph, we take it down," Collins said. "But if all of a sudden a storm comes by and it gets to the point where



it's unsafe for employees to take it down — we just leave it up. The wind is brutal when you get a hold of it. At 30 mph, trying to grab 1,800 square feet of flag can send a guy flying across the parking lot!"

That 100 foot pole is actually 111 feet long, with 11 feet of it underground and stabilized in 50,000 pounds of concrete — though the steel tube that runs through its center is grounded in 5,000 pounds of sand, which allows it to sway back and forth in the wind.

"We've had so many people taking pictures of it," Collins says. "Artists sit here during the day and sketch it. I think the flag moves a lot of people."

This Fall, Collins obtained a zoning variance allowing him to build a second Platinum Carwash 10 miles away in Somers Point. Will he fly a similar flag there? You betcha!