

Salute to Veterans

Camp Fire USA National Project



Purpose:

- **Help children learn about veterans, develop a sense of caring for others, and give service to others.**
- **Pay tribute and express appreciation to veterans.**
- **Increase community awareness of the role of the Veteran's Administration (VA) medical centers.**
- **Encourage citizens to visit the hospitalized veterans and to become involved as volunteers.**

Outcomes:

- Greater self-awareness
- Increased appreciation and respect for others
- Increased knowledge of governance process and teamwork
- Youth make program choices and plan sequentially
- Increased competency in and appropriate application of basic learning skills

Requirements:

Participants complete the following two requirements. Generally the requirements are completed in two meetings:

1. Who are Veterans?
2. Valentines for Veterans

Requirements can be altered or substituted according to the needs, interests, and ideas of the group. Participants receive a national project bead after each requirement is completed. Participants completing two requirements receive the recognition emblem (#B12000). The Salute to Veterans emblem is a heart design which symbolizes love and appreciation of the veterans of our country.

Tips for teachers, leaders, or coordinators:

- This project is administered with the cooperation of the VA in Washington, D.C. All valentines are sent to council offices and then to the VA hospitals all across the country.

- If a VA hospital is located in the council's area, making a visit is encouraged. Youth can learn a great deal about veterans by actually visiting a hospital. Find out if the VA hospital in your area will allow visitors. If a hospital is not available, you may contact your local Veterans of Foreign Wars post.
- Contact your council regarding deadlines, information on materials and how to distribute the valentines.
- Check with your council before doing any activities shown on the list of options. Some of these activities may not be suitable for the VA hospital in your area.



Camp Fire USASM
Today's kids. Tomorrow's leaders.

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Meeting Plan: Who Are Veterans?

Purpose: Teach children what veterans did for this country and what it means to give service to others.

Materials:

- Sample of Salute to Veterans emblem (#B12000)
- Crayons or markers
- One piece of 8½" x 11" paper for each child
- Optional: a variety of building materials (spoons, paper, string, yarn, wood, paper cups, fabric, building blocks, boxes, etc.).

Preparation:

Check on council procedures for this project. The group could invite a veteran to this meeting. Check to see if there is a veteran among the families of the group.

There are many activities in this meeting plan; choose the ones most appropriate for your age group.

Activities:

Veterans

1. Ask the children, "What is a veteran?"
 - Men and women who have served this country in the Armed Forces, such as the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines, or the Coast Guard.
 - Point out that veterans are people who defended our country so everyone can live in peace.
 - Emphasize that veterans are people of all races and nationalities.
2. Ask them if they know anyone who served in the military in WWII, Vietnam, Korea, Desert Storm, Afghanistan, or Iraq. Once these people retire or leave from the military, they are considered veterans.

Patriotism

1. Talk about how veterans believe in patriotism, citizenship, freedom and compassion.
2. Give children a chance to express their ideas as to what these concepts mean and talk about how they relate to the children's own experiences.
 - a. What does being patriotic mean?
 - Loving one's country.
 - Similar to loving your group and feeling that it is special.
 - b. What are some things that are patriotic?
 - Saluting the flag.
 - Saying the Pledge of Allegiance.

- c. What does it mean to be a citizen?
 - Caring about what happens around you.
 - Taking part in the activities of the group.
 - Helping to make your country better.
- d. What is freedom?
 - Being able to make decisions.
 - The children make choices about the group and what they want to do.
- e. What is compassion?
 - Caring about others.

Peace

1. Ask the children:
 - a. "What is the meaning of peace?"
 - b. Can they remember a time when they felt peace?
 - What were they doing?
 - Playing a game?
 - Making something with their friends?
 - Were they outside?
 - Were they with people in their families?
2. If the children do not know what you mean by peace, ask them to remember a time when they felt happy, strong, helpful, or good about themselves.
3. Avoid defining peace as a particular behavior. Emphasize that peace is personal.
4. As you discuss peace, encourage the children to talk about their everyday feelings of peace.
5. Ask the children if they feel peace when they help their brothers, sisters, or friends. Explain that doing something helpful is a good way to experience peace.

Picture

1. Ask each child to draw or paint a picture illustrating one of the above concepts and what it means to him or her. This will give them a better idea of the meaning of this project.
2. Discuss what they draw.

Being in the Hospital

1. Explain that one way to be in contact with veterans is through a local Veterans Administration hospital.
2. If you have a VA hospital in your area, identify someone from the group to interview a patient.
3. Ask the children:
 - a. What it is like to be hospitalized?
 - b. What can patients do when they are in the hospital?
 - c. What can't they do?
4. Ask if any of the children have ever been in the hospital. Have they ever visited anyone in the hospital?
5. What is something nice they can do for someone in the hospital?

6. Explain that not all veterans are in the hospital, but the ones who are, enjoy getting special things. Stress that a veteran is not always in the hospital because of a war injury, but they could be there for other reasons, too.
7. Act out an impromptu skit or pantomime about how a veteran in the hospital might feel when he or she receives a valentine from a Camp Fire USA youth.

Valentines

1. Point out that at the next meeting time the group is going to make valentines for veterans. If there is no VA hospital in your area, you might want to find other ways to support veterans. As an alternative, have the group visit a Veterans of Foreign Wars post or send valentines to active service men and women.
2. Ask the children to suggest different kinds of valentines to make for the veterans or for armed service personnel. Talk about the materials the group would like to use to make the valentines.
3. Explain that at the next meeting you will bring these materials and the children will create their own valentines and write letters to the veterans.

Ceremony

1. Pass the emblem around the group. Point out that the children will receive the emblem for making their valentines for the veterans. The emblem shows that they are thoughtful and caring and that they made somebody very happy.
2. Ask the children to help you plan a ceremony in which they can receive their emblems. The ceremony will be held during the closing of the next meeting after they have made their valentines.
3. Remember, the ceremony does not have to be elaborate. The group plans it, and that makes it special. Songs, special words, lighting candles, reciting the Camp Fire USA Law, and forming a friendship circle are just a few ideas for a ceremony.

Playback: Points to Reinforce:

- What are some things you learned about veterans?
- What will you tell your family about a veteran?

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Meeting Plan: Valentines for Veterans

Purpose: Help children make valentines and write letters to veterans.

Materials:

- One 9" x 12" piece of red construction paper for each child
- Variety of items to decorate valentines (scrap lace, doilies, yarn, fabric)
- Paper for letters
- Markers or crayons
- Pencils
- Emblems
- Masking tape
- Scissors
- Glue
- Optional: cloth for blindfold

Preparation:

- Optional: Make heart patterns out of large sheets of paper.

Activities:

Explain to the group that today the group will be making special valentines for veterans. Ask them if they remember what a veteran is. Why is it important for the group to be making these valentines for the veterans? How do they feel when they are helping someone else?

Point out that when they finish their valentines, each child will also write a special letter to send with the valentines (optional). Explain that the veterans love to get letters. It means a lot to them to know that someone cares about them. Some of them are lonely and do not get very much mail, so it makes them happy to hear from somebody. Point out that people often think of others only on birthdays or holidays. They forget that people like to be remembered at other times, too.

Individual Valentines

1. Discuss the information that is to be included in the letters. Ask the following questions:
 - How should you begin your letter? Appropriate greetings are "Dear Veteran," "Dear Friend," or even "Hi."
 - What could you say to the veterans to help them feel better?
 - What could you tell them about yourself? Encourage the children to talk about hobbies, school, pets, and being a participant in a Camp Fire USA group.
 - How should you sign your letters? (The children sign their letters with their **first names only** and group name.)

2. Do not let the youth put their addresses on the letters. Medical centers for veterans or military posts do not allow letters with return names or return addresses to be delivered. This rule is for the safety of the youth, medical centers, and patients themselves.
3. Give any instructions needed to help them make their valentines. If young children are making card-type valentines, their letters can be written inside. Older children may need separate sheets of paper because their letters may be longer.
4. When the children have finished, talk about the valentines and letters. What did they say in their letters to make someone feel better? What are some special things about the valentines that will make someone happy? What did they tell the veterans about themselves?

Group Valentine

With the scraps left over from making valentines, make a group valentine.

1. Divide the group into smaller groups of three or four children. Give each group one large piece of construction paper.
2. Ask one of the children in each group to cut out or draw one heart the size of the paper. Younger children will need hearts traced in advance.
3. The groups choose materials from the leftover scraps to decorate and glue on the group heart. Each participant of the group can make one decoration for the heart, or the group can make something together.
4. When the groups are finished, have a contest and let the children choose the funniest, most unique, or most colorful heart.

A variation of this activity:

1. Have each member of the group make a small decoration but not glue it on the group heart.
2. Each group then hangs its heart on the wall using masking tape. Make sure it doesn't damage the wall.
3. The members of each group line up facing their group heart.
4. The children place tape on the backs of their decorations. Each child takes a turn placing the decoration on the heart while being blindfolded.
5. After all the hearts have been decorated, choose the funniest, unique, and most colorful.

These valentines can be included with the valentines being sent to the veterans. They can be used as decorations at the hospital.

Playback: Points to Reinforce:

- What special feeling do you get from helping others?
- How do you think the veterans will feel when your valentines arrive?

Closing:

Close with the emblem ceremony the children planned in the first meeting.