

Celebrating **Our Veterans**

Celebrating veterans should not be a once-a-year activity, but something we do all year long. Try striking up a conversation with a veteran. Get to know one of them in a meaningful way. There is a wide cultural gap between Americans who have no relationship with the Armed Forces and those who've served their country. Closing that gap is as necessary as it is long overdue.

Here are four ways to connect with veterans year-round:

1. Check Your Assumptions

"Veterans are very often stereotyped into two stock characters: the crying wounded or the guy who jumps the White House fence to get to the President," says Paul Rieckhoff, the executive director of Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America, a national nonprofit with more than 200,000 members.

"Don't treat veterans like victims. They're not broken. They've been through a lot, but they're rising out of it."

While national discussion and media coverage of post-traumatic stress disorder have chipped away at some of the generations-old entrenched stigma associated with mental illness, many of these stories involving PTSD make headlines because they involve violence. It's critical for everyone to remember that having PTSD doesn't mean a person will be violent, and not every veteran has PTSD.

Each veteran has a unique story. Their military service has probably shaped them in profound ways, but they are not the sum total of that time. Take the time to get to know one of them. They have a lot of lessons to share.

2. Invest in Veterans – It's Good Business

One of the biggest hurdles service members face after leaving the military is finding a job. About 77% of veterans have struggled

through unemployment, and more than a quarter have searched for more than a year for a job, according to Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America.

But there's reason for hope, judging by recent figures from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. The unemployment rate for post-9/11 veterans peaked in January 2011 at 15.2%, CNNMoney reports. In October 2013, there was 10% unemployment. Last month, the job picture for veterans improved as unemployment hovered around 7%.

Many corporations have launched new hiring initiatives for veterans. In April 2013, Walmart pledged to give 100,000 veterans jobs within five years. In November 2013, Starbucks launched a nationwide initiative to hire 10,000 veterans and spouses by the end of 2018. Uber is driving programs to hire veterans. Want to hire a veteran? The Returning Heroes Tax Credit (www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/fact_sheet_on_veteran_tax_credits-1.pdf) should provide a financial incentive. For veterans who need jobs, the veterans job bank (www.nationalresourcedirectory.gov/home/veterans_job_bank) and resources on the VA website (www.ebenefits.va.gov/ebenefits/nrd) might help.

3. Help Veterans' Families

While it's well known that 22 veterans a day kill themselves, a CNN investigation revealed that many military family



members also have attempted or contemplated suicide.

The Uncounted, an HBO documentary, examined how war's trauma can wreck entire families. Family members have endured unprecedented multiple deployments during two wars, in Afghanistan and Iraq, lasting more than a decade. That means financial and emotional stress for relatives. If a family member returns from war, it's often the relatives who must care for them.

"If we can't figure out a way to provide better support for families, the public will pay one way or another. Every family member interviewed for *The Uncounted* expressed the same need to be understood by those whose lives had nothing to do with the military. They didn't want to be thought of as 'the other.' Don't be afraid to approach them. Don't push military family members away because you're afraid you'll say the wrong thing. Just asking means you care, and that means everything," says Kristina Kaufmann, executive director of Code of Support Foundation, which tries to bridge the gap between military and civilian communities.

4. Volunteer With Veterans' Programs: Websites and resources to connect with veteran agencies are on page 4. →

Winter Slip and Fall **Safety Tips**

Slips and falls account for 300,000 serious injuries and 20,000 deaths a year. With winter approaching once again, it is important for you and your family to be aware of slip and fall prevention strategies:

- ✓ **Although your hands might be cold, don't put them in your pockets** when you are navigating wintry stretches. If you slip, you will need your arms to restore balance. If you fall, your arms will help you to break your fall and land safely.
- ✓ **Wear the proper footwear.** Although it may not be glamorous to wear a pair of boots, it will give you traction, not to mention keep your feet warm. If you want to wear heels or other kinds of shoes, simply carry an extra pair with you to change into.
- ✓ **If you think you are approaching a particularly slick area of snow or ice,** don't be afraid to explore the area with your toe to see how slippery it is before you put your full weight on the area.
- ✓ **Don't carry large loads while walking on snow or ice** – you are asking for trouble! If you do carry a load on an icy walk and feel yourself falling, toss your load so that you can break your fall with your arms.
- ✓ **Take small careful steps instead of large ones.** When getting out of a vehicle, step, don't jump. When possible, use handrails, handles – anything that will help you keep your balance. Never run.
- ✓ **Help your elderly friends and relatives on snow and ice.** Slips and falls can be extremely dangerous for seniors. If you are older, don't shy away from asking others for a helping hand.



Remember that **prevention** is the best way to stop slips and falls during the winter in icy conditions. On your own property, be sure to shovel driveways, walkways and sidewalks. Salt high-traffic areas if you think ice may form. If there are especially icy spots, place a sign to warn others of the hazard.

Celebrating **Our Veterans** *(Continued from page 1.)*

4. Volunteer With Veterans' Programs

Whether it's a simple conversation with a veteran or their family member or volunteering, get involved. Figure out what you do best and offer that skill.

Here are some agencies that you may want to volunteer with:

Give an Hour: www.giveanhour.org/

Connects counselors to service members, veterans and their families.

TAPS: www.taps.org/

Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors, which connects family members who have lost service members and veterans in similar ways. For instance, if someone's brother died of an IED attack in Iraq, TAPS links that person with a peer who has lost a sibling in Iraq.

The National Military Family Association: www.militaryfamily.org/get-involved/ and **Blue Star Families:** www.bluestarfam.org/
Connect military families with leaders in the civilian community.

Welcome Back Veterans: web.welcomebackveterans.org/index

The organization is intended to help people in the community link to veterans.

Veterans Health Administration: www.va.gov/health/

America's largest integrated health care system serving 8.76 million veterans each year.

Veterans served our country during peace and wartime in order to protect the freedoms and way of life that we all hold dear. Celebrating veterans should not be a once-a-year activity, but something we do every day of the year.



You can't see radon.

And you can't smell it or taste it. But it may be a problem in your home.

A Citizen's Guide to Radon

Radon is a cancer-causing, radioactive gas.

Radon is estimated to cause many thousands of deaths each year. That's because when you breathe air containing radon, you can get lung cancer. In fact, the Surgeon General has warned that radon is the second leading cause of lung cancer in the United States today. Only smoking causes more lung cancer deaths. If you smoke and your home has high radon levels, your risk of lung cancer is especially high.

Radon can be found all over the U.S.

Radon comes from the natural (radioactive) breakdown of uranium in soil, rock and water and gets into the air you breathe. Radon can be found all over the U.S. It can get into any type of building — homes, offices and schools — and result in a high indoor radon level. But you and your family are most likely to get your greatest exposure at home, where you spend most of your time.

You should test for radon.

Testing is the only way to know if you and your family are at risk from radon. The EPA and Surgeon General recommend testing all homes below the third floor for radon. The EPA also recommends testing in schools.

Testing is inexpensive and easy — it should only take a few minutes of your time. Millions of Americans have already tested their homes for radon.

You can fix a radon problem.

Radon reduction systems work and they are not too costly. Some radon reduction systems can reduce radon levels in your home by up to 99%. Even very high levels can be reduced to acceptable levels.

How Does Radon Get Into Your Home?

Any home may have a radon problem.

Radon is a radioactive gas. It comes from the natural decay of uranium that is found in nearly all soils. It typically moves up through the ground to the air above and into your home through cracks and other holes in the foundation. Your home traps radon inside, where it can build up. Any home may have a radon problem. This means new and old homes, well-sealed and drafty homes, and homes with or without basements.

Radon from soil gas is the main cause of radon problems. Sometimes radon enters the home through well water. In a small number

of homes, the building materials can give off radon, too. However, building materials rarely cause radon problems by themselves.

Nearly 1 out of every 15 homes in the U.S. is estimated to have elevated radon levels. Elevated levels of radon gas have been found in homes in your state. Contact your state radon office for general information about radon in your area. While radon problems may be more common in some areas, any home may have a problem. The only way to know about your home is to test.

Radon can also be a problem in schools and workplaces. Ask your state radon office about radon problems in schools, day care and child care facilities, and workplaces in your area.

How to Test Your Home

You can't see radon, but it's not hard to find out if you have a radon problem in your home. All you need to do is test for radon. Testing is easy and should only take a few minutes.

The amount of radon in the air is measured in picocuries per liter of air, or pCi/L. There are many kinds of low-cost, do-it-yourself radon test kits you can get through the mail and in some hardware stores and other retail outlets. If you prefer, or if you are buying or selling a home, you can hire a qualified tester to do the testing for you. You should first contact your state radon office about obtaining a list of qualified testers. You can also contact a private radon proficiency program for lists of privately certified radon professionals serving your area. For links and information, visit www.epa.gov/radon/radontest.html.

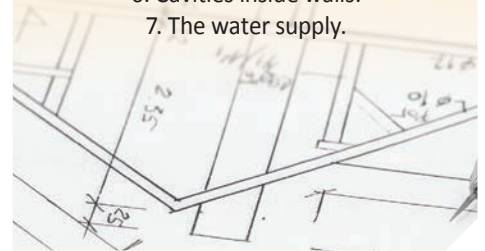
There Are Two General Ways to Test for Radon:

Testing is easy and should only take a few minutes of your time.

SHORT-TERM TESTING: The quickest way to test is with short-term tests. Short-term tests remain in your home for two days to 90 days, depending on the device. Charcoal canisters, alpha track, electret ion chamber, continuous monitors, and charcoal liquid scintillation detectors are most commonly used for short-term testing. Because radon levels tend to vary from day to day and season to season, a short-term test is less likely than a long-term test to tell you your year-round average radon

RADON GETS IN THROUGH:

1. Cracks in solid floors.
2. Construction joints.
3. Cracks in walls.
4. Gaps in suspended floors.
5. Gaps around service pipes.
6. Cavities inside walls.
7. The water supply.



level. If you need results quickly, however, a short-term test followed by a second short-term test may be used to decide whether to fix your home.

LONG-TERM TESTING: Long-term tests remain in your home for more than 90 days. Alpha track and electret detectors are commonly used for this type of testing. A long-term test will give you a reading that is more likely to tell you your home's year-round average radon level than a short-term test.

What Your Test Results Mean

The average indoor radon level is estimated to be about 1.3 pCi/L, and about 0.4 pCi/L of radon is normally found in the outside air. The U.S. Congress has set a long-term goal that indoor radon levels be no more than outdoor levels. While this goal is not yet technologically achievable in all cases, most homes today can be reduced to 2 pCi/L or below.

Sometimes short-term tests are less definitive about whether or not your home is above 4 pCi/L. This can happen when your results are close to 4 pCi/L. For example, if the average of your two short-term test results is 4.1 pCi/L, there is about a 50% chance that your year-round average is somewhat below 4 pCi/L. However, the EPA believes that any radon exposure carries some risk — no level of radon is safe. Even radon levels below 4 pCi/L pose some risk, and you can reduce your risk of lung cancer by lowering your radon level.

If your living patterns change and you begin occupying a lower level of your home (such as a basement), you should retest your home on that level.

Even if your test result is below 4 pCi/L, you may want to test again sometime in the future.


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PACE UPDATES



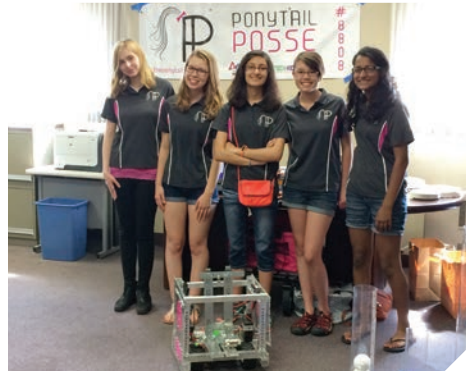
Pace Industries Demo

By Rose

To thank Pace Industries (a local die casting company) for their generous donation, we offered them a demo in their office. The day before, we spent an hour and a half planning how to get our ideas across and show the employees what we do. We ended the meeting with a long bullet-point list of notes and a general idea of who was saying what.

The next day, we met bright and early at the coach's house and headed out to the Pace Industries building. We were greeted with a table of snacks and friendly smiles. After setting up, our coach briefly reviewed what Pace Industries does and gave us the stage.

Over the next 20 minutes, we gave an overview of FIRST*, the four programs within the organization, and a detailed description of FTC. We also explained what we've learned over the years and how much FIRST has affected our lives. Best of all, when we hinted that FIRST was always looking for volunteers, a few audience members seemed interested



Sabriyah, Amy, Emily, Meghan, Nancy, and Rose:
 Their second year in the program

in visiting tournaments and even chipping in their own time to help.

The purpose of this demo was to spread the word about FIRST and say "thank you" to Pace Industries. As we gave our presentation, we achieved both of these things by telling them about the organization and emphasizing how much we appreciate their support.

*What is FTC (FIRST Tech Challenge)?

"FIRST®Tech Challenge in MN (MN FTC) is part of an international robotics program that includes more than 3,000 teams globally. Teams of up to fifteen students collaborate to build and program a robot that competes on a 12' by 12' field. The challenge is new each year and is designed to challenge students to think critically and expand their knowledge of the engineering process." More information can be found at www.usfirst.org.

Source: www.theponytailposse.com/about

Benefits updates:

Vision Insurance Change

VSP (our vision insurance provider) has added Walmart and Sam's Club to their In-Network Provider List effective September 1, 2015.

2016 HRAs

Be on the lookout for information about scheduling your 2016 Bravo HRA screening. On-site mass events will take place mid February/March 2016. Scheduling will open toward the end of December 2015. More Info to come!

"We really enjoyed hearing about how the program works and how schools are getting students involved in fun education. All of you girls did a great job explaining the program and you could tell you were prepared for the presentation. We learned a lot and didn't realize the cost of one of the robots. We wish all of you good luck in your competitions. We hope to employ one of you ladies once you become engineers!" – Joyce Clark