



BEYOND BELIEF NETWORK

Beyond Belief Network Guides: Military Appreciation

This guide contains information for community service events to support our military. [Military Association of Atheists & Freethinkers](#) and [Beyond Belief Network](#) collaborated on this guide as part of Beyond Belief Network's National Partners in Philanthropy program. We are including projects that benefit both the military at large and nontheist service members in particular, who can face discrimination and harassment because of their (non)beliefs and do not have the benefit of chaplains. Don't forget to submit a [report](#) about your military appreciation event and contact us for help if you need it.

Event ideas

1. Collect supplies to send to a soldier overseas. If you would like to send a care package to a nonbeliever overseas, you can contact Beyond Belief Network who will get names for you from Military Association of Atheists & Freethinkers. You can also contact MAAF directly: community@militaryatheists.org or visit their [roster](#) of nonbelievers serving in the military. Soldiers could use supplies such as:
 - a. Sunglasses
 - b. Socks
 - c. Sunscreen
 - d. [Baseball Caps](#) ([MAAF](#) or [FBB](#) are good choices)
 - e. Snacks and food (IMPORTANT: nothing that will melt, no liquids, and no perishables)
 - f. Holiday or Seasonal decorations
 - g. Playing cards (with [FBB logo](#))
 - h. Deodorant
 - i. Mouthwash, dental floss, toothpaste, and/or toothbrushes
 - j. Hand lotion
 - k. Q-Tips

Note: This event can only be completed if you have a specific soldier to which to send the care package because the Post Office will no longer accept packages mailed to "Any Soldier." USPS has [additional guidelines](#) your team will have to follow when sending packages.

2. Hold a fundraiser to benefit nonbelievers serving in our military through [MAAF](#). You can find quite a few fundraising guides in the BBN Facebook group or email bbn@foundationbeyondbelief.org for help.

3. Adopt a local unit. You can contact your local unit to adopt them or work through your local VFW*, if they are a) friendly to nontheists and b) have already adopted a unit. Depending on the needs of the unit, your group can help with:
 - a. Birthday parties
 - b. Dog walking
 - c. Babysitting
 - d. Task of daily life
 - e. Chores
 - f. Welcome home
 - g. Family day
 - h. Holiday parties

*The national VFW and some local VFW posts have had a history of hostility towards working with nontheist groups. Please keep this in mind and [contact BBN](#) if you encounter any problems.

4. Volunteer at your local [Veterans Administration](#) or [Military Hospital](#). Volunteers may be able to escort patients, provide office assistance, feed patients, help with grounds maintenance, greet patients or work in the laundry room. Contact your local hospital for their requirements but, before volunteering, some hospitals may require you to:
 - a. Complete a tuberculosis screen test
 - b. Complete an orientation program
 - c. Complete and clear a background check
5. [Operation Paperback](#) is a nonprofit that collects gently used books and sends them to military members both at home and abroad. Your team can [sign up to volunteer](#) with Operation Paperback and receive a military address to which to send the books. Your team can send books from these genres:
 - a. Bestsellers and classics
 - b. Action and spy-novels
 - c. Murder mysteries
 - d. Fantasy and science fiction
 - e. Business and investing
 - f. Military history
 - g. Current event-oriented non-fiction
6. March in a community parade. Participating in parades and community events for patriotic holidays (Independence Day, Vets Day, Memorial Day) is a great way to get positive visibility and show your support for your local veterans and active service members.

Most communities advertise their civic events on their official city or village website, along with registration and rules for participating. Be sure that you register by the deadline and follow all of the guidelines for participating. Unfortunately nonbeliever groups often face greater scrutiny (and your very presence might be objectionable to some members of your community).

Remember, you can earn up to 20 free t-shirts with your logo on the back through [Beyond Belief Network](#) by submitting [event reports](#). You can also [contact BBN](#) if you need to order additional t-shirts.

Additional Resources

1. [Military Association of Atheists & Freethinkers](#) provides a community for nonbelieving service members and other programs, including a [network of local affiliate groups](#) that could partner with BBN teams on military appreciation events.
2. [Beyond Belief Network](#) is a network of local secular humanist and atheist groups that volunteer and fundraise to benefit their communities. Teams that [join](#) can also earn free t-shirts, grants, awards and other perks as they complete reports about their service activities.
3. United States Postal Service has [guidelines](#) for mailing military care packages.
4. [United Service Organizations](#) provide a number of recreation, social services, and morale-building [programs](#) for troops and their families and operate [centers all over the US](#). There are lots of [volunteer opportunities](#) that you could explore with your group or do on your own. Additionally, they send a care package to a military member with every \$25 [donation](#).
5. [Veterans of Foreign Wars](#) operates educational programs for the community and supports veterans returning to the United States. You can also find VFW [district offices](#) or local [posts](#) to work with to assist veterans or current service members. Some groups have found that the national VFW and their local posts are hostile to nontheists, so you may try to collaborate with other groups before contacting VFW.