

Freedom Salute Campaign within the Army National Guard

What is it? The Freedom Salute Campaign is one of the largest Army National Guard recognition endeavors in history, designed to publicly acknowledge Army Guard Soldiers and those who supported them during the President's call to duty for Operations Noble Eagle, Enduring Freedom, Iraqi Freedom, and New Dawn.

The campaign workers, predominantly volunteers, in many cases will schedule and plan a homecoming ceremony in an armory or similar setting where they can hang welcome banners and yellow ribbons and have a dynamic welcoming home event, with the expected noise, excitement, and joyful chaos. After the First Deployment, the Soldier is presented an American flag in a wood display case, a Defender of Freedom certificate, Defender of Freedom Medallion and commemorative coins. After the Second Deployment the Soldier is presented a Freedom Ring and the Soldier's Spouse is honored with a mantle clock. After the Third Deployment or multiple deployments, Soldiers are recognized with the Freedom Salute Brass Plaque. Each plaque has a commemorative coin at the top and a place to personalize the plaque by inserting an individually chosen 4x6 photo.

What has the Army National Guard done? The Freedom Salute Campaign began in December 2003 and has recognized deserving Soldiers, Family members, friends, employers, centers of influence, and other very important persons for their contributions since the terrorist attacks on 11 September 2001.

What does the Army National Guard have planned for the future? The Freedom Salute Campaign Leadership plans to continue this program into the foreseeable future. This program is not a "nice to have," "good thing to do"; it is a "must-have" and "must do well" program that will continue to have a positive impact on the recruiting, retention, and well-being of our Soldiers.

Why is this important to Army National Guard Soldiers and their Families? The leadership of the Army National Guard considers the Freedom Salute Campaign first and foremost to be a Retention Program. The leadership recognizes that how an organization treats its people is a direct reflection of the values held by the organization. Parents, prospects, other Soldiers, and Families watch closely how the Army National Guard treats returning Soldiers. Conducting Freedom Salute Campaign programs is a wonderful opportunity to increase awareness in the community of the good work being done by Guard Soldiers. Not only does Soldier recognition directly impact recruiting, but it affects Soldier retention as well. In a post-deployment survey, Soldiers returning from Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom indicated that recognition for their service and sacrifice was one of the most important contributing factors in their decision whether or not they would continue to serve in the Army National Guard.

Click on the following link for additional information:

<http://www.virtualarmory.com/FreedomSalute/OverView.aspx>