

TIME TO SAY THANK YOU

Our community has an opportunity to show true leadership, not just in our state, but nationwide. On Leap Day – February 29th, the Edmonds Merchants, the Edmonds Chamber of Commerce, and Edmonds-based Operation Military Family, will launch the first of its kind year-round city-wide discount program for veterans and service members. The Program is being called Military Veterans Promotion Network, or MVP Network, and will kick-off with a special ceremony at noon in front of Edmonds City Hall.

We all know the sacrifices our military and their families have made, whether in a distant time and place, or more recently in conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan. We all know of families that have lost loved ones, others that have wounded return to face the reality of entering into everyday life, hoping to find work and reconnect. We also know that we are dealing with a very tough economy and returning veterans are especially hard hit with unemployment, often double what the civilian community is faced with. With all of these sacrifices, losses, and unknowns, the MVP Network is a great way to show our gratitude to those who have given so much of themselves.

As Mayor of Edmonds I will be challenging other Mayors in Snohomish County, as well as across the state and Nation to join Edmonds in this cause. This is much more than a "discount" program. It is a statement that we, as Citizens of the United States, want to make about how proud we are of our returning service men and women, and how proud we are of our country.

Carolyn Douglas, formally of King 5 News and now of Carolyn Douglas Communications, Michael Schindler of Operation Military Family and Colleen Bowman of C'est la Vie spearheaded the program. It is set-up so that participating merchants can determine the discount or promotion they want to provide to Veterans, sign-up online through the MVP website, and advertise their participation in the program by placing an MVP sign in their store window. The reaction from the business community has been spectacular. As of this writing, 23 businesses have signed-up and more are signing-up daily. Local media sources have also shown their support for the program with feature articles, press release publication, and a feature segment on Evening Magazine with Megan Black.

Guest speakers at the February 29th kick-off will include Michael Reagan, known internationally for his portraits of soldiers killed in action in Afghanistan and Iraq, veteran family Nick and Felicia McCallon, Michael Schindler of Operation Military Family, and a representative from the Downtown Edmonds Merchant's Association.

I hope you will find the MVP program as inspiring as I do and that you will join us on February 29th as Edmonds says thank you to our Veterans!