

(Michael Josephson is the Founder & CEO of the Josephson Institute of Ethics and its well-known Character Counts! program. His daily commentary is heard by several million listeners on KNX Radio in Los Angeles, the Armed Forces Radio Network globally and several other U.S. radio stations, as well as printed in a number of U.S. local newspapers. Below is Michael's Veterans Day 2006 commentary.)

Mr. Blewitt's Gift to Veterans

As we celebrate Veteran's Day in the wake of a brutal campaign season focused heavily on the politics of ethics and war, it's right and important that we pause, put all forms of partisanship aside, to honor with gratitude the men and women who won't be home for Thanksgiving this year and, especially, those who won't be coming home at all or will come home battered or brutalized.

But to Navy veteran Richard Blewitt, a thankful pause is just not enough. He thinks we ought to understand more about and do more for the people whose lives have been turned inside out in service to their country. He thinks our debt needs to be paid by more than a parade or moment of silence.

At a recent meeting in New Orleans, newspaper editors toured areas laid to waste by Hurricane Katrina. Though each once thought their newspapers had fully told story of this great storm, seeing close-up the wreckage to people and property made them realize how inadequate statistics and second hand descriptions were in conveying the true extent of the devastation.

In the same way, Mr. Blewitt thinks the casualty data and photos we've seen from Iraq and Afghanistan fall far short of conveying the real price of patriotism paid by thousands of American troops and their families.

A deeply compassionate man, he knows that beneath the shell of bravado often shown to the world are souls shredded by pain and fear. He's seen and is haunted by muffled screams and grimaces, sighs of anguish and confusion, and fleeting gazes revealing inner grief or despair.

And he's concerned not only for those who suffer with broken bodies, but with their families, especially the children, who must cope with unwanted realities and darkened futures. For every lost or wounded soldier there are dozens of mothers and fathers, sons and daughters, husbands and wives, and sisters and brothers whose lives have been permanently altered.

Driven by a golden heart, a clear-eyed vision of the scope of these personal tragedies and a sense of duty, Mr. Blewitt has formed a nonprofit organization dedicated to providing GIs and their families with a meaningful and durable experience designed to soothe the pain, inspire hope and to bring at least temporary smiles to the faces of these victims of war.

It's a bold and important undertaking. If you want to find out more about this venture write me at www.charactercounts.org.