

LIFEnotes



LIFE

Honors Our Heroes



May 1, 2026

Dear Friends:

When most of us think of the month of May, we conjure up thoughts and images of Mother's Day – perhaps it is gathering family to celebrate our moms over brunch, or if our mother has passed as mine has, visiting the cemetery and placing flowers at her grave.

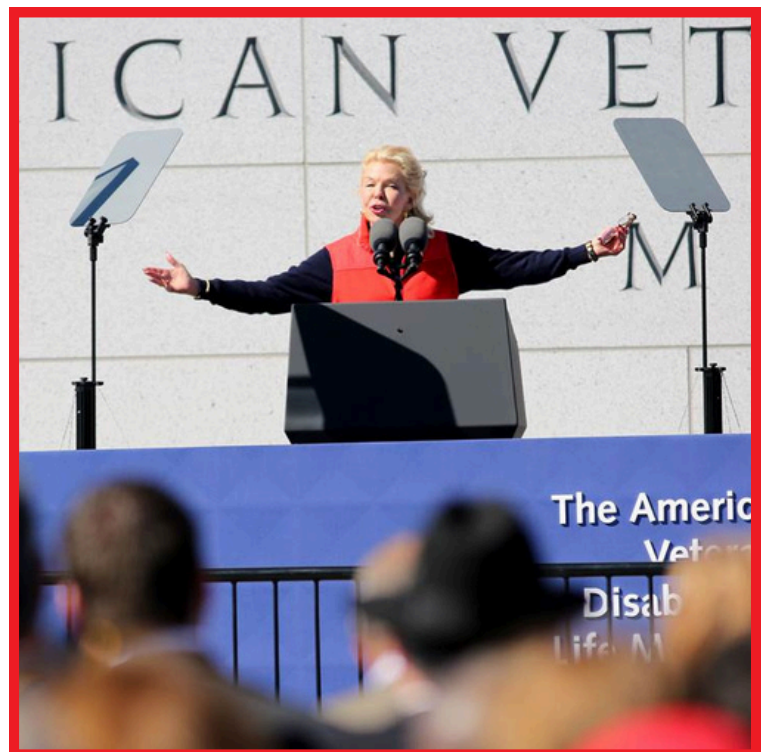
For others, May is the month of celebrating our sons and daughters at their college graduation ceremonies. We watch with true joy – and, often, sighs of relief – as they march, clad in their cap and gown, to receive their diplomas. (Then, after all the pomp and circumstance, we also fret as they go through the often long and stressful search for meaningful employment, but that is another story).

Of course, for fans of “Star Wars,” May is also home to “May the ‘Fourth’ Be with You”; for those who enjoy a tequila, guacamole, and tacos, there is “Cinco de Mayo.” And there are also such celebrations as “Dance Like a Chicken Day” on May 14, National Chocolate Chip Day on the May 15, World Turtle Day on May 23, and Paper Airplane Day on May 26, among so many other designations.

For me, though, May has much more personal meaning, one that is deeply profound. May is both National Military Appreciation Month and Mental Health Awareness Month. There is much connectivity between the two, as I first came to understand decades ago when I was a Broadway actress and performed at a holiday benefit at the Rusk Rehabilitation Hospital in New York City.

Many of you know the story, so I will just give a brief reminiscence so you will know why I have such a stalwart commitment to the millions of men and women who have served in our nation's Armed Forces.

At that holiday benefit, I was singing “Somewhere” from the hit Broadway show of the time, “West Side Story.” As I came to the line, “Hold my hand and I'll take you there,” I reached down to take the hand of a man lying on a hospital gurney. But he had no hand – or arm – for me to hold. I was so taken aback I could barely finish the song.



A Promise Made, A Mission Lived



President Barack Obama congratulates Lois Pope at the dedication of the American Veterans Disabled for Life Memorial, our country's first permanent public tribute to the courageous individuals who continue to bear the scars of war.

At the conclusion of the show, I went to him and asked how he lost his arm. He told me that his arm was blown off fighting in Vietnam. In fact, each of the individuals at the benefit was disabled in some way in that conflict – some lost arms, some lost legs, some lost their eyesight, their hearing. Some had massive burns on their body. And that was just their permanent physical disabilities. With a doubt, the overwhelming majority also would have equally permanent emotional scars from PTSD and Traumatic Brain Injury.

These heroic men and women – and all those who have fought in the wars since, from Bosnia, Serbia, Iraq, Afghanistan and others -- sacrificed so much for us, for our democracy, for the freedoms that we all enjoy and cherish living here in America.

So, I made that man – and all those in that room – my solemn promise that if I ever had the financial resources, I would do something big to honor them. Years later, that promise began to materialize in my mind when I visited the Vietnam War Memorial in Washington DC. As I was tracing the name of my cousin who died in that conflict, a man in a wheelchair next to me was terribly startled by what sounded like a clap of thunder. He was trembling, while I immediately thought back to that day at the Rusk hospital, and the promise that I made then. I approached a National Park Ranger and asked, “With all the memorials here on the National Mall, where is the one for disabled veterans?” He looked at his map and answered, “There isn’t one, ma’am!”

I knew then what that something big had to be and I set out to build our country's first permanent public tribute to the courageous individuals who continue to bear the scars of war. Long after the fighting on the battlefield ends for them, their fight continues to reclaim their life and readjust to their families, their communities, their professions, and society at-large while far too often being marginalized, forgotten, or defined not by who they are as people but by those disabilities.

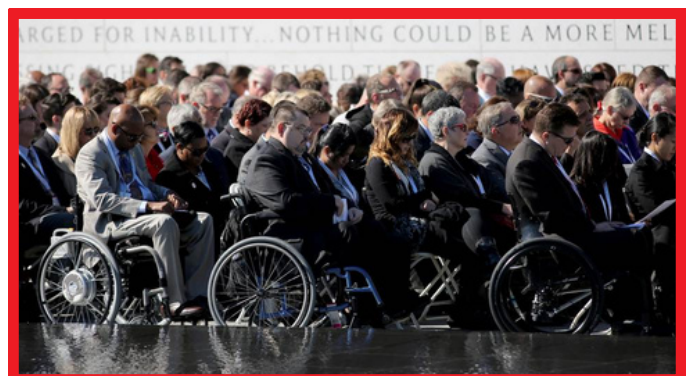
On October 5, 2014, my promise became reality with the dedication of the American Veterans Disabled for Life Memorial. It is located on a 2.3-acre site 1,000 feet from the U.S. Capitol Building – a just reminder to the elected officials who work in the edifice of the full and complete human cost of war!

Since then, I have helped establish an annual National Day of Honor, each year on October 5, for what is now more than 5.6 million disabled veterans; created a national program to train and provide Certified Service Dogs for Veterans afflicted with PTSD and TBI in an effort to end the scourge of Veterans suicide in this country, which remains at nearly 20 a day, and supported other initiatives to remind us all of our Veterans' service and sacrifice.

And that's what I urge all of you to do this and every month of May -- to remember on National Military Appreciation Month and Mental Health Awareness Month that we are here today because of these valiant men and women who stepped up, who donned our nation's Armed Services uniforms, and who came home with permanent physical and psychological challenges – all to ensure that America remains the beacon of freedom and democracy the world over.

With love always,

Lois

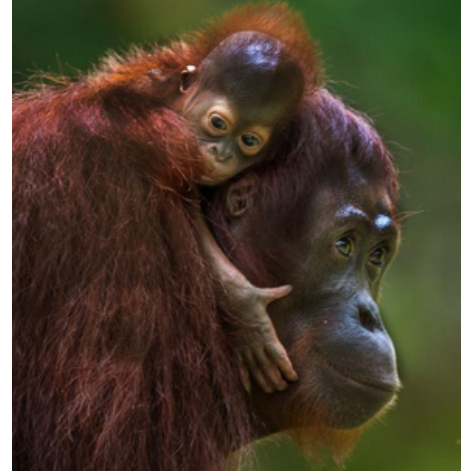


On October 5, 2014, Lois Pope fulfilled her promise by dedicating the American Veterans Disabled for Life Memorial in the presence of thousands of disabled American veterans.



Happy Mother's Day

from All of Us at LIFE





COME TO THE
MASQUERADE

AT LIFE'S 33RD ANNUAL
LADY IN RED GALA

**SUNDAY,
MARCH 14, 2027
6PM**



THE BREAKERS PALM BEACH

ENJOY AN EVENING OF COMEDY
STARRING
COMEDY ICON

JAY LENO

AND
COMEDIENNE EXTRAORDINAIRE

RITA RUDNER

*Guests will also enjoy the Palm Beach
Symphony performing Broadway hits
during cocktails, a gourmet dinner,
and dancing to music of the
Danny Beck Band!*

*Reserve your tables and sponsorships
early for one of the most anticipated
philanthropic and social events
of the Palm Beach season!*



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