

# Our Heroes Deserve Proper Welcomes

October 16 2013 8:52 AM



Twelve year [IBEW Local One](#) member Rodney Cook, an Industrial Electrician at GKN Aerospace believes every veteran whose been honorably discharged from the American Armed Forces deserve a proper welcome home. In 2012 he and his wife Gretchen started an organization called [Mission: American Gratitude](#) to do just that in the [Riverbend area of Illinois](#).

“We want our veterans to feel like heroes when they come home and thank them for their service and the sacrifices they made for all of us” Brother Cook said. “We also want to rekindle that patriotic spirit and pride our communities used to have.”

Mission: American Gratitude makes every effort to make our returning veterans feel like heroes. The organization is dependent on the family and friends of returning veterans notifying them in advance. However, once they have the details, they reach out in all directions seeking to enlist every possible resource available to surprise that veteran with a proper welcome. Mayoral proclamations, military and school bands, representatives and honors from veteran's organizations like the American Legion, Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) and the USO, Police and Fire escorts as well as miles of full size American flags and digital signs welcoming them home by name are all possible surprises for returning veterans thanks to this organization.

Mission: American Gratitude is also working on a new program called Operation: Let It Wave which will provide and install an American-made, American Flag on the home of any veteran in their area who does not have one. Brother Cook hopes that this program will promote patriotism by motivating neighbors to fly their own flags while also honoring local veterans.

Mission: American Gratitude is also reaching out to other veterans organizations to help develop a network of local support to help ease the transition into civilian life for local veterans and their families. Developing resources for PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder) is the top priority though many other ideas are on the drawing board as well.

What makes organizations like this one work are the volunteers and supporters. "Just 20 minutes on a line waving a flag for a returning veteran is a positive force that will be remembered for the remainder of that returning service member's life" said Cook. He's always looking for volunteers and is currently supporting about 90% of the costs of the organization personally. If you would like more information about how you can help [check out their webpage](#) and be sure to [click the "Contact" link](#) at the top of the page if you'd like to volunteer, make a donation, start a chapter near you, let them know about a returning honorably discharged vet, or just say thank you.

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