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ASHLAND — Returning soldiers need our help

With Veterans Day now past, we have another unique opportunity to act and put our words into action.

We have had many thousands of service personnel and support people out of the country in the last few years. From 200,000 deployed for almost eight years from in the 1990s and early 2000s to up to 600,000. But they are coming home. That's the good news. But to really honor our service people who have survived and sacrificed, we now need to help them with the many problems that have been plaguing our veterans on their return.

Unemployment for veterans is at least two percent higher than for nonveterans. Twenty percent of returning veterans have symptoms of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Prescription drug abuse has soared and suicide deaths have outnumbered combat deaths in the last two years. A third of children who have a parent deployed in a war zone are at higher risk for psychological problems, and a new study says violence is more common among kids of combat veterans.

Not one group or institution alone can handle these problems. We're now all going to have to pitch in to make sure they all have a soft landing. I cannot think of many adjustments bigger than coming from an environment where there is violence to one where there isn't.

Those of us in the South may have even a bigger burden of helping veterans since the tradition of military service in the South has continued since 2001. In Kentucky we have over 10,000 service people deployed.

It's time to give our service personnel the special attention and consideration they deserve. This would not elevate them above the rest of us but only insure that they can enjoy a normal life. This may be the biggest gift we can give them.

Douglas A. Wain, Founder and Executive Director, Win The War Against Violence

Veterans Day program great