

# AMERICA SALUTES ITS HEROES

## Honoring Our Wounded Warriors

by Gerard M. Kelly

(NAPSA)—As Memorial Day approaches, the United Spinal Association asks our fellow Americans to take time during this solemn holiday to remember the courageous young men and women who have lost their lives in the war in Iraq and its aftermath. Please spend Memorial Day 2004 attending a remembrance ceremony to honor those troops killed in action in Iraq.

Our soldiers who are seriously wounded in battle face a difficult readjustment period. The veteran members of United Spinal Association, all of whom use wheelchairs as a result of a spinal cord injury or disease, know this all too well. When we were given the opportunity to affiliate United Spinal with the Wounded Warrior project, we had to say, "Yes, Sir!"

The Wounded Warrior project was started by a small group of patriotic Americans to support and encourage newly disabled soldiers and to provide assistance to their families. The focus of the project is the Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington DC and the Bethesda Naval Medical Center, just outside our nation's capital. These two facilities receive most of the young men and women injured in Iraq.

Wounded Warrior staff spend time simply visiting these soldiers to lift their spirits. We also help with accommodations and local transportation arrangements for their families. The Wounded Warrior Backpack, however, is our most popular form of assistance to these brave troops.

It is filled with much needed personal items, and it is convenient to carry from one rehabilitation appointment to the next. The gratitude on each of their faces when



they receive the backpack makes each soldier realize that their fellow citizens care about them and appreciate their courage.

You can learn much more about the Wounded Warrior project by visiting our Web site, [www.unitedspinal.org](http://www.unitedspinal.org). You can also honor America and the members of our armed forces this Memorial Day by flying the flag. You can receive our free pamphlet "How To Display Our Flag," and our "America is #1 Thanks To Our Veterans" sticker by ordering them on our Web site or by telephone at 800-444-0120. We wish you a peaceful Memorial Day.

*Gerard M. Kelly is Executive Director of the United Spinal Association. Now in its 58th year, the Association—formerly the Eastern Paralyzed Veterans Association—is a national veterans service and disability rights group. Our membership is open to any individual with a disability or disease of the spinal cord.*