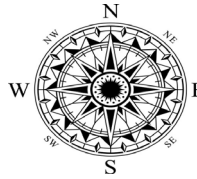

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JULY 2026 EDITION

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From Battlefield to Fireworks: Honoring 250 Years of American Courage

BY AIMEE COOK

For 250 years, the story of the United States has been shaped by courage, sacrifice, and a commitment to the ideals expressed in the Declaration of Independence. When Americans gather on July 4th and watch fireworks light up the night sky, they are seeing more than colorful explosions. They are witnessing a symbol of a nation's journey — a journey built through the service and sacrifice of generations of men and women in uniform.

The birth of the United States was forged in conflict. In 1775, the Continental Army was formed to fight for independence from Great Britain. Under the leadership of George Washington, American soldiers faced tremendous hardships, including shortages of supplies, difficult winters, and a powerful enemy. Their determination eventually led to victory at Yorktown in 1781 and helped secure the independence of a new nation.

As the young nation grew, its military history continued to be written through moments of extraordinary courage. During the War of 1812, American defenders at Fort McHenry in Baltimore Harbor endured a fierce British bombardment. Through the night, rockets and cannon fire struck the fort, but the American flag remained flying above the defenses. The sight of that flag after the attack inspired Francis Scott Key to write "The Star-Spangled Banner," a song that would later become the national anthem. The flag became a lasting symbol of the determination of those who stood beneath it — including the soldiers who fought, suffered, and sacrificed to protect it.

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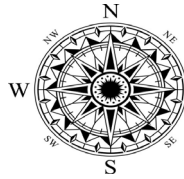
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From Battlefield to Fireworks: Honoring 250 Years of American Courage Continued

Throughout the next two and a half centuries, America's military forces continued to play a major role in defending the country and shaping world history. The United States Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, and Coast Guard have served in conflicts ranging from the Civil War to the world wars, and from the challenges of the Cold War to modern missions around the globe.

American service members have fought not only for territory, but for principles such as freedom, self-government, and the protection of allies. During World War II, millions of Americans served overseas in one of history's greatest struggles. Their efforts helped defeat the Axis powers and changed the course of the world. In every generation since, Americans in uniform have answered the call to serve, often far from home and at great personal sacrifice.

The fireworks that fill the sky each Independence Day carry a deeper meaning because they reflect this history. The bright flashes can remind us of the cannon fire heard during the Revolutionary War and at places like Fort McHenry. The red, white, and blue colors represent the flag and the ideals it stands for. The sound of each burst can serve as a reminder of the battles fought and the sacrifices made to protect the freedoms Americans enjoy today.

Fireworks are also a moment of remembrance. Behind every celebration are the stories of soldiers, sailors, airmen, Marines, guardians, and coastguardsmen who gave their time, their strength, and sometimes their lives in service to the nation. The celebration is possible because of those who stood in defense of something larger than themselves.

As the United States celebrated its 250th anniversary, the fireworks above our communities represent both the past and the future. They honor the victories won, the challenges overcome, and the generations who carried the responsibility of protecting the nation. Each burst of light is a reminder that America's story is not only about where the country has been, but also about the values and commitments that will guide it forward.

For 250 years, the American flag has flown because people have been willing to defend what it represents. The fireworks that illuminate the sky are a tribute to that enduring legacy of courage, sacrifice, and service.

Sources and References

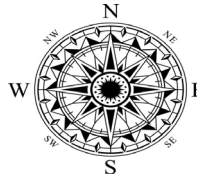
This article was developed using historical information from the following trusted sources:

- National Archives. "Declaration of Independence," "American Revolution," and historical records on the founding of the United States. <https://www.archives.gov/>
 - Smithsonian National Museum of American History. "The Star-Spangled Banner: The Flag That Inspired the National Anthem." <https://americanhistory.si.edu/>
 - U.S. Department of Defense. Historical information on the United States Armed Forces and military service throughout American history. <https://www.defense.gov/>
 - National Archives. "The War of 1812" and records related to Fort McHenry and the defense of Baltimore. <https://www.archives.gov/>
 - The National WWII Museum. Historical resources on American service and sacrifice during World War II. <https://www.nationalww2museum.org/>
 - Encyclopedia Britannica. "Continental Army" and historical background on the American Revolution. <https://www.britannica.com/>
- Sources accessed for historical background and context regarding the 250-year history of American independence, military service, and the traditions surrounding Independence Day.

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Drink Water to Beat the Heat: Know the Warning Signs Before It's Too Late

BY AIMEE COOK

For those of us who served in the military, there are certain phrases we'll never forget.

"Hydrate!"

"Drink water!"

"Take a knee and drink from your canteen!"

At the time, most of us rolled our eyes and wondered if we could possibly drink another drop. Looking back, the military wasn't trying to make our lives miserable—the military was trying to keep us alive.

And let's be honest—we all remember that one service member who thought they were tougher than the heat, skipped the water breaks, and ended up falling out. They quickly became the example everyone else was told not to follow.

The truth is, those lessons don't end when we hang up the uniform.

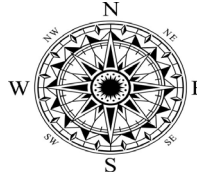
As we all know, the brutal summer has arrived in Wisconsin, bringing long, sunny days and plenty of opportunities to enjoy the outdoors. Whether you're relaxing by the pool, heading to work, attending community events, or tackling projects around the house, it's easy to get caught up in the day and forget about your health and safety. When was the last time you stopped to drink a glass of water? Have you taken a break from the heat? Are you wearing sunscreen or seeking shade when possible?

Many people don't recognize the dangers of extreme heat until they begin experiencing symptoms. Feeling unusually thirsty, fatigued, dizzy, irritable, or developing a painful sunburn may be your body's way of telling you it needs immediate attention. Ignoring these warning signs can lead to serious heat-related illnesses.

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Dehydration

Dehydration occurs when your body loses more fluids than it takes in. It can happen quickly during hot weather, especially if you're working or exercising outdoors.

Warning Signs Include:

- Excessive thirst
- Dry mouth or lips
- Dark yellow urine or decreased urination
- Headache
- Dizziness or lightheadedness
- Fatigue or weakness
- Muscle cramps

What To Do:

Drink water or an electrolyte-replacement beverage, move to a cool area, and rest. Severe dehydration may require medical attention.

Heat Cramps

Heat cramps are painful muscle spasms that usually occur after heavy sweating during physical activity.

Warning Signs Include:

- Painful muscle cramps or spasms, especially in the legs, arms, or abdomen
- Heavy sweating
- Fatigue

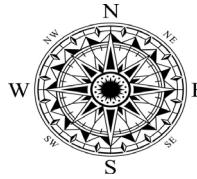
What to do:

Stop your activity, move to a cool place, gently stretch and massage the affected muscles, and drink water or an electrolyte-replacement drink. Wait until the cramps have completely gone away before resuming strenuous activity.

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Heat Exhaustion

Heat exhaustion is more serious and develops when your body is unable to cool itself effectively.

Warning Signs Include:

- Heavy sweating
- Cool, pale, or clammy skin
- Weakness or extreme fatigue
- Dizziness or fainting
- Headache
- Nausea or vomiting
- Rapid, weak pulse
- Muscle cramps

What To Do:

Move to a cool or air-conditioned place immediately. Loosen or remove unnecessary clothing, sip cool water, and apply cool, wet cloths to your skin. If symptoms worsen, last longer than an hour, or the person is vomiting or loses consciousness, seek medical care immediately.

Heat Stroke – A Medical Emergency

Heat stroke is the most severe heat-related illness and can be life-threatening. Immediate medical attention is critical.

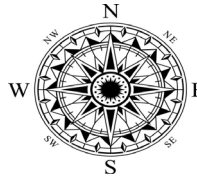
Warning Signs Include:

- Body temperature of 103°F (39.4°C) or higher
- Hot, red, dry, or sometimes damp skin
- Confusion, disorientation, or slurred speech
- Loss of consciousness
- Seizures
- Rapid, strong pulse
- Severe headache

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What To Do:

Call 911 immediately. While waiting for emergency responders, move the person to a cooler location, remove excess clothing, and cool them with cold water, ice packs, or cool, wet towels. Do not force someone who is confused or unconscious to drink fluids.

Stay Safe This Summer

Heat-related illnesses are largely preventable. You can protect yourself and those around you by:

- Drinking water regularly, even if you don't feel thirsty.
- Taking frequent breaks in the shade or air conditioning.
- Wearing lightweight, light-colored clothing.
- Applying and reapplying sunscreen.
- Avoiding strenuous outdoor activities during the hottest part of the day.
- Checking on older adults, young children, people with chronic medical conditions, and pets, as they are especially vulnerable to extreme heat.

Enjoy everything Wisconsin summers have to offer—but remember that your health comes first. Recognizing the warning signs early and taking action can prevent a medical emergency and may even save a life.

Sources and References

This article was developed using health and safety information from the following trusted sources:

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). “Heat and Your Health” and guidance on preventing heat-related illnesses, recognizing symptoms, and responding to heat emergencies. <https://www.cdc.gov/>
- National Weather Service (NWS). “Heat Safety Tips” and information on heat illness prevention, hydration, and staying safe during extreme temperatures. <https://www.weather.gov/>
- Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA). “Protecting Workers from Heat Illness” and resources on heat exposure, hydration, and workplace safety. <https://www.osha.gov/heat>
- American Red Cross. “Heat Safety” guidance on dehydration, heat cramps, heat exhaustion, heat stroke, and first aid responses. <https://www.redcross.org/>
- Mayo Clinic. “Heatstroke: First Aid” and information on recognizing symptoms and providing emergency care. <https://www.mayoclinic.org/>
- Wisconsin Department of Health Services. Heat-related illness prevention information and public health guidance for Wisconsin residents. <https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/>

Sources accessed for medical guidance and public safety information regarding hydration, extreme heat exposure, heat-related illnesses, and emergency response.



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SUMMER EVENTS

2026

Veterans/Military/Families

June 4-6

PrideFest free admission all weekend military/ veteran only

June 12-14

Polish Fest free admission all weekend military/ veteran only

June 27

Summerfest free admission Noon-6PM military/ veteran +4

July 24

German Fest Military Appreciation Day \$5 admission for everyone

July 24-26

German Fest free admission active military/veterans all weekend +1 all weekend

August 9

Wisconsin State Fair free admission before 4PM military/veteran +3; daily discounted admission for veteran is \$13.00

August 13-16

Irish Fest free admission all weekend active military +1

August 16

Irish Fest free admission military/veteran +1, stop by the Onóir Lookout

August 21

Mexican Fiesta free admission Noon-3PM for the general public

August 22-23

Mexican Fiesta free admission Noon-1PM military/veteran only

Acceptable forms of Identification:

Active military ID
Retired military ID
VA health ID card
Veteran ID card (VIC)
Drivers License w/veteran
designation
DD Form 214
NGB 22/23
Membership card for
veteran organization



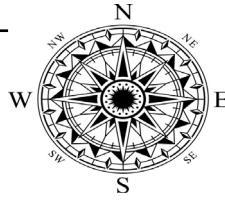
SUMMERFEST

June 18-20 • June 25-27 • July 2-4, 2026 



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HELPFUL INTERNET LINKS

Army Retirement Services <https://soldierforlife.army.mil/retirement>

Navy Retirement Services <https://www.mynavyhr.navy.mil/SupportServices/Culture-Resilience/Retired-Activities/>

Coast Guard Retirement Services <https://www.dcms.uscg.mil/ppc/ras/gp/#guides>

Air Forces Retirement Services <https://www.retirees.af.mil/>

Combat Related Special Compensation (CRSC) - (DFAS)
<https://www.dfas.mil/retiredmilitary/disability/crsc>.

html Concurrent Retired Disability Pay (CRDP) - (DFAS)
<https://www.dfas.mil/retiredmilitary/disability/crdp>.

html Federal Employees Dental and Vision Insurance Program (FEDVIP) www.benefeds.com

Defense Finance and Accounting Service (DFAS) www.dfas.mil

Express Scripts (Mail Order Pharmacy) www.express-scripts.com

RAPIDS Site Locator (DEERS Enrollment & ID Card Issuing Facilities)
idco.dmdc.osd.mil/idco/

Social Security Administration (SSA) www.ssa.gov

Space Available Travel (Space-A) www.amc.af.mil/AMC-Travel-Site/

Thrift Savings Plan (TSP) www.tsp.gov

TRICARE tricare.mil

Military Service and Social Security (Social Security Administration)
<https://www.ssa.gov/pubs/EN-05-10017.pdf>

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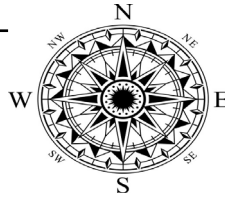
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Crisis Line**



1-800-273-8255 PRESS 1

**Veterans
Crisis Line**



Confidential chat at **VeteransCrisisLine.net** or text to **838255**

Suicide & Crisis Hotline

Call 988 or Text 988



Línea de Prevención del Suicidio y Crisis

1-888-628-9454

Lifeline Options For Deaf + Hard of Hearing For TTY Users

Use your preferred relay service or dial 711 then 988.

National Sexual Assault Hotline

Call 800-656-HOPE (4673)

Connect with a trained staff member from a sexual assault service provider in your area that offers access to a range of free services. Crisis chat support is available at Online Hotline. Free help, 24/7.



National Domestic Violence Hotline

Call 800-799-SAFE (7233)

Trained expert advocates are available 24/7 to provide confidential support to anyone experiencing domestic violence or seeking resources and information. Help is available in Spanish and other languages.



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