

"Thanksgiving is a time to be mindful of the blessings in our lives - the food on our table and the family and friends who surround it, the roof over our heads and the warmth of our homes. But this Thanksgiving, I can't stop thinking back to Veterans Day.

Just a couple of weeks ago, the country learned the story of Marine Corporal Todd Nicely, who happens to be from Arnold, Missouri. He also happens to be a medal for valor recipient, an exceptional American and a hero.

Of the thousands of troops injured in the line of duty in Iraq and Afghanistan, he is one of only three surviving quadruple amputees. Both of Cpl. Nicely's arms and both of his legs were taken by an improvised explosive device in March of this year as he led a routine security patrol in southern Afghanistan.

The quick actions of his squad saved his life, and the dedicated men and women in our military at Landstuhl Regional Medical Center in Germany, the National Naval Medical Center in Bethesda, and at the Walter Reed Military Advanced Training Center gave him back his mobility. From finding the right prostheses for Cpl. Nicely to helping him regain the ability to perform tasks basic to everyday living, someone was with him every step of the day.

But the real story is Cpl. Nicely. In a Washington Post profile published on Veterans Day, he says, "I'm just a regular guy who joined the military." And his wife recalls a moment in the long recovery process when Cpl. Nicely realizes he's lost both his hands, but instead wants to know if anyone else was hurt in the explosion. Despite everything, Cpl. Nicely has done everything in his power to keep his focus, even at the risk of understating the ordeal he has been through.

If you want a copy of the compelling article, call my office and I will be glad to send you one. I don't think valor begins to describe this young hero from Arnold. Every American ought to hear this story. And while Veterans Day is an appropriate time to reflect on the sacrifices of Cpl. Nicely and his family as well as the brave actions of his platoon, Thanksgiving is also a day to think about the strength of the Americans and their families who serve our country in uniform.

Cpl. Nicely is one example, but there are many, many more. They care about others more than themselves. They love our country and our American freedom more than any of us knows to say. And in the midst of painful personal sacrifices, they barely complain, they don't become bitter, and they never, ever quit.

I am thankful for many things each Thanksgiving, but I am thankful this year especially for that spirit. It is patriotism, pure and simple, and also a symbol of how much we owe to the Americans who - whether through military service or in some other way - devote themselves to the betterment of our country, the protection of our sacred freedoms, and the preservation of this patriotic spirit for generations of Americans to come."