

NORTH MISSISSIPPI

# DeSoto County gives 'Green Light' to veteran appreciation effort

By [Toni Lepeska](#), Special to the Daily Memphian

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DeSoto County officials are putting out green lights and urging citizens and business owners to also do so in support of the area's veterans.

Operation Green Light will begin Nov. 7. County buildings will be illuminated in green through Nov. 13. The weeklong span will include Veterans Day on Nov. 11.

[Families of vets will get 'home away from home' on VA Medical Center campus](#)

DeSoto is participating for the first time, joining the National Association of Counties and the

National Association of County Veteran Service Officers, which are inviting every county, parish and borough nationwide to participate.



**DeSoto County Dist. 2 Supervisor Mark Gardner installs a green light bulb in an exterior light fixture as part of Operation Green Light. DeSoto County is home to more than 11,000 vets.**  
(Submitted photo)

DeSoto County is home to more than 11,000 vets.

District 2 County Supervisor Mark Gardner was at a government conference with a second supervisor and the county road manager when they learned of Operation Green Light. Gardner did not serve in the military, but he found it easy to support the effort.

His brother served during the Vietnam War, and his father served under one of the most famous American military commanders of World War II.

“In Patton’s Army,” Gardner said, referring to Gen. George S. Patton. “Very close association. So, I have an affinity for all veterans. I’m changing out my porch lights for green bulbs.”

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[FedEx grants help to businesses owned by veterans, people with disabilities](#)

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Green was reportedly chosen due to its symbolism — green is the color of hope, renewal and well-being — while “greenlight” is a term often used to activate forward movement.

The whole month of November has been associated with veterans for many years. In 2018, then-President Donald Trump issued a proclamation designating it as National Veterans and Military Families Month, but the correlation across the years predates his order.

In DeSoto County, local and state elected officials commonly spend many hours on veteran issues, particularly regarding financial benefits, Gardner

said. Seemingly small gestures also can mean a lot to veterans, however, and should include everyday residents.

“If I see someone in the store who has a hat indicating they are a veteran of whatever conflict, I always thank them for their service,” Gardner said. “I think (Operation Green Light) is a way for our community to collectively embrace them for their service.”

Hugh Green of Southaven says the most heartwarming thing someone can say to him is “welcome home.”

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### VA Healthcare System marks century of serving Mid-South veterans

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“I spent 14 months in Vietnam in the jungles, what they call the bush. Thousands didn’t get to come home,” Green said.

He wears a cap signifying his military service. He had not heard of Operation Green Light, but those kinds of gestures mean a lot to him.

“It makes you feel good,” Green said. “You get more of that now than when we came home. That is comforting to know people appreciate the things you have done.”

The county’s official news release put the need for Operation Green Light this way:

“America’s veterans are some of our nation’s bravest, hardest-working men and women. However, it is hard to show them the appreciation they deserve when, back home and out of uniform, they are more camouflaged than ever. By displaying a green light for our veterans, we not only bring attention to

veterans and their needs, we can also reflect on how we can assist our military service personnel as they transition back into civilian life upon completion of their service to our country.”

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## DeSoto law enforcement acquiring K-9 to sniff out child pornography

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Here’s how county officials suggest residents, business owners and civic organizations participate:

- Individuals can simply change one interior light or exterior light bulb. These may spark conversations or simply be seen by passersby and veterans.
- Business owners and operators can light their buildings in the same way the government buildings will be lit. Participation can be noted via news releases and on social media.
- Homeowner associations can encourage residents to participate by sending out flyers or making social media posts. They may also participate by adding green lights to entryway signs, community street lights or HOA buildings.

Officials encourage participants to use the hashtags #OperationGreenlight and #DeSotoCounty when posting to social media. The county also has established a website page for additional ideas and resources [here](#).

### TOPICS

DESOTO COUNTY   OPERATION GREEN LIGHT   VETERANS



### **Toni Lepaska**

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