

Honoring America's Veterans, Phoenix Veterans Day Parade Marks 30 Years of Honor with New Route, America 250 Theme

PHOENIX, AZ, UNITED STATES, September 1, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- PHOENIX — The Phoenix Veterans Day Parade, twice rescued from an uncertain future by Navy veteran Paula Pedene and community supporters, will mark its 30th anniversary this year with a new route and a theme tied to America's 250th anniversary.

The 2026 HAV Phoenix Veterans Day Parade will step off at 11 a.m. Wednesday, Nov. 11, under the theme "250 Years of Freedom, 30 Years of Honor."

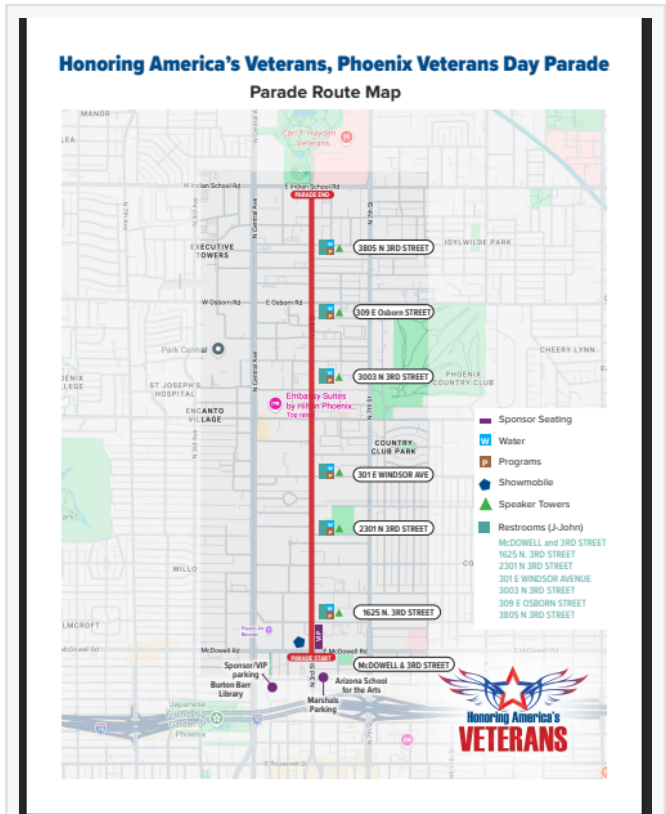
The milestone commemorates both the nation's semiquincentennial and three decades of a Phoenix tradition dedicated to honoring those who have served.

The anniversary also brings one of the parade's biggest changes in more than a decade.

After 12 years following a zigzag route through central Phoenix, the parade will move to a more direct corridor. Entries will begin at McDowell Road, travel north on Third Street and conclude at Indian School Road at Steele Indian School Park.

Behind the marching bands, military vehicles, floats, and thousands of spectators is the story of how the parade endured.

Pedene, now executive director of Honoring America's Veterans, founded the parade in 1997. A U.S. Navy veteran who served during the Cold War from 1978 to 1986 and reenlisted in 1990 during Desert Storm, Pedene said she wanted to bring the community together around a simple purpose: honoring America's veterans.



Map of the New Parade Route HAV
Phoenix Veterans Day Parade

What began under her leadership with approximately 60 entries and 10,000 spectators it grew over the years to as many as 100 entries and 45,000 spectators. Sponsorship support grew from \$10,000 to \$300,000.

Along the way, some famous faces joined Arizona veterans at the front of the parade:

- Celebrity Grand Marshals have included M*A*S*H star Loretta Swit, broadcaster Hugh Downs, actor and entertainer Connie Stevens and Nancy Cartwright, the voice of Bart Simpson.
- Arizona personalities have also been part of the tradition, including blues legend Big Pete Pearson, the legendary radio Morning Mayor Dave Pratt, Arizona Diamondbacks great Luis Gonzalez and beloved Arizona entertainer Pat McMahon, known to generations of Arizonans for his characters, including Gerald, on The Wallace and Ladmo Show.

Some of the most consequential moments in the parade's history, however, happened away from the parade route.

The parade survived two major threats after institutional support disappeared.

First, the original nonprofit organization associated with the parade stepped away. At the time, Vietnam veteran, and Maricopa County Attorney Rick Romley and Pedene collaborated to save it, creating a new nonprofit, getting new board members, and sponsors to keep it going.

Later, as the Phoenix VA wait-time scandal unfolded, VA support also disappeared, creating a more complex challenge for the parade's survival.



Honoring America's Veterans Phoenix Veterans Day Parade

HAV 30th Anniversary Parade Logo



30 foot tall Uncle Sam Balloon

Then-Phoenix Mayor Greg Stanton stepped in, saying “he could not imagine the City of Phoenix without a Veterans Day Parade.” He worked with organizers and Pedene, who at the time was one of the Phoenix VA whistleblowers facing retaliation for her disclosures on the lack of prompt and adequate care for our nation's veterans.

Civic leaders, businesses, veteran's organizations, volunteers, and supporters stepped forward because they believed Phoenix needed a Veterans Day Parade and that the men and women who served the nation deserved public recognition.



HAV Parade Honor Guard

“There were moments when this parade could have ended,” Pedene said. “But there were always people who understood what it stood for. There was kindness, grace, and a genuine desire to serve those who served us. I may have kept pushing it forward, but the community is what made it possible.”

Thirty years later, that partnership continues.

As HAV prepares for the milestone parade, opportunities are still available for Arizonans, businesses, veterans, students, and schools to take part in the celebration.

- [Parade Sponsorships](#) — Deadline September 8

Businesses and organizations can help sustain the Phoenix Veterans Day Parade through sponsorships beginning at \$5,000.

- [Honor Our Heroes nominations](#) for Veterans Grand Marshals — Deadline Sep.1. HAV is seeking nominations for Arizona veterans whose military service and continued service to their communities exemplify what it means to serve.
- [High School Essay Competition](#) — Deadline Sept. 11: Students in grades 9–12 throughout Arizona, including homeschooled students, can take part in HAV's annual essay competition.
- High School Marching Bands Needed: HAV is also seeking more Arizona high school marching bands to take part in the 30th anniversary parade. Participating bands will receive a stipend based on band size. Band directors interested in participating can contact former band director Marshal Pratt at havteam@honoringamericasveterans.org.

For Pedene, the anniversary is about much more than looking backward. It is about ensuring the

parade is there for the next generation.

“For 30 years, veterans have come down the parade route and seen people standing along the streets applauding them, thanking them and teaching their children what service means,” Pedene said. “That matters. Our route may be changing, and the parade has certainly changed over three decades, but our purpose has not.”

“We honor veterans, remember their service, value our freedom, inspire future generations and keep marching.”

About Honoring America's Veterans.

Honoring America's Veterans is an Arizona nonprofit organization dedicated to honoring and supporting America's veterans through community engagement, recognition, and events. Its signature event, the HAV Phoenix Veterans Day Parade, brings veterans, military organizations, schools, businesses, and community members together each Veterans Day to recognize the service and sacrifice of the men and women who have worn our nation's uniform.

- 2026 HAV Phoenix Veterans Day Parade
- Wednesday, Nov. 11 | 11 a.m.
- McDowell Road to Indian School Road via Third Street
- Theme: “250 Years of Freedom, 30 Years of Honor”

For more information, visit HonoringAmericasVeterans.org.

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