



VETERANS HISTORY PROJECT EVENT TOOL KIT



"Our longstanding partnership of NCRF and the Library of Congress is so valuable. Not only are our record-making skills utilized to preserve memories for posterity, but the veterans are able to share their experiences with interviewers, videographers, and court reporters – our members who are changed by hearing the military lives of these servants."

NCRF Chair Doug Friend, FAPR, RDR, CRR (Ret.),
and a past president of NCRA.

**For more information about NCRF's VHP participation,
please contact ncrfoundation@ncra.org.**



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What is the Veterans History Project?



In October 2000 U.S. Rep. Ron Kind from Wisconsin authored legislation creating the [Veterans History Project](#), which preserves and makes accessible firsthand accounts of American war veterans that are archived at the Library of Congress. A large portion of this preservation is owed to the National Court Reporters Foundation's (NCRF) Oral Histories Program, which recruits volunteer court reporters and captioners to transcribe veterans' stories from oral interviews. The National Court Reporters Association (NCRA) and NCRF have been partners in this program since its inception. To date, NCRA members have recorded and transcribed the moving

stories of nearly 5,000 U.S. war veterans, helping to build a lasting legacy of the diverse group of men and women who have served our nation during wartime. The stories collected as part of the VHP effort cover an array of military conflicts including the oral histories from veterans of World War II, the Korean War, the Vietnam War, and military operations in Central America, the Gulf War, Iraq, and Afghanistan.

Through this partnership with the Library of Congress, NCRA and NCRF continue to help preserve for future generations of Americans the opportunity to hear from the veterans themselves and will be able to better understand the realities of war.

Why host a Veterans History Project event

NCRA members, volunteers, and veterans themselves find that the experience of participating in a VHP event leaves them humbled, thankful, and proud, as well as sometimes sharing tears of sorrow, laughter, and even joy. Below are some of what NCRA members and veterans have shared about their experiences.

"The Library of Congress Veterans History Project is your chance to make history. Volunteer to interview or collect the firsthand narratives from the veterans in your lives and communities. By donating them to the Veterans History Project, these treasured memories are then preserved, archived, and made accessible so they can instruct and inspire for generations to come. Whether participating as a veteran, an interviewer, or an advocate, I can guarantee that it will be a worthwhile endeavor. I personally carry many of these stories in my heart and find myself changed for listening to them. I hope you will feel the same."

Kerry Ward, liaison specialist for the U.S. Library of Congress Veterans History Project
At the 2021 NCRA Conference & Expo

NCRA member Anne Messineo, RPR, an official court reporter from Fayetteville, N.Y., is not at all surprised that her husband, Joe, became involved in the Veterans History Project after asking about four transcriptions she was completing for the VHP to earn PDCs. Since then, he and Anne have teamed up with friend and videographer Mike Whalen to conduct VHP interviews with U.S. war veterans from the New York area.



"History is written by people who are typically removed from the actual event by years or decades. The authenticity of a firsthand account is priceless. When they talk about intense moments you can watch their gaze drift off into a 1,000-yard stare, their eyes narrow, their voice changes, and they are no longer with us in the present; they are on the battlefield. It is mesmerizing. Twenty or 30 years from now, their great-great-grandchildren will sit in silent awe when they listen to history come alive."

Joe Messineo, Fayetteville, N.Y.

"It means everything. One of my biggest fears in life is that he will be forgotten and things like this keep him alive. He was just a really, really, good guy; he really was."

Gold Star mother Sonja Ruhren, Stafford, Va., whose son, Army Sgt. David A. Ruhren, died while serving during Operation Iraqi Freedom in 2004.

"We need to document the real events that troops have experienced so we don't lose their experiences to time. Students need to study these accounts to learn what the true price of war really is on our nation. The first veteran of the day didn't want to come and participate. It was painful for him to tell his story. At the end of the interview, he was very appreciative that we encouraged him to speak. You will cry. You will laugh. You will walk away a better person."

Andrea Kreutz, CLVS, owner of Huney-Vaughn Court Reporters, Ltd., Des Moines, Iowa, which she purchased from her father, a Vietnam veteran.

"The Veterans History Project truly is a service to others, but there is no value that can be put on what is gained by those who serve. This is a labor of love provided by NCRF and NCRA members. Thank you for the opportunity for our members to discover these ways to grow, share, and find deep satisfaction in the service of others."

Debbie Dibble, FAPR, RDR, CRR, CRC, Past President of NCRA and freelance court reporter and captioner from Salt Lake City, Utah.

"It was such an honor to be a part of this noble endeavor. I am already excited about helping capture another brave soldier's memories."

April L. Crites, RMR, CRR, an official court reporter from Cincinnati, Ohio.

"It's important for me, I feel, for future generations to know there are people that care not just about themselves but care enough to commit a part of their life to serve something greater than themselves."

U.S. Army Veteran Tim Seaman, Gainesville, Va.

"I can't describe it. We did a lot of things. It's tough for me to even talk about it."

U.S. Navy Veteran James Fritzius, Gloucester, Va.

“Being in the presence of such great leadership, bravery, and service gave me an entire new perspective on life and put my personal life complaints and situations on hold in an effort to embrace and visualize the strength and perseverance of our heroic Vietnam veterans. I learned a lot of life lessons. All of them were 80 years old and older, so you can only imagine the wisdom.”

Margary Rogers, RPR, CRI, NCRA Director and official court reporter from Washington, D.C.

What can you earn besides helping to preserve history?

Professional court reporters will earn 0.25 Professional Development Credit (PDC) for each transcription completed and can earn up to a maximum of 1.0 PDC during their three-year certification period. Likewise, stenographic court reporting students can earn an NCRF-funded student membership in NCRA by transcribing two oral histories. For more information, contact Jill Parker Landsman at jlandsman@ncra.org.

Planning a Veterans History Project event

A VHP event is usually a one-day event. The number of veterans scheduled to be interviewed will depend on the number of volunteer interviewers and court reporters/captioners who sign up, as well as the size of the location where the event is being held.

The structure of the event

Each interview takes between 35 and 45 minutes. One court reporter or captioner and one interviewer is needed for each veteran to be interviewed. Note that the court reporter or captioner can be connected via Zoom or another online chat platform to take down the interview. The interviewer, however, should be onsite for the event. Volunteers should not be scheduled for more than two interviews back-to-back as the discussions can sometimes be emotionally taxing.

Choose your location

Interviews with veterans can be held in an array of venues including hotel rooms, military facilities, local libraries, local museums, private homes, and at military-related events. Also consider reaching out to local elementary and high school history teachers to see if they would be interested in hosting an event in the classroom that students might even be able to participate in. The event could not only serve as a history lesson, but also introduce students to the court reporting and captioning profession. Other potential locations to consider include local Boys & Girls Clubs, Girl Scout, and Scouting America troop meeting locations.



Identifying VHP event opportunities

Picking a date

While there are no rules set in stone about when to host a VHP event, many organizers chose dates that are significant to the military. Remember that while there are an array of national days of recognition and remembrance, many localities and states also hold their own such meaningful observances. Connecting a VHP event with a military-related observance can also aid in generating media coverage of the event. (*More on media outreach is covered under NCRF resources.*)

Below is a list of potential dates to hold a VHP event. Be sure to double-check your calendar for the correct dates as some vary year by year.

- ★ Air Force Birthday
- ★ Air Force Reserve Birthday
- ★ American Legion Birthday
- ★ Armed Forces Day
- ★ Armed Forces Week (celebrated in May)
- ★ Army Birthday
- ★ Army Reserve Birthday
- ★ Coast Guard Day
- ★ Coast Guard Reserve Birthday
- ★ D-Day/Anniversary of WWII
- ★ Gold Star Family Day
- ★ Gold Star Spouses Day
- ★ Hug a GI Day
- ★ Independence Day
- ★ Korean War Veterans Armistice Day
- ★ Marine Corps Birthday
- ★ Marine Corps Reserve Birthday
- ★ Marine Forces Reserve Birthday
- ★ Medal of Honor Day
- ★ Memorial Day
- ★ National Guard Birthday
- ★ National Military Appreciation Month (celebrated in May)
- ★ National Vietnam War Veterans Day
- ★ Navy Birthday
- ★ Navy Reserve Birthday
- ★ Patriot Day
- ★ Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day
- ★ POW/MIA Recognition Day
- ★ Purple Heart Day
- ★ Seabee Birthday
- ★ Silver Star Banner
- ★ VE Day
- ★ Veterans Day
- ★ Veterans Golden Age Veterans of Foreign Wars Day
- ★ Warrior Games
- ★ Women Veterans Day

Where to find the veterans

Many veterans have never shared their stories with family and friends – either entirely or even in part – and many find it a relief once they do share. Start by asking members of your family or the families of your friends who have served if they would be interested in sharing their story for the VHP effort. You can also reach out to local military organizations such as American Legion and Veterans of Foreign Wars posts. (*A list of organizations is available later in this tool kit.*)

Reach out directly to these organizations and explain what a VHP event is and why it is important and then invite them to share their stories. Let them know it is OK to have family members or close friends attend as well when they share their stories.

Where to find volunteers

The best place to recruit volunteers is by reaching out directly to your court reporter or captioner friends and your state association. Since these interviews can be captured via a Zoom interview, be sure to reach out to those you know in the profession who might not live nearby as well.

Interviewers do not need to be court reporters or captioners. They can be friends, family members of the veterans, or representatives from the organization you might be partnering with to host the event. It has been noted by others who have hosted VHP events that a veteran interviewing a veteran often makes the sharing of stories easier.

NCRA also has a list of veterans from around the country who are interested and eager to share their stories. For names of veterans in your area, please contact pr@ncra.org.

Tips for a successful event

The best tip for hosting a VHP event or any event is solid prior planning, readiness the day of, and the willingness to follow up in a timely manner. Below are some additional suggestions for success.

Before the event

- Download and print copies of the necessary paperwork required by the Library of Congress to accompany final transcripts. (See *more under downloadable Library of Congress resources*.)
- Make sure the necessary paperwork that needs to be signed by the veterans and the volunteers for submission with the interview to the Library of Congress has been distributed and encourage each of the parties to complete it beforehand and bring it with them to the event. (See *more under downloadable Library of Congress resources*.)
- Request extra copies from the Library of Congress of its VHP Field Kits to have on hand to share with attendees, especially if they know of other veterans who might be interested in sharing their stories.
- Share a schedule of the event with all of your volunteers and veterans who are slated to be interviewed so they know where they need to be and at what time. Be sure to schedule a reasonable amount of time between each interview.
- Share with the court reporter/captioner who is capturing the oral history the name of the veteran and interviewer ahead of time. Also share with them a little background about the veteran.
- Share some insights with the interviewer about the veteran they will be interviewing. It helps veterans relax if they feel the interviewer is invested in their story already.
- Share the standard questions provided by the Library of Congress. (See *more under downloadable Library of Congress resources*.)
- Make sure you let the veterans, the court reporters/captioners, and the interviewers know that media might attend and get permission from them to be photographed and/or interviewed for a potential story.
- Create a folder for each veteran to keep track of the necessary paperwork.
- Follow up with all participants to make sure they are still planning to attend.
- Try and set up the venue the day before the event or at least 90 minutes before the event.



Set Up

- Interview tables should be spaced well apart from each other to ensure there are no disruptions from other interviews taking place, especially if more than one interview is taking place at the same time.
- Make sure there is plenty of room for the veteran to get to the interview table.
- At each table, have the veteran seated next to the interviewer and the court reporter/captioner (or their screen if they are remote) set up at one end of the table.
- Make sure to have bottled water, tissues, and mints accessible on each table. A small vase of flowers also makes a nice addition.
- Make sure you have an extra set of questions on the table for each interviewer.

Day of the event

- Make sure to test all equipment *before* each interview starts.
- Make sure to have a volunteer assigned to welcome the veterans and their guests, check that all paperwork is completed, and to help keep extra noise at minimum especially during interviews.
- If possible, have some cookies or other light refreshments and coffee and tea available for the veterans and their families while they wait for their interviews to begin.
- Have extra paperwork on hand for veterans, court reporters /captioners, and interviewers in the event someone forgets to bring theirs.
- Have pens, notepads, and clipboards available should they be needed.
- Make sure to keep everyone in the room quiet so that the veteran can hear what the interviewer is asking and can answer with no interruptions.
- Remind the interviewer that it's OK to pause and let a veteran gather their thoughts before answering. In many cases, these veterans have never shared or even spoken about their experiences before, and sharing can bring up a variety of emotions.

After the event

- Double-check that all the necessary paperwork has been completed by the veterans, court reporters/captioners, and interviewers. (*Refer to the VHP Field Kit noted below.*)
- Set a deadline to receive the final transcript.
- Package all the materials (hard copies and copies saved on a thumb drive) and send them to NCRF, 12355 Sunrise Valley Drive Suite 610, Reston, VA 20191.

Resources from the Library of Congress, NCRA, and NCRF

Library of Congress Veterans History Project

The following links have complete instructions about the requirements for gathering and submitting the oral histories of U.S. war veterans. These resource include the required paperwork, interview questions, and details on what other items veterans can submit with their stories to the Library of Congress.

- [Transcription guidelines](#)
- [VHP hosting guidelines](#)
- [VHP Field Kit](#)



Links to NCRA/NCRF downloadable VHP event resources and more

Below are samples of the many downloadable resources available to you to help you promote the profession. Below each sample are the links to download it as well as some tips for using it. Each of these can be downloaded and printed by the user or by a nearby printer such as Kinkos, Staples, or a local printer. It also never hurts to ask the vendor if they would consider printing these items for free in exchange for your giving them recognition at your display.

- [VHP PowerPoint](#) - This downloadable PowerPoint presentation can be run on a laptop at an event or be used to help promote the VHP effort.
- [VHP cards](#) - These downloadable cards can be handed out to local military organizations, veterans, and family and friends of veterans to provide them with a direct connection to signing up to share the stories.
- [VHP sign-up sheet](#) - This downloadable sheet can be made available at VHP events to encourage others to sign up or it can be given to military organizations, clubs, and other groups to capture the contact information of veterans interested in sharing their stories.
- [VHP loop](#) - This downloadable loop of images and news items can be played on a laptop at VHP events or when promoting the VHP effort.

- [VHP media advisory](#) - Use this downloadable template to help promote your event to local media outlets. For assistance, contact pr@ncra.org.
- [VHP Banner](#) - Consider ordering a VHP Banner to help promote the effort and to use as a backdrop for your interviews. A banner can be ordered through alphagraphics by contacting Sarah Huh at 703-289-1200. The cost is approximately \$250.

Valuable links to national organizations

Below is a list with links to national organizations to contact for information about state and local chapters.

[*American Gold Star Mothers*](#)

[*American Legion*](#)

[*Catholic War Veterans*](#)

[*Combat Veterans Motorcycle Association*](#)

[*Disabled American Veterans*](#)

[*Fleet Reserve Association*](#)

[*Gold Star Wives of America*](#)

[*Jewish War Veterans of the United States of America*](#)

[*Marine Corps League*](#)

[*Military Order of the Purple Heart*](#)

[*Military Order of the World Wars*](#)

[*National Association for Black Veterans*](#)

[*Paralyzed Veterans of America*](#)

[*Pearl Harbor Survivors Association*](#)

[*Polish Legion of American Veterans*](#)

[*Retired Enlisted Association Inc*](#)

[*U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs*](#)

[*Veterans of Foreign Wars*](#)

[*Vietnam Veterans of America*](#)

For more inspiration, read these stories about how NCRA members have supported the VHP effort

[Louisville veterans interviewed at VHP event](#)

[NCRA/NCRF VHP in the news](#)

[VHP event honors Vietnam veterans](#)

[NCRA members participate in special VHP event to honor Vietnam Veterans](#)

[First-time VHP participant moved by story of WWII veteran](#)

[NCRA VHP event in the news](#)

[Court reporters' VHP transcriptions play a key role](#)

[NCRA members honor U.S. veterans with VHP event](#)

[VHP Director attributes many transcribed veteran history stories to NCRA Members](#)

[NCRF showcases the profession with VHP Day at NCRA's Annual Convention](#)

[NCRA member's husband inspired by wife's VHP work, preservation of history](#)

[Serving never ceases to give back](#)

[Veterans share war stories, insight to service at event hosted by NCRF in Houston](#)

[Preserving heroes' narratives: Inside the Veterans History Project event at the NCRA Conference](#)

[NCRA honors American veterans by transcribing oral histories](#)

[NCRA members capture oral histories from Gold Star mother and veterans](#)

And finally...

Remember, please be sure to share your VHP experiences with NCRA by sending stories and photos to pr@ncra.org. Feel free to also send additional tips you think could be useful to add to future editions of this tool kit.

For more information about the National Court Reporters Foundation VHP and other oral histories programs, please contact NCRF Manager Jill Parker Landsman at jlandsman@ncra.org.

