

Holiday Trends

Interviewing Veterans—Enriching For Every Generation

(NAPSA)—More and more Americans are looking forward to the holidays—and other occasions—as a way to look back.

That's because they're seizing the opportunity to interview some of the older members of their family, preserving the insights and highlights of their lives.

Making this especially meaningful—and simple—is the Veterans History Project (VHP) of the American Folklife Center at the Library of Congress. According to U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs statistics, nearly 22 million war veterans currently reside in the United States. Each one has a unique story to share, if only someone would ask.

During this holiday season and beyond, VHP asks volunteers, including students in grades 10 or higher, to record veterans' interviews or to submit veterans' original wartime photos, diaries, correspondence and other documents, which will be preserved at the Library of Congress for posterity.

The Project's congressional mandate is to collect, preserve and make accessible the wartime stories of America's veterans who served during World War I and through the recent conflicts. The goal is for future generations to hear directly from veterans and better understand the realities of war. VHP holds nearly 89,000 collections, of which over 12,500 are digitized and fully accessible through its website, www.loc.gov/vets.

Veterans Benefit

"As a veteran, I understand how important it is to share your experiences and preserve them for generations to come. Veterans who participate in the Library of Congress Veterans History Project have the opportunity to share



Photo courtesy of the Veterans History Project, American Folklife Center, Library of Congress.

Interviewing a friend or family member about his or her life can be a terrific holiday tradition, especially if the interviewee is a veteran. A free kit can help.

their stories in their own words, in their own way," said Bob Patrick, project director.

Students Benefit

Educators agree that not only does participating in the VHP process help create a lasting legacy for each veteran, it also provides an opportunity for students to experience history up close and personal—a lesson they won't soon forget.

"Our students have the opportunity to leave their classrooms, go out into the community and hear firsthand accounts of combat and life during wartime from the people who actually made that history. Talk about bringing history alive!" said Eileen Hurst of Central Connecticut State University.

Learn More

To find out how to participate in this national preservation effort, visit www.loc.gov/vets. From there, you can search a database of veterans' stories, watch a 15-minute instructional video and download a field kit, a how-to-record-a-story booklet.