



## **National Military History Center / American Veterans Institute Educational Programming *Frequently Asked Questions***

### **What is the AVI educational program?**

The American Veterans Institute (AVI), working in concert with the National Military History Center (NMHC) is developing a comprehensive curriculum tied to the service and sacrifice of our nation's GIs. This ambitious education initiative will offer an innovative approach to conveying American history, as it relates to the U.S. Military, the multitude of global and regional conflicts since 1776, and the individual experiences, impressions, and lessons of those who played an active role in preserving America's freedom.

### **What kind of materials and content are you developing?**

The components of this joint education initiative include:

- 1). **K-12 materials:** An educational book series, lesson plans, primary historical documents, digital presentations, take-home activities, and outreach visits focusing on the historic role of America's military, the individual achievements of American GIs, and practical youth leadership skills for K-12.

AVI and the National Military History Center, are currently working with or preparing to work with several school districts – Tipp City, Troy, Oakwood and St. Luke's schools in Ohio, and La Grange, Allen, Steuben, Noble, and Garrett Schools in Indiana – to "beta test" the books, lesson plans and activities. The project's educational consultant is Dr. Terry Maris of Ohio Northern University.

### **How will teacher get the materials?**

Initially, upon e-mail or telephone request to the NMHC or AVI. Eventually, through a dynamic web presence, teachers will have access to a broad range of downloadable documents – all tied to academic content standards – specific to grades K-4, 5-8 and 9-12.

A unique aspect of the education program is that it will be linked to the assets of the American Veterans Research Library, which will be based at the National Military History Center in Auburn, IN. Stories, booklets and materials that are submitted by veterans will be used as the basis for classroom tools to tell the story of America's veterans and military history from the perspective of those who lived it. Children will read and experience first-hand accounts from real people who could easily be their friends, neighbors, parents or grand parents.

### **How is this program funded?**

The development phase is being funded through several modest grants to the NMHC and by the founders of AVI. Schools are provided the materials at no charge and AVI is seeking corporate or large scale foundation support in order to increase distribution. Special branding opportunities will be available to program sponsors. Already the Dekko Foundation, the Tipp City Foundation and the Miami

County Foundation have come on board to support production and distribution of books and lesson plans.

### **What is the ‘Embracing Freedom’ book series?**

The Embracing Freedom series will be a multi-book series for children in grades K-7 (broken down by age ranges 10 and under, or 10 and up), and designed to entertain and educate youngsters on the foundations of the freedom they enjoy as Americans. The educational theme of each book will be gently presented from a child’s perspective and will help spark an early interest in American history, current events, language arts and the civic responsibilities of every American.

The series will espouse no political viewpoint but will help children personalize the often vague concepts of freedom and American history. Each book will be based on real people and/or real experiences and will feature classroom activities and lesson plans. The idea is to use relatable individuals and experiences to help spark student interest in history, civics, government and current events. The books will be to the American Veterans Research Library and American Veterans Hall of Honor, which will be part of the pending expansion of the National Military History Center in Auburn, Indiana.

### **Books currently planned for the series**

*Welcome Home Grandpa* – Grades K-4 (Topic: Veterans Day & Vietnam) (**Book is complete**)

*My Neighbor is a Caterpillar* – Grade 4-6 (Topic: World War II and veterans in general) (**Book is complete**)

*Day of Memories* – Grades 4-6 (Topic: Memorial Day & World War I)

*“I Pledge of Legions”* – Grades K-4 (Topic: The Pledge of Allegiance & the Flag)

*My Mother Wears Combat Boots* – Grades K-4 (Topic: Women in the Military & War on Terror) (**Book is complete**)

*Poppa is a Citizen Soldier* – Grades K-4 (Topic: The National Guard and Reserves)

*A Sparkler for Allison* – Grades K-4 (Topic: Independence Day)

*The Fighting 99<sup>th</sup>* – Grades 4-6 (Topic: America’s first black combat pilots)

### **What will the book series and materials do for children?**

It will give them a greater appreciation of the sacrifices that have preserved America’s freedom. It will also help them personalize American History so that they understand that the people who “make” history are just like them...or their family members. It will encourage them to seek out the heroes in their own families, and to record the stories of those individuals.

The National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) notes that young people view the world from an egocentric standpoint; that is, they view history and current events based on how such things impact them directly – or those with whom they have regular contact (parents, grandparents, friends, neighbors, etc.)

With regard to teaching Social Studies and history, the NCSS noted that “the concept of time is difficult for young children, but they do need a sense of the past in order to understand how the present has come about, as well as to appreciate their heritage.” The organization further observes that: “The early years are the ideal time for children to understand democratic norms and values (justice, equality, service, etc.) in terms of smaller entities (the family, classroom, and community). Applying these concepts to the nation and the world will be easier if one understands and appreciates them first on a smaller scale.”

The NMHC and AVI seek to provide tools and lesson plans that will allow teachers to capture student attention and imagination, and present history based on “relatable concepts, situations, and individuals” that will challenge and energize young people. We are working with education experts, universities, authors, history majors, teachers, and students to build, refine and beta test our education program in order to address the challenges outlined in this section.

### **Doesn't this project run the risk of militarizing young people? Is there an 'anti-war' perspective offered as well?**

There is no one more ‘anti-war’ than a man or woman who has seen combat. AVI and the NMHC firmly believe that this program will not only *not* militarize young people, but will make them far more aware of the many options that can and should precede combat.

Because the NMHC and AVI focuses on veteran and military history, our curriculum is rooted in the American experience as it applies to our veterans and our nation’s global and regional conflicts, but the goal of the program is much broader. The objective is not to militarize students or recruit future GIs; rather, the goal is to engage students in thoughtful discussion and activities involving leadership, democracy, historic preservation, the rights and responsibilities of American citizens, the role of the military, and the role of the United States in the global arena. Only by understanding such interactions in the context of history, can young people hope to chart a better course for the future. The objective is to stimulate interest and enthusiasm in students that will allow them to ask questions, posit solutions, and become effective leaders in their own communities and, ultimately, on the world stage.

**“Indeed, far from militarizing students, our over-arching goal for the program is to inspire a generation of leaders who have the historical perspective to *prevent* wars, rather than *start* them,” said American Veterans Institute founder Mike Jackson, Lt. Col. USAF (ret.)**

### **What do you hope to achieve with this program?**

We are building lesson plans and teaching tools that will achieve the following goals:

- relate history and historical events to individuals or situations in the students’ lives;
- provide a unique “color commentary” on history by giving students emotional and behavioral connections to history (through veteran commentaries, memoirs, and personal interaction), thus allowing students to understand the human response to historical events which, in turn, gives them greater empathy for the individuals who “made history”;
- give students an appreciation for the service and sacrifice of the men and women of America’s military;
- give students the understanding that history is “made” by real people who are not so different from the students themselves – and that they, too, have the capacity to make a difference and “make history;”
- give students varying perspectives on individual historical events and make them better able to compare, analyze and interpret information based on the sources and perspectives provided;
- give students a better appreciation for the diversity of America’s military, and the courage and contributions of a multitude of ethnicities and cultures;
- give students a personal stake in preserving history – make them historians/authors in their own right and give them “ownership” of history;
- give students a better grasp of their rights and responsibilities as Americans, and the foundations of their freedoms;
- give students a clear understanding of why we celebrate or honor such holidays as Veterans Day, Memorial Day, Independence Day, and other patriotic dates and observances;

- give students the building blocks of leadership and help them understand how to become leaders and positive role models in their own lives;
- create an inter-generational dialogue that helps young people connect to previous generations through shared emotions, reactions and experiences.
- meet the proficiency standards required of teachers so that materials can be introduced into the classroom without fear of losing the academic standards requirements..

**How will you address individual grade levels? Obviously, what is appropriate for a 10<sup>th</sup> grader would not be appropriate for a first grader!**

Quite right. And we are working with educators and universities to develop lesson plans and tools for each grade level that will not only allow young people to better embrace and appreciate American History and the role of individual veterans, but to better appreciate and utilize the freedom they have been granted as American citizens.

Ultimately, ALL lesson plans and tools will be tied to state and federal standards so that teachers can use the materials in their daily classroom activities without endangering the proficiency requirements.

**Grades K-3:** This programming will feature fundamentals on what a veteran is, what the military does, what the branches of the armed services are, and what the various patriotic holidays represent (i.e. Flag Day, Memorial Day, Veterans Day, Independence Day). Students will be introduced to the concept of timelines and the role that historical events can play in their lives. Students will learn the history and purpose of the patriotic holidays that are sometimes overlooked, minimized or misunderstood – even by adults. The *Embracing Freedom Book Series* will be introduced along with the accompanying lesson plans. Through the book series and lesson plans, students will learn to ask questions of (i.e. interview) family members, record family history, broaden their observational skills, participate in “beginner” group discussions, utilize basic graphic organizers in order to understand relationships and concepts presented in the materials, and develop an early appreciation for history, geography, and other social studies sub-domains through the experiences of family members or other relatable individuals (relatives of friends or familiar community members.)

**Grades 4-7:** Classroom discussion, interviewing/observational skills, historic preservation and language arts will be emphasized at this level. Students will read compelling hand-outs outlining the history of the Armed Forces as well as personalized accounts from veterans of diverse backgrounds. Students will be encouraged to find the heroes in their own families and preserve their stories. A yearly class project will involve selecting and nominating (and preparing a nomination package) a veteran for the American Veterans Hall of Honor – and, in the process, learning about the branch of the military, the unit, the conflict or era in which the veteran served. The reading materials and preparation of the nomination package will incorporate state benchmarks, expanded use of graphic organizers, history frames, story maps, and other key comprehension tools. The project will encourage team work, organizational skills, written communications, persuasive writing, critical thinking skills, English skills and much more. Level

**Grades 8-12:** Digital presentations, research and preservation, problem solving, story mapping, and role-playing will form the foundations for this aspect of the education program. Students will view “docu-minis” (8-15 minute documentaries) on the role of American GIs in various conflicts (initially, 20<sup>th</sup> Century conflicts such as WW I, WW II, Korea and Vietnam), in addition to reading excerpts from individual veteran stories from each conflict. Students will discuss the elements of the conflict and the role of the individual veteran – how and why the veteran served; what his/her contribution was, what the long-term impact of each conflict was, how the student would respond to similar events and situations. Peacetime military service will also be spotlighted as students discuss and debate the historic reasons for military service in the U.S. and how those reasons are similar to or different from military service in other

countries. A heavy leadership component will be featured at this level of programming. Through the examples provided by Hall of Honor inductees, students will learn about courage, honor, duty, integrity, selflessness, the skills necessary to motivate people, the need for leadership in any situation, etc. Students will select a famous veteran and prepare a report or video essay on the elements of his or her leadership style (good and/or bad) and the impact of his or her service. Students will be encouraged to gather and assemble the military histories in their own families for inclusion in the American Veterans Research Library. This grade level will also feature reciprocal teaching exercises and a “student as the teacher” approach to a variety of the topics.