WAYS YOU CAN HELP GET VEP TO THE TEENS THAT NEED IT MOST:

**VETERANS:**
- Attend a VEP speakers training
- Become a speaker with VEP
- Support other veterans as they develop their stories
- Go to a veteran's presentation as a friend
- Tell other veterans about VEP

**EDUCATORS & YOUTH WORKERS:**
- Invite VEP speakers to your classroom or program
- Work with staff to tailor a VEP presentation to the specific needs of your group

**SUPPORTERS:**
- Make a financial contribution
- Encourage teachers to invite VEP speakers to their classes
- Volunteer in the office

**VEP VETERAN STORYTELLERS**

Sharing Experiences with Teens

Men and women veterans volunteered to tell their stories to teens. Combat and non-combat veterans alike shared many kinds of stories from war, boot camp and non-combat experiences, VEP veterans provide teenagers with first-hand historical perspectives and practical life lessons.

Sharing personal stories can be challenging and difficult work, yet speaking to teens gives veterans an opportunity to positively influence a younger generation. Our vets find working with VEP and teenagers to be a validating and satisfying experience.

**TRAINING AND SUPPORT**

VEP provides training in our unique Storytelling Approach. Veterans learn how to construct stories that share positive values without "preaching," give class presentations, lead discussions and answer tough questions. Our staff and experienced speakers support new speakers in working with teenagers and in honing their storytelling craft.

**FIRST JUSTICE LILLIAN MIRANDA, FRANKLIN-HAMPSHIRE JUVENILE COURT**

"I have come to rely on the programs VEP offers... The Veterans Education Project and its staff are well known and highly respected throughout Hampshire and Franklin Counties."

**PHYLLIS LARDMORE, VEP VETERAN SPEAKER**

"I enjoy talking with the teenagers because I can be honest about my life and they appreciate hearing that."

"The veterans are coming for a good reason—to help us get out of trouble and teaching about honor and respect... I used to think I could do anything. I used to be a real bad boy. I don't want to be like that anymore."

**STUDENT, SPRINGFIELD ALTERNATIVE MIDDLE SCHOOL**

"I was impressed with the way he could connect his experiences in war to what we experience every day... I was amazed at how he could talk about something so meaningful to a bunch of kids he has never met..."

**STUDENT, AMHERST REGIONAL HIGH SCHOOL**

"Discussions after my talks have alerted me to some of my own unfair biases, given me important new insights, and a greater understanding about long held opinions and anger. My talks on behalf of VEP have benefited me as well as the students."

**PAUL SLATER, VEP WWII VETERAN SPEAKER**

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**PAUL SLATER, VEP WWII VETERAN SPEAKER**
A VALUABLE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCE

The Veterans Education Project (VEP) has been providing innovative and effective educational and violence awareness programs for teenagers since 1982.

M en and women veterans trained in our innovative Storytelling Approach share personal stories about their military service that teach young people important life lessons. VEP's Storytelling Approach has been successfully applied throughout western Massachusetts to complement a variety of classroom, guidance department, law enforcement and youth group programs.

VEP VETERANS' PRESENTATIONS:
- Enrich the academic study of history, civics or literature
- Address important youth issues such as violence, peer pressure, and sexual harassment
- Promote critical thinking, respect and self esteem
- Encourage tolerance and leadership
- Provide positive adult role models

VEP's approaches to addressing youth violence have won recognition from the National Council on Crime and Delinquency and from the Congressional Black Caucus of the U.S. Congress.

VEP's methods for teaching lessons about history and addressing issues related to violence are included in a national curriculum on the Vietnam War produced by the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund.

"I believe that the direct and personal involvement of groups like VEP is the only way to make [violence] prevention efforts a reality."

U.S. SENATOR JOHN F. KERRY

VEP'S PROGRAMS: OPTIONS FOR A VARIETY OF AUDIENCES

ORAL HISTORY
Supporting academic study
First hand experiential accounts engage students and bring history to life. VEP veterans impart a personal perspective, helping students to understand dramatic historic events and to grasp their relevance for today. They are trained to share their stories in ways that augment school curricula.

VETERANS' ORAL HISTORIES:
- Educate and inform about events such as Balkan peacekeeping missions, Desert Storm, the Vietnam War, the Korean War, the Cold War and World War II.
- Promote critical thinking about historical events and political decisions
- Illuminate the study of history and literature such as The Red Badge of Courage, For Whom the Bell Tolls, The Things They Carried, etc.

"It's like having people stepping off of the pages of history books and into the classroom in the flesh, up close and personal. Students can see the people who were actually involved."

CHAIR, SOCIAL STUDIES DEPT., PATHFINDER VOCATIONAL TECHNICAL H.S., PALMER

UNDERSTANDING VIOLENCE
Supporting school and community efforts to help youth confront violence
VEP veterans draw parallels between teenage violence and the experiences and lessons of the battlefield. The vets' honest and thoughtful reflections on surviving violence and coping with its aftershocks often earn the trust and respect of even aloof, hard-to-reach teens, including those in programs for delinquent youth.

UNDERSTANDING VIOLENCE PROGRAMS:
- De-glorify war and violence
- Illustrate the lasting emotional and physical costs of violence and trauma (both for victim and perpetrator)
- Reveal underlying motivations for teen violence and substance abuse; for example, "going along with the gang," earning respect, fear, alteration, etc.
- Promote the building of positive peer relations, respecting differences, managing one's anger, avoiding violence when possible, etc.
- Help counselors to address issues such as bullying, gang involvement, domestic violence, drug and alcohol abuse, racism and sexual harassment
- Offer community voices against violence: VEP veterans draw parallels between teen violence and the experiences and lessons of the battlefield. The vets' honest and thoughtful reflections on surviving violence and coping with its aftershocks often earn the trust and respect of even aloof, hard-to-reach teens, including those in programs for delinquent youth.

"For young people who have personally experienced violence, there is no substitute for adult models of survival who really understand what at-risk youth are experiencing..."

DIRECTOR, AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAM, GREENFIELD

PROGRAM FOR GIRLS
Women veterans supporting girls and young women in the community

WOMEN VETERANS' STORIES:
- Promote discussion about choices and consequences girls need to consider
- Look at the impact of power and violence, helping girls find a personal balance amid society's conflicting messages
- Reach out to boys as well, expanding their understanding and influencing their choices

Given the contradictory messages girls and young women hear all around them (Be strong, but not too strong. Be powerful, but feminine. Be independent, but submissive. . . ), how does a young woman find the right balance for herself?

Women in the military strongly experience all these contradictions. Performing at the highest levels of physical and emotional difficulty, they challenge women's exclusion from any sector of society, including combat. Still, they are confronted more frequently than in civilian life with sexual aggression and double standards. Their stories of navigating these challenges open the way for rich sharing and provide invaluable guidance for girls today.

"In adolescence especially, girls need the voices of women's experience to guide them while they encounter and negotiate issues of power and control, connection and disconnection. Psychologists say, 'It is important to note that the women with whom girls found it easy to speak their minds and their hearts were women who spoke from their own experience...""

BETWEEN VOICE AND SILENCE, JILL M. TAYLOR, CAROL GILLIGAN & AMY M. SULLIVAN
I Want to Help VEP Address Young People's Need to Confront Violence

In support of VEP’s veteran speakers telling their stories to youth, addressing violence, and promoting positive decision making:

I have enclosed my tax-deductible contribution of:

- $500  
- $250  
- $100  
- $50  
- $35  
- Other $___

☐ I would like to pledge $_____ each ___month, ___quarter, ___half year, totaling $_____ for this year.

Please contact me about ☐ volunteering with VEP ☐ arranging/attending a presentation ☐ making a gift of stock or securities.

Name

Address

Phone ☐ Please do not list my name when you publicly report gifts.

Thank You For Your Support.

Veterans Education Project, Inc. P.O. Box 416, Amherst, MA 01004 (413) 253-4947