

Practical Strategies for Engaging Veteran and Military-Affiliated Patrons at Your Library

Introductions



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Why Veteran and Military-Affiliated Patrons?



By the numbers:

- **1,335,848** Active Duty Service Members
- **1,551,972** Active Duty Family Members
- **800,064** Reserves and National Guard
- **1,015,386** Reserves/ National Guard Family Members
- **18,592,457** Veterans

[Resiliency leads to the Kentucky National Guard's first female infantry officer](#)
by [Kentucky National Guard Public Affairs Office](#) is in the public domain.

Source: National Center for Veterans Analysis and Statistics; Military OneSource Military Community Demographics

Libraries and Veteran and Military-Affiliated Patrons



[Library](#) by [Petty Officer 2nd Class Magen F Reed](#) is in the public domain.



[USAG Japan library holds Stuffed Animal Sleepover at the Library](#) by [Winifred Brown](#) is in the public domain.

Statewide Partnerships, Training, Programming, and Tools



Inclusive Statewide Programs



State of Connecticut Military Saves Week

Connecticut State Library

[Finance - Service to Veterans &
Military Families - LibGuides Home at
Connecticut State Library, Division of
Library Development
\(\[ctstatelibrary.org\]\(http://ctstatelibrary.org\)\)](#)



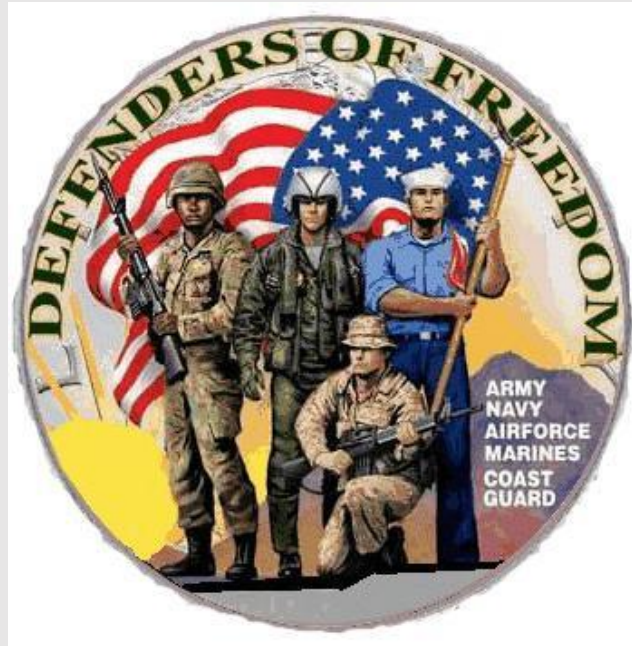
State Resources for Engaging Blind and Physically Disabled Veterans

Connecting Visually Impaired Veterans with Assistive Technology

Connecticut State Library for the
Blind and Physically Disabled



How to Engage Veterans and Military Families in a Public Library



Presented by Lee Ann Amend, Library Director for Sharon Public Library, Sharon, MA
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Where Do I Begin?

Choose Your Audience

- **Vietnam Veterans**
- **Post-Vietnam Veterans** (wars and campaigns that came after Vietnam such as: Desert Storm, Shield, Operation Iraqi Freedom, Operation Enduring Freedom, etc.)



Know Your Audience

Vietnam veterans

- Mostly **retired**, living on a fixed income, and have time to enjoy free programming
- They enjoy **military history** and other historical topics
- **Daytime programming** is easier for this older population
- Appreciates **being thanked for their service**
- Willing to **talk about their experiences with other veterans**

OIF, OEF and other post Vietnam veterans

- Most are **working** and have **families**
- **Don't feel comfortable being thanked** for their service and don't consider themselves heroes
- Most **prefer not to talk about their experiences**
- Many **suffer from PTSD** and other physical and emotional issues
- Have **difficulty applying for VA benefits**
- **Don't know what libraries have to offer**, and don't use them

Secure Funding for Your Program

Funding opportunities include:

- LSTA (Library Services and Technology Act)
- Humanities (state or national)
- Local Cultural Council Grants
- Friends of the Library
- Local businesses and restaurants (can often claim tax credit for their donations to a good cause)
- Other funds such as budget funding or other private grants



Planning Your Program



- Design your **first program for** military families to get the **largest audience** you can. You want to learn who they are, and what type of programs, services and information they would be interested in.
- Expect **parents, grandparents, siblings, spouses and children** of veterans to attend.
- Create a program that will **appeal to all ages** and **ask for volunteers**.
- **Choose a time and date** that doesn't coincide with another town-wide or sports program. Remember, **most OIF/OEF Vets are working**.

Promote and Publicize

- Create informational **flyers, brochures** and other materials.
- Send information out through your **website, email contacts, social and other local media sources.**
- Send information to the **schools, parent teacher organization, local veterans organizations,** and other groups.
- Create a **patron program registration form.** Keep contact list information for future use.



Image courtesy Sharon Public Library

Educate and Inform

- Remember, Veterans and their families **may not know what libraries offer**. Create an information brochure or packet of information for all ages.
- Display **technology and other “Library of Things”** items that patrons can check out. Ex. musical instruments, hotspots, laptops, headphones, e-readers, tools, sewing kits, hearing and sight equipment, games, STEM kits, grab & go kits for children, movies for all ages, books on applying for VA benefits, movies, etc.

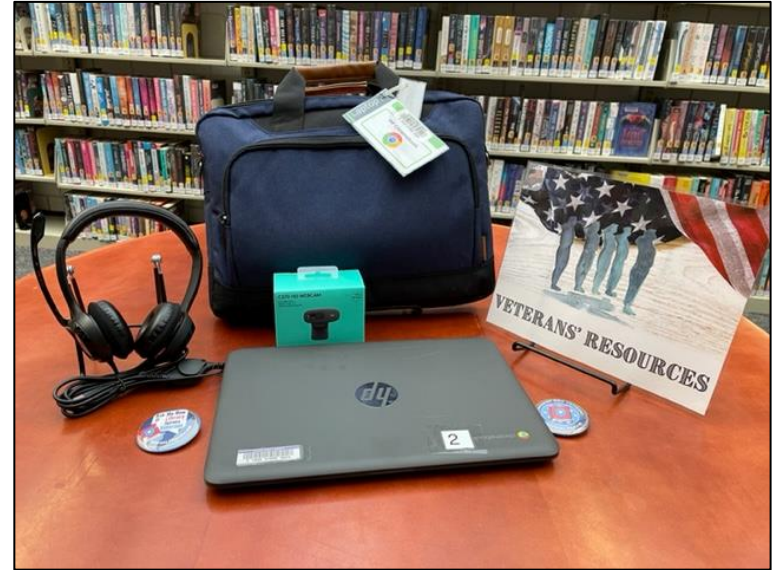


Image courtesy Sharon Public Library

Gather Information



Image courtesy Sharon Public Library

- Create a survey asking questions about services, programs and information that military families would attend. Include questions about timing of event, special speakers such as Veteran benefit experts, college admission counselors, etc.
- Distribute and request that it be completed before leaving the event.
- Create a sign-up sheet for those interested in joining a library sponsored veteran's club. Let them know they can have an opportunity to help plan and host events or programs.

Program Suggestion:

Musical Café for Military Families and Friends

- Consider hiring a band or DJ to play a variety of music.
- Contact local restaurants for appetizer donations for the event. Remind them about their tax deduction. Provide beverages.
- Make sure you have a host for the program to announce program activities.
- Invite and introduce the local veterans affairs officer and other members of local VA organizations to meet participants and distribute information.
- Partner with your Friends of the Library organization for help with the event.



Image courtesy Sharon Public Library

Musical Café for Military Families and Friends (continued)



Image courtesy Sharon Public Library

- Have children make themed decorations during the storytime/craft sessions a month before the event. Hang them up so parents can see their children's artwork.
- Plan activities for children in the children's room or other space.
- Invite the Youth Advisory Committee to plan activities for tweens and teens for the event. Provide snacks.
- Make sure all participants fill out the survey instrument before they leave.
- Thank everyone for their participation.

Thank Volunteers After the Event

Sharon Public Library Musical World Café

Thursday March 8th

6:30 to 9:00 PM

Sharon Pubic Library

11 North Main Street, Sharon, MA

The Musical World Café celebrates the 100th anniversary of Leonard Bernstein. Leonard Bernstein and his family owned a summer home on Lake Avenue in Sharon where he was inspired by Sharon's natural beauty.

To commemorate the life of Leonard and one of Leonard's greatest hits, "West Side Story", this program will feature finger foods from the following countries. **Israel, Russia, Puerto Rico and Italy.**

Performers showcased will each perform one piece by Leonard Bernstein plus selections from their own repertoire:

Sharon Community Chorus - "America"

Sharon Community Chamber Orchestra - "Maria" (Violin)

Canton American Legion Community Band - "Somewhere"

Mark Berney Trio - "Maria"

A special thanks to our sponsors for their food donations: Jennie's Creations, Southeastern Regional Vocational Technical High School, and others.

For information: contact Lee Ann Amend,
Library Director at Lamend@ocln.org or call
781-784-1578 x 1425

Sponsored by the Friends
of the Sharon Public Library

Building Successful Partnerships

Russell Library Veterans' Writing Group: We Were There



Images courtesy Russell Library

Veterans' Writing Group

“We Were There” is the Russell Library Veterans’ Writing Group that has been meeting since 2012.

This group has participants from all branches of service, and both men and women.



Image courtesy Russell Library

Partnerships

- Community Reads: One Book One Town
- Community Foundation of Middlesex County
- Connecticut Humanities
- Local Schools: 4th Graders Book Discussion

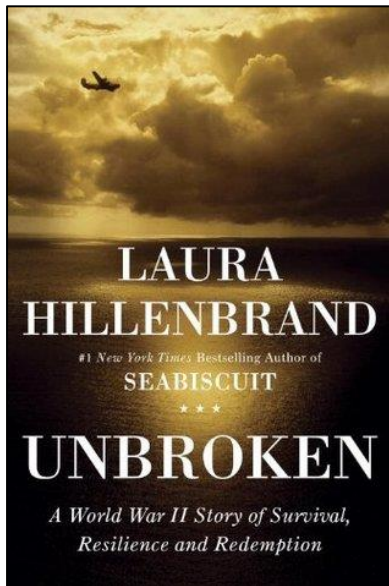
Christy Billings and Liz Petry: Facilitators

Partners in crime...(aka writing!)
for the Russell Library Veterans'
Writing Group: "We Were There."



Image courtesy Russell Library

One Book One Middletown Community Read

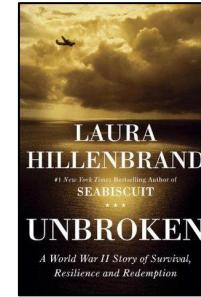


- Article in American Libraries Magazine: [Helping Warriors Unleash the Power of the Pen.](#)
- Planned to host a writing group for Veterans with Liz Petry, a local author, to model our writing group on the Veteran's Writing workshop written about in the article.
- Liz had taught college English and her husband was the commander of the Veterans of the Vietnam War in Middletown.

Writing Program



Image courtesy Russell Library



Prompts based on passages from
Unbroken by Laura Hillenbrand

1. A Person You Admire
2. Memorable Event or Place
3. Cultural Differences Encountered

At the end of three weeks, the writers wanted to continue.

We planned a format for the sessions and looked for funding.

Community Foundation Middlesex County



Image courtesy Russell Library



COMMUNITY
FOUNDATION
of Middlesex County

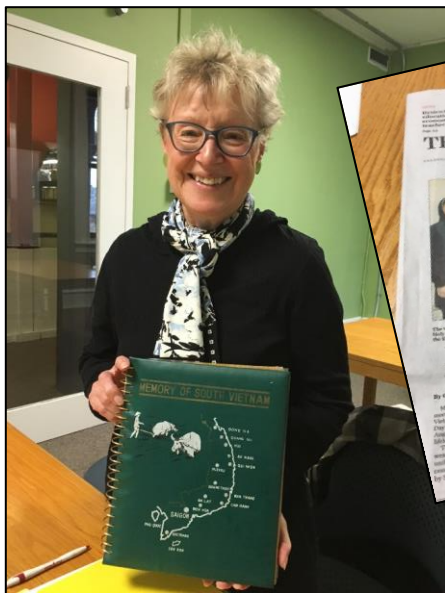
Philanthropy • Leadership • Legacy

The How of Our Weekly Meetings

Meeting Format (Pre-COVID)

- Agenda of discussion items. These include events the writers are attending, excerpts of podcasts or video clips, articles, book, magazine, or NYT articles/excerpts.
- Writers would read their work, and receive critiques or comments.
- Last 30 min would be writing on a prompt.

Veterans' Writing Group



Partnership CT Humanities

- With a grant, Author Craig Grossi and his dog Fred, who traveled home with him from Afghanistan came to the Middletown Military Museum.
- He held two sessions, one for the public, and one for the Veterans Writing Group.



Images courtesy Russell Library

Talking about the *Writing Process* with the Veterans and Craig and Fred



Images courtesy Russell Library



Virtual Book Discussion with Lawrence School 4th Graders and Russell Library Veterans

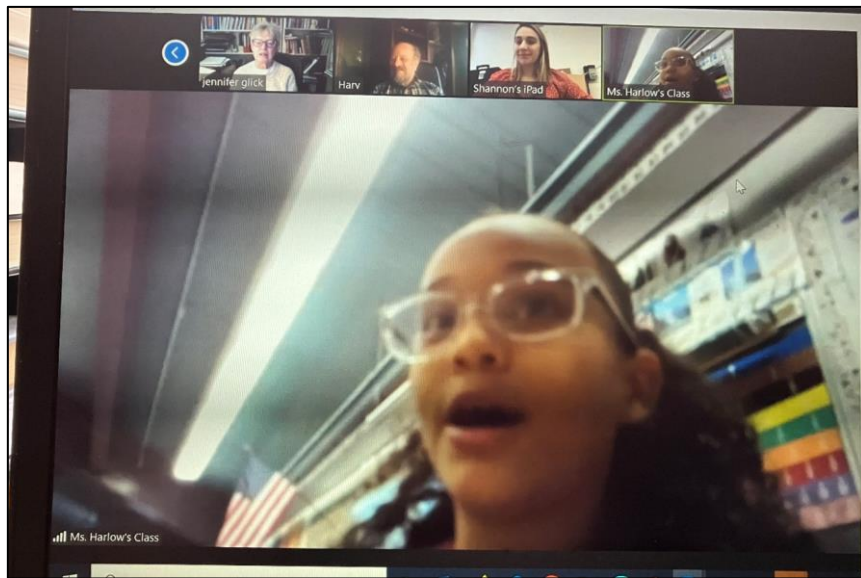


Image courtesy Russell Library



In Their Own Words

Jerry Augustine Army, Vietnam, 196th Light Infantry Brigade

"I almost lost my life six times....
I feel I had a guardian angel and got to come home.
There's a reason for me to be here because now I help out
Veterans."



Images courtesy Russell Library

Thank you from the Russell Library Veterans' Writing Group.



Image courtesy Russell Library

Libraries and Veterans Toolkit

Introducing the Toolkit

The Toolkit contains:

- Lesson plans
- Exhibit ideas
- Program outlines
- Collection development ideas
- Best practice documents
- and more!

The goal of the Toolkit is to help ease the way for those just getting started in this work - and to make it easier for those already engaged to find new ideas and new strategies to increase the success of their programs.

About the Toolkit

- Searchable and browsable
 - Type of library
 - Type of program or activity
 - Type of audience
 - Topic of program or activity
- CC BY-NC licensed

Serving those who served

These resources are created by experts in veteran services to assist you to develop programs for veterans at your own library.

Browse By

Library Type

Resource Type

Programming Audience

Topic

- [Academic Library](#)
- [Government Agency](#)
- [Military Library](#)
- [Public Library](#)
- [School Library](#)
- [VA Library](#)
- [Other Library Type](#)

Submit to the Toolkit

We welcome your additions. Please submit your program for entry.

Additional Resources

- [Resources and Bibliography](#)

Visit the Toolkit

<https://veterans.libguides.com>



Thank You to our Generous Sponsor



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Questions?

Or contact the Libraries & Veterans National Forum Project Team at
librariesveterans@gmail.com