

The National Service Ride Project

*Veterans strengthening and helping move America
forward through citizenship and service to community
and country*

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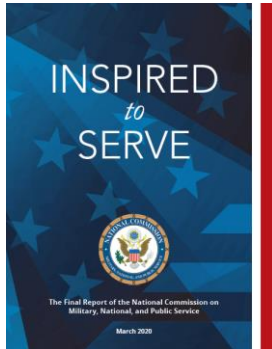




The Meaning and Value of Service

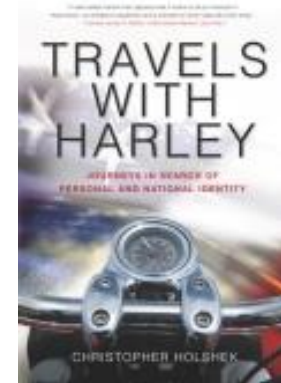
- [National Commission on Military, National, and Public Service](#) defines service as:

- “a personal commitment of time, energy, and talent to a mission that contributes to the public good by protection the Nation and its citizens, strengthening communities, or promoting the general social welfare...”
- “From the earliest days, service has been a central part of what it means to be an American. Civic engagement and service are critical to the health and well-being of the Nation; by bringing people together to tackle common problems, service makes communities stronger and strengthens American democracy.”



Travels with Harley – Journeys in Search of Personal & National Identity:

“It is only through service to others and personal engagement within and beyond the known worlds of our communities and our nation that we can gain a true sense of ourselves, refresh our own sense of a connective national identity, transcendent of social divisions, and keep them both balanced and strong.”



Meanwhile...

- Growing public interest in a national service bill and desire to overcome national divisiveness
- Growing school community service requirements, e.g., NY State Seal of Civic Readiness Program
- Growing recognition of the personal and collective values of service from the pandemic
- Growing youth interest in real connectivity and volunteerism



About the Project



- Adaptive, community-based service-learning initiative: veteran-related motorcycle groups ride to schools to mobilize youth interest in community service and synergize service-learning curriculum demand with supply of volunteering opportunities
- Main platform, developed with Orange County Youth Bureau, is a series of compounding resources to support a school-led service-learning curriculum strategy:
 - hour-long interactive service-learning seminar to motivate youths to serve
 - on-site service-learning fair to help youths interact with current volunteers to find and sign up for community-level service-learning opportunities that best suit them
 - virtual extension e.g., [Dutchess-Orange United Way Volunteer Portal](#), school social media
 - follow-on appearances – focus groups, motivational speakers, OC Youth Bureau seminars
- Interactive seminars utilize role models and peer examples to help youth better understand how community service helps them as well as their community and country
- Fosters an empowering and unifying narrative of citizenship, service and social responsibility to pass the baton of generational leadership – connecting service veterans looking to give back with young citizens looking to pay it forward
- Offers meaningful advancement to those in back of the classroom as well as the front: “servicship” (not just scholarship) as a path to social inclusion and economic success

Check out the [video](#), the [website](#) or [Facebook page](#)!



School Service-Learning Events - Seminar



- Provides motivational context for service-learning fairs – maximizes student interest in signing up for community service/volunteering as part of their annual school year plan
- Conversational and interactive – what is service and why does it matter to you
- Value proposition that runs from philosophical to practical reasons to serve
 - “Mindful moment of gratitude” – students read names of area veterans KIA since 9/11, then bridge to how civilian service honors veteran sacrifice (“a country worth defending”)
 - “Thank you for your service” – passed from military to police, fire, first responders, health care and social workers, educators, etc. to demonstrate service diversity and universality
 - Socializing service – moves from adult role models to peer exemplars (2 min. “elevator speech” on service experience, what it has meant to them, and what they got out of it), then ask for more storytellers from the floor – service becomes “cool”
 - “What’s in it for me?” – personal and professional benefits of service learning
 - Schools (and Youth Bureau) then explain:
 - Community service re: curriculum and graduation/award requirements - e.g., in support of [New York State Seal of Civic Readiness](#), as well as for the [National Honor Society](#), Boy/Girl Scouts, [JROTC](#) and other youth leadership programs
 - Service-learning fair concept, organizations and virtual service learning portal
- Community and public awareness component: school board/PTA briefings; local media coverage, student-faculty chats school social media – local organizations invited

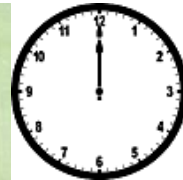




How the Seminars Round the Bases



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Thought Provocation – “What Is Service?”

- What is it and why does it matter?
- Stories of service - local role models to peer examples
- Not always the usual suspects



Value Proposition – “What’s In It for Me?”

- Personal and professional/career benefits
- Help yourself by helping others – self-esteem, human connection, and social inclusion
- Obtain skills, build resumes, and find vocations



Grounding and Focus

- “Mindful Moment” of gratitude
- The best way to thank veterans...
- “Thank you for your service” passed from military to civilians



Call to Action – Sign-Up to Service-Learning

- Review of school service curriculum requirements
- Heads-up on the Service-Learning Fair, organizations and web-based resources
- Goal: Sign kids up for community service!





Key Seminar Message Points



- The best way to honor veterans is to give them a country worth their service and sacrifice – and when you serve your community, you serve your country
- Service doesn't require a uniform, a change of address, or a good GPA
- Service is a way of living that belongs to all of us – there are many ways to serve, from random acts of kindness to full-service careers, and to see the service in what you already do
- Service helps you find out who you are and what you're about – builds self-esteem and character
- The most successful people are not always the smartest or the richest, but those most willing to learn – service is learning and leading; all it takes is courage and humility
- Service learning is a free way to personal growth, build a resume, obtain vital skills (teamwork, collaborative problem-solving, leadership/interpersonal), get references, and grow a network
- In today's service economy, service learning helps you become a more attractive investment
- You help yourself best by helping others – and get back much more than you give!
- Like charity, citizenship begins on the block – and good citizenship makes for good governance
- You can't save the world, but you can save your corner of it...
- You've heard their stories – what will yours be?





Service-Learning Fairs



- Provides easy-to-access, one-stop personal/virtual pathways to service learning
- Two components – on-site and virtual – maximum opportunity, minimum pressure
- School based full day Volunteer Fair event
 - One-on-one discussions with representatives from volunteer organizations
 - Participating organizations include - Volunteer Fire and Ambulance, Local Food Pantries, Warming Stations, Animal Shelters, Libraries, Therapeutic Riding Programs, Nursing Homes, and many more.
- Virtual extensions – e.g., [JustServe](#), [United Way Volunteer Portal](#) and school social media linked to local organizations
- Community resource to link organizations with (youth) volunteers at local level
- Schools and county youth bureaus can collect data on student participation to feed school reports on service-learning curriculum outcomes and verify graduation/program
- Students can obtain certificates of service and build resumes
- Great source of material and testimony for local, mass, and social media!





Organizational Partnering Scheme



Schools: It's Their Program

- Middle schools, high schools, community colleges, BOCES and universities
- Adaptive to school curriculum and schedules; organized with school admin, guidance, JROTC
- One-stop sourcing event to motivate and integrate students in the community
- Use of virtual platforms extend both the service-learning fair and opportunity access



Veteran Motorcycle Groups

- American Legion/VFW Riders, 'Nam Knights, Buffalo Soldiers, Rolling Thunder, Blue Knights...
- Great source of service role models – military, police, fire, first responders...
- Makes events highly visible and media-friendly
- Motorcycles appeal to freedom, adventure, finding identity, moving forward together...
- Enables greater veteran contact with youths

Local Organizations

- Veterans: American Legion, VFW, etc.
- Community: Interact, Kiwanis, Leos... volunteer groups (parks, police, fire, ambulance)
- Chambers of commerce – local, county
- County: Youth and community development – e.g., Orange County Youth Bureau
- State: Education, Youth, Environment, etc.
- National: Americorps, United Way, etc.





Shared Program Benefits



- Adaptable and flexible to fit the curriculum needs, aims and constraints of schools and veteran/community service organizations – helps VSOs/CSOs and volunteer organizations gain greater access to schools, attract younger members, and build organizational depth
- Schools like its “one-stop” motivate-and-integrate platform to connect youth with service-learning opportunities efficiently and effectively – enhancing educational outcomes to produce citizens who are positively engaged with their local communities.
- Low overhead, high impacts (short and long term) – brings together and synergizes like-minded and -limited organizational programs through shared goals and platforms
- Helps military veterans, police, firefighters, first responders, medical services, etc. connect with their communities in a positive and meaningful way, improving community relations and enhancing generational partnering – in order to “pass the baton of leadership”
- Mass and social media friendly platform – helps organizations raise public visibility and awareness, with impacts on branding, membership, volunteerism, and fundraising
- Instills a greater sense of community and national cohesion and resilience – helps mitigate related socioeconomic problems and the costs that come with them

Only one restriction – No politics, political leaders, or political groups!



Current Status



- Supported by Orange County NY American Legion & Legion Riders
- In partnership with the:
 - Hudson Valley Veterans Task Force
 - Hudson Valley Veteran Riders Network
 - Orange County Veterans Service Agency
 - Orange County Youth Bureau
 - Orange Ulster BOCES
- Schools committed in 2022-23 school year:
 - [Cornwall Central High School](#)
 - [Middletown High School \(New York\)](#)
 - [James I. O'Neill High School](#)
 - [Monroe Woodbury High School](#) (2021 and 2022)
 - [Pine Bush High School](#) (2021 and 2022 – Leadership & Law Academy)
 - [Port Jervis Senior High School](#) – and Port Jervis Elementary School in June 2022
 - [Valley Central High School](#)
 - [Washingtonville Central School District](#) (2021 and 2022)
 - Additional County and Hudson Valley schools in the works...
- Media coverage in the Hudson Valley
 - *Straus News* syndicate local newspapers
 - WJFF “Let’s Talk Vets,” WTbQ, WALL, WHUD, WPDH
 - *The Motorcycle Channel* – HUDSY network TV series; TV12 news





Lessons So Far



- Incorporate these events, the NSR and Youth Bureau capacities, and virtual platforms into a comprehensive annual service-learning curriculum strategy – avoid *ad hoc* approaches!
- Socialize the strategy with the faculty, Board, PTA (esp. parents), student groups, and community – use local/school media and student journalists to build support and momentum
- Front-load the Volunteer Service-Learning Seminar and Fair into the first (or last) part of the school year so students can include community service in current (or next) school year plans – have follow-on seminars, guest/motivational speakers, focus meetings, etc. through the year
- Separately schedule the Volunteer Seminar and Fair by at least one day – best venues are the school auditorium (seminar) and gym (fair); video the seminar to show on school TV
- Focus on freshman/sophomores at high schools; consider seminars at middle schools
- Don't overlook veterans service organization resources – youth programs, veteran assistance service-learning opportunities, motivational speakers, scholarships, awards, etc.
- Same for chambers of commerce (local businesses) for service-learning opportunities
- Avoid/minimize political leader involvement in public events to mitigate politicization



Way Ahead



- *Locally...*
 - Expansion from Orange County, NY into Lower and Mid-Hudson Valley
 - Development of a county “servicship” award
 - Events at NYMA and U.S. Military Academy – involvement of cadets?
 - Grow local/regional media interest and coverage – print, radio, television

- *New York State...*
 - Continue local/regional socialization NY Veterans Organizations (American Legion, Veterans of Foreign Wars, etc.)
 - Introduce this initiative to our NYS partners serving youth throughout the State
 - Prepare and conduct orientation/training seminars (on-site and online) for regional and state organizations interested in adopting the project locally
 - Conduct follow-on consultations, on-site and online, winter 2022-23

- *Nationally...*
 - Grow national media interest through New York City based media
 - Visit/inform (non-political) Washington-based organizations

- *Long-term:*
 - Make the National Service Ride project a National Veterans Organizational program (e.g., American Legion Riders, VFW Riders, etc.)



How You Can Help



- Help us get the word out to
 - Schools Districts, Faculty, Boards of Education, BOCES, PTA/PTO
 - Recruit Veteran/Community Organizations, Volunteer/Advocacy Groups, Chambers of Commerce, etc.
 - Generate mass and social media interest



- Join the NSR social media pages/groups, “like” and share NSR posts, and post or send your stories of service and related activities (*again: No politics!*)



Questions?

