

## History and Awards

The Veterans Education Project was founded in 1982 by Vietnam veterans and local educators who saw the value of veterans sharing their personal stories in area classrooms. Since its founding, VEP has grown from a few veterans providing a handful of presentations to an organization with 35 volunteers who offer presentations in schools and public venues each year. To our knowledge, VEP's educational mission is unique among veterans' groups in our region and nationally.



In 2009, VEP received the Paragon Award from a partnership of leading Hampshire County businesses and organizations, in recognition of its veteran volunteers' outstanding record of community service. At the national level, VEP's innovative work with at-risk youth earned citations from the Black Congressional Caucus of the U.S. Congress and the National Council on Crime and Delinquency.

## How can you get involved and support VEP's unique mission?

- Tell the VEP story to friends and family, including veterans you know
- Attend VEP events; see our website for listings
- Make a tax deductible donation
- For more information, please contact us at [vep@crocker.com](mailto:vep@crocker.com)

*The Veterans Education Project relies solely on the generosity of individual donors, businesses, and grants. Your tax-deductible donation will help VEP continue its unique educational mission. Thank you.*



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[www.vetsed.org](http://www.vetsed.org)



## Helping the next generation understand the realities of war while supporting veterans and their families



*"These speakers make history come alive for the students. Their presentations give unique first hand, primary source information and perspectives."  
~ History Teacher,  
Turners Falls High School*

The Amherst-based Veterans Education Project (VEP) trains military veterans to share their personal stories of combat and military service in ways that reveal war's realities, sacrifices and human costs. These men and women served in theaters that include World War II, Vietnam, Iraq and Afghanistan. They volunteer to speak in VEP programs at schools and other venues throughout the Pioneer Valley.

VEP presentations put a human face on the men and women who served, and shed light on current events in distant war zones. The stories are compelling, poignant, sad and funny. They are always eye-opening and unforgettable.

[www.vetsed.org](http://www.vetsed.org)

## VEP programs make an impact across Western New England

VEP offers as many as 140 presentations per year to area schools, youth programs, human service organizations and public audiences. Our volunteers and staff contributed more than \$20,000 of time and free services to our schools and communities. VEP is an independent nonprofit that receives no government or VA funding. Most school and community programs are offered free of charge.



*"Sharing your stories and putting your life out for us to judge and feel is amazing and takes great courage."*

*"I am completely inspired by you and your actions as human beings. Please come back!"*  
~ Student, Amherst Regional High School

## School and Youth Programs

VEP speakers visit high schools, middle schools and colleges, offering programs in history, English and psychology classes, and in assemblies.

Some of our war veterans present to groups of at-risk youth in public schools and in juvenile jail programs. No matter where they speak, VEP veterans offer students important life lessons and positive role models.

*"When veterans from the VEP share their innermost experiences, firsthand, the students are changed forever."*

~ English teacher, Smith Vocational and Agricultural H.S.



Photos: (front cover) Jim Monroe, U.S. Marine Corps, Vietnam; (this page, clockwise): Victor Nunéz Ortiz, U.S. Marine Corps, Iraq; Cherie Rankin, U.S. Red Cross, Vietnam; George Williams, U.S. Army, Vietnam; Paul Slater, U.S. Navy, WWII; (back cover) Pete Rogers, U.S. Army, Vietnam; Don Chevannes, U.S. Army, Vietnam

## Community Presentations and Workshops

Since 9/11, VEP veterans have spoken in many public venues, and have offered workshops that teach social workers, clergy, and medical professionals about the issues and problems confronting veterans returning from war zones.



## Support for Our Military Families

During the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, local military families have faced the dual challenges of loved ones deploying overseas, then returning to struggle with reintegration back into family and civilian life. VEP has provided these families both peer support and opportunities to share their experiences in VEP speakers' programs.

*"... to be able to walk into a room full of people that understood what I was going through was such a relief... a wonderful, supportive experience."* ~ Annie Diamond, military mother of an Iraq veteran, co-founding member of our military family support program

*"Your workshop [on veterans, military families and PTSD] was the best I've been to in 17 years on the faculty here."* ~ Psychology professor, Graduate Program, Union Institute

## The Healing Power of Stories

While the mission of VEP's speakers is to serve their community, speaking at VEP programs has helped veterans and military families to heal emotional wounds. Sharing personal experiences and insights of war also connects VEP's volunteers with the community in many positive ways.

*"I have had help and support when a tough issue arises or when memories from my experiences follow me at night... I have had the chance to explore, share and analyze where I have been and where I am going."* ~ An Army Reservist, emailing VEP from his third tour in Iraq



Photo courtesy of Springfield, Republican