Wisconsin Vietnam War Stories is a partnership of the Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs, Wisconsin Historical Society and Wisconsin Public Television.
REEL to REAL: WISCONSIN VIETNAM WAR STORIES

Many are surprised to discover the abundance of thought-provoking films on Wisconsin Public Television (WPT)-films dealing with race and diversity, social justice, history, the arts, education and civic engagement. These topics resonate in communities throughout Wisconsin and they get people talking. In 2010, the partners who brought you the award-winning Wisconsin World War II Stories and Wisconsin Korean War Stories are presenting the stories of Wisconsin’s Vietnam veterans with Wisconsin Vietnam War Stories.

Reel to Real: Wisconsin Vietnam War Stories will engage the community by providing tools supporting local screening and discussion events featuring the film, local veterans and historians, bridging the gap between viewing the series, and creating community dialogue and action to honor the veterans and discover the impact of this war in their local community. Each event is designed to meet the individual and community at its core. Participation in these community events has impacted issue discussion, community participation, and library and station involvement.

Funding for Reel to Real comes from a grant from the 2009-2010 UW-Extension Program Innovation Fund and the Alliant Energy Foundation. For more information on Reel to Real: Wisconsin Vietnam War Stories (or any of our Reel to Real events), please contact Lynne Blinkenberg at lynne.blinkenberg@wpt.org. Reel to Real is a partnership of Wisconsin Public Television and the Wisconsin Library Association.

Special thanks to Jeffery Kollath of the Wisconsin Veterans Museum.
Wisconsin Vietnam War Stories

More than 57,000 Wisconsin men and women served in Southeast Asia during the Vietnam War. Their stories will provide valuable insight into a war that continues to profoundly affect our culture, politics, and the lives of Wisconsin’s Vietnam War veterans and their families.

Like many veterans, Vietnam War veterans have been reluctant to share their experiences. Because of the controversy surrounding the Vietnam War and the often hostile response on their return home, Vietnam veterans have carried a greater burden. Few were thanked or welcomed home. They put away their uniforms and tried to put away their memories, but these are memories that cannot be forgotten.

This project gives these veterans a voice to share their stories so that we can better understand their experience and the Vietnam War’s effect on all our lives.

As veterans speak of their memories, their struggles and their losses, the documentary offers a perspective of military service that is neither romanticized nor demonized, it is simply humanized. Wisconsin Vietnam War Stories is a long-form television documentary that will premiere in spring of 2010 on WPT, followed by airings across the Midwest and around the nation, streaming on the wisconsinstories.org web site, and available on DVD. The program’s three hours will include the personal stories of Wisconsin veterans who served in Vietnam and Southeast Asia during the war. As was shown in our Wisconsin WWII Stories and Wisconsin Korean War Stories projects, no account of war is more compelling and moving than the too vivid memories of those men and women who experienced it firsthand. In the case of Vietnam, the so-called “TV War” brought the conflict into America’s living rooms, but these are stories that have not been heard. Until now, the Vietnam veterans haven’t had an opportunity to share their accounts of valor, pride of service, devotion to duty and the intensely personal stories of loss. The stories may not change people’s views of the war, but will change our view of the men and women who fought it. It will challenge the conventional image of the Vietnam veteran and replace it with the more accurate representation of neighbors, civic leaders, successful businessmen and contributing citizens. And it will make all too clear the disservice they received when they returned home.

The documentary will be structured as three one-hour programs, focusing respectively on the buildup of American involvement in Southeast Asia from the mid-1950s to 1967, the turbulent and tide-turning period surrounding 1968 and the long wind-down to the fall of Saigon in 1975. Over the course of these years, in vastly different areas of operation that ranged from mountains to tropical jungles, facing both guerilla and conventional foes, Wisconsin veterans were there every step of the way, and their combined stories portray the nature and flow of the war.
Project Components

A PERMANENT ARCHIVE
The documentary and supplementary material will draw from more than 100 extended interviews with Wisconsin Vietnam veterans. These extended interviews will record the veterans’ stories, covering the span of their military service, their return home and how their experience has shaped their lives. The archive will become a permanent addition to the collections of the Wisconsin Veterans Museum and available to researchers and life-long learners.

LZ LAMBEAU, A WELCOME HOME WEEKEND
In an effort to right a wrong that has lingered for more than 40 years, the partners will be joined by the Green Bay Packers, the city of Green Bay, the State of Wisconsin and the sovereign Indian nations of Wisconsin to provide our Vietnam veterans with a welcome home that was denied them when they returned from their service. Designed in conjunction with veterans and veterans service organizations, Wisconsin's Vietnam veterans and their families will be invited to a weekend of activities that will include a motorcycle ride across the state from La Crosse to Green Bay, concerts, a welcoming parade, the "Moving Wall," Vietnam War exhibits and vehicles/helicopters, photo galleries and social reunions. The event will culminate with the veterans and their families filling Lambeau for an official welcome home, musical and spoken word performances and a screening of excerpts from Wisconsin Vietnam War Stories on the Tundravision.

A special outreach effort will encourage the participation of the families of the more than 1,200 Wisconsinites who did not return from the war and the families of those returned veterans who did not live long enough to be welcomed home.

COMPANION WEB SITE wisconsinstories.org
Built as a lasting resource for the state and Wisconsin’s veterans, the site will include streaming media, transcript excerpts, veterans’ letters and memoirs, links to useful resources, organizations and a bibliography—all added to the partners’ popular Wisconsin history Web site. The site taps the extensive holdings of the Wisconsin Historical Society and the Wisconsin Veterans’ Museum to make these materials always available and encourage contribution of additional stories from Wisconsin’s Vietnam veterans and facilitate connection to veterans groups in Wisconsin.

COMPANION BOOK
Building on the stories of the Vietnam veterans featured in the documentaries, the Wisconsin Historical Society (WHS) Press will publish a companion book of extended excerpts from the interview transcripts offering a fuller picture of the individual stories of Wisconsin’s Vietnam veterans. The book will include personal photos and the moving accounts of the veterans’ service and sacrifice. Authored by Sarah Larsen and Jennifer Miller, the book will be released in May 2009.
COMPANION PORTRAIT EXHIBIT
Photographic portraits of Vietnam veterans featured in the project will be mounted as exhibits for libraries, museums and community groups seeking to honor their Vietnam veterans.

COMPANION CURRICULUM
Funded by a Teaching American History Grant from the Federal Department of Education, the Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs and its Wisconsin Veterans Museum will work in partnership with the University of Wisconsin Madison Department of History, Madison Area Technical College, and social studies educators from around the state to build lesson plans and activities. These curricular resources on the Vietnam War will be made available to Wisconsin primary and secondary school teachers. The activities will assist teachers and students in gaining a better understanding of the war as a whole. Some of the topics will include an overview of the Vietnam War, the politics of the era and the culture of the 1960s. Copies of primary source materials will accompany each lesson plan.

THE PRODUCTION TEAM
Producer Mik Derks has been telling stories in Wisconsin for 30 years. Before joining WPT in 1995 to produce documentaries, he worked in film (Poster/Derks Moving Pictures), radio (Wisconsin Public Radio), print (Petersen’s PhotoGraphic Magazine, Lens) and theater (American Players Theatre). At WPT, Mik produced segments for the history series, Wisconsin Stories, the award winning Wisconsin World War II Stories, Wisconsin Korean War Stories and Hometown Stories: Green Bay – all produced in partnership with the Wisconsin Historical Society (WHS).

Videographer Butch Soetenga has been a cinematographer, videographer and editor for WPT since 1972. He worked as videographer and editor for Wisconsin World War II Stories and Wisconsin Korean War Stories. He was drafted into the army in 1966 and served in Vietnam from April 1967 to May 1968. He returned to Vietnam in 1989 to work on a documentary, Legacy of War.

Sound Recordist Tom Naunas has an extensive background as a musician and composer. He holds a Bachelors of Arts from Penn State and Master’s Degree in South Asian Studies from the University of Wisconsin. He worked on the Academy Award-nominated The War At Home (1979) and Wild by Law (1992). His music compositions and sound design have won numerous awards including a 2004 Emmy for Wisconsin WWII Stories: The Pacific.

The team of Derks, Soetenga and Naunas have led the production of Wisconsin World War II Stories and Korean War Stories. They worked closely with the staff of the WHS and the Wisconsin Veterans Museum in completing in-depth interviews with more than 170 Wisconsin veterans, archiving those interviews as a resource for future generations.
WISCONSIN VIETNAM WAR STORIES: THE PARTNERS

The Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs (WDVA) provides veterans loans, grants and health benefits. The agency is a pioneer in the delivery of improved services to veterans and operates one of the most progressive and comprehensive benefits systems in the United States. The agency also operates the Wisconsin Veterans Museum to offer educational programs focusing on the role of state citizens in America’s military past.

The Wisconsin Veterans Museum and its parent agency work to commemorate, acknowledge and affirm the role of state citizens and American military history. Nearly 100,000 people visit the museum annually and the state’s veteran community of nearly 450,000 men and women take an active interest in its support. The Veterans Museum has earned state and national recognition for the high quality of its exhibits and educational programs and has recently opened a new archival research center and a display gallery focusing on the history of the Wisconsin National Guard.

Wisconsin Historical Society, founded in 1846, serves as the archives of the State of Wisconsin, and is designated as an official documents depository by the governments of Wisconsin, the United States and Canada. The Society houses the largest library in the world dedicated exclusively to North American history, and maintains a museum, area research centers and a statewide system of historic sites. Collections include books, periodicals, maps, manuscripts, audio and graphic materials, clothing, archaeological artifacts, movie, television and theater records, government papers and a newspaper collection second in size only to the Library of Congress. The Society also administers a broad program of historic preservation, school services, and publishes a wide variety of historical materials, both scholarly and popular. For more than 12,000 members of the Society and more than 4,000,000 people served each year, the WHS is a vital, powerful reminder of the value in preserving our past.

Wisconsin Public Television is the only non-commercial television service committed to exploring and encouraging discussion on issues and events unique to Wisconsin audiences. It is a statewide service of six stations, six translators and three affiliate stations, broadcasting 18 hours a day, 365 days a year. It is available free of charge on broadcast television. In addition, more than 185 cable systems carry WPT to subscriber homes. WPT’s loyal audiences make it one of the highest-ranking PBS services nationwide, reaching more one million viewers each week. WPT is supported in part by more than 60,000 families and 200 corporate underwriters.

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VIETNAM WAR FACT SHEET:

2,594,000
U.S. Troops from Wisconsin who served in Vietnam: *
165,400
Surviving disabled Vietnam Veterans *
11%
Average age of the Vietnam War GI: †
19

US Casualties †
Killed in Action 47,418
Non-hostile Deaths 10,811
Hospitalized Wounded 153,329
Non-hospitalized Wounded 150,375
Missing in Action 2338 (at war’s end)
Prisoners of War 766 (114 died in captivity)

Wisconsin Casualties
Killed in Action ‡ 1241
– Missing in Action # 37

Timeline 1950 – 1975 †
MAR 1965 Operation Rolling Thunder begins bombing raids on North Vietnam.
MAR 1966 Operation Game Warden begins U.S. Navy inland waterway interdiction.
OCT 1968 Operation Rolling Thunder Ends.

DEC 1970  U.S.Navy ends inland waterway combat.

Throughout 1972  Operation Linebacker/Linebacker I/Linebacker II. Concentrated bombing of North Vietnam.


APR 1975  Fall of Saigon to the army of North Vietnam.

SOURCES:
† Vietnam War Combat Chronology: A Special Publication of VFW Magazine, 2002
‡ Wisconsin Historical Society
* Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs
# The Highground list of Vietnam casualties
PLANNING YOUR REEL TO REAL: WISCONSIN VIETNAM WAR STORIES EVENT

WATCH THE OUTREACH DVD:
Take notes on the important issues you’d like to address. Are there any controversial topics to be aware of? Is this film appropriate for all ages? What aspects of the film pertain to your local community? Who in your community would be your “audience” for the event? How would this event connect to and extend your organization’s mission?

FIND YOUR COMMUNITY PARTNERS
Collaborating with other individuals and community organizations can simplify your planning and add meaning to your event. Folks who have firsthand experience with the subject of your discussion can advise you on how to structure the event to increase its impact. Also, they may have connections with community members you would like to attract to your event.

A variety of viewpoints will enrich your project and ease your workload at the same time. Partners can take on tasks you are not comfortable performing or don’t have the necessary experience (or time) to perform. None of us can be experts in every topic, so it’s beneficial to find folks who will lend their expertise in support of your event.

Before you approach a potential community partner, consider the following:
- Decide how many partners you’d like to work with. A group that’s too large may take more time than you have to spend.
- Consider the event from a potential partner’s point of view. Is there a natural connection?
- Assess the partner’s availability. If they’re overbooked, keep them in mind for next time.
- Ask partners for suggestions of who else they think should join the effort
- Can the topic of your program be tied to any events in the community that other organizations are already sponsoring? If so, talk to those organizations.
- Decide what role(s) you’d like a partner to play before approaching them. It’s easier to attract and motivate a partner when it’s clear they’re providing a necessary function.

Put together your group of community partners at the start of your planning. Partners will feel stronger ownership in the event if they’ve been able to contribute to it from its inception.

Community partners can contribute to the event in a variety of ways. For example, they can:
- Provide expertise on the discussion topic or contribute their experience in fundraising, event planning, group dynamics, publicity or evaluation.
- Act as facilitator or suggest others who could play this role
- Publicize the event by speaking at events around the community
- Provide staff or volunteers to help support the project
- Help distribute invitations or flyers

Some places to look for potential community partners:
- Check with local colleges, universities, and University of Wisconsin-Extension offices for people who might serve as community partners. Also, you'll find people there who study or work with conflict resolution. These folks are excellent resources to serve as, or help train, facilitators.
- Local historical societies
- County Veterans Service Officer (CVSO): http://dva.state.wi.us/CVSO.asp#cvso
- Schools
- Churches
- Retirement/Senior Centers

Once you've created your group of partners, meet with them to decide what roles they will play. Partners can contribute to the event in many different ways, such as:
- Act as facilitator or guest speaker at the event, or recruit others to play this role
- Provide expertise on the topic and guide decisions about event goals and format.
- Contribute to planning and/or hosting the event, including fundraising, logistics, publicity and post-event follow-up.
- Provide a location for the event or furnish refreshments.
- Donate in-kind services such as access to press lists, photography and audio, etc.
- Distribute information about the event to their membership, general public or the press.
- Help with printing and materials preparation.
- Distribute materials at event and/or collect and coordinate event evaluations
- Publicly endorse the event and/or include their name in event publicity.

CHOOSE YOUR EVENT FORMAT
Consider the resources you have to devote to this event (e.g. time, calendar, volunteers, partners, space, public relations efforts, funding, etc.) Given your resources, what type of event would best serve your intended audience and fits your time, energy level and needs? Some examples:
- Screen entire DVD in a single evening followed by large-group discussion. Invite community leaders to join discussion.
- Divide the DVD into segments and screen one segment each week for a month. End each event with small-group discussion.
- Screen the DVD as one event in a series of community events devoted to topic.
- Invite community organizations that are invested in the film topic to attend the screening. After the film, invite audience members to talk with the organizations about possible action steps.
LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION
If possible, choose a venue or create a space within a venue that is welcoming and accessible to all. Community centers such as libraries, neighborhood centers or schools are often great choices provided the space is suitable to the event format. The general rule to selecting a venue is to “go to your intended audience; don’t make them come to you.” For example, an exclusive club or private space can be off-putting for some and could keep them from attending.

Some things to consider when choosing a venue:
- Is the location easy to find?
- Is it accessible to people with disabilities?
- Is it available for pre-event site visits?
- Is there a contact person?
- Is it available for a large enough block of time if your event runs overtime?
- Is the room the right size for your event?
- Is there an appropriate electrical system for audio/visual equipment?
- Is there access to a kitchen and/or child care?
- Is it served by public transportation?
- Is there enough parking?

FIND A DATE AND CONFIRM
When is the best date to hold this event? Are there local conflicts that might affect the date(s) you choose? What is the best time of day for your targeted participants?

Once you find a date, confirm with your partners. Give them a call or write them an e-mail reminding them of their participation and next steps.

CREATE A BUDGET
Some things to include are:
- Location rental fee/charges
- Staffing needs
- Promotion (mailings, stationary, printing/copying, graphic design, postage, newspaper advertising and public service announcements)
- Photography
- Food
- Transportation
- Audio/visual equipment rental
- Fees for guest speakers and/or facilitator
- Photocopying and printing costs for handouts or other materials to be distributed at event

PLAN THE DISCUSSION
You and your partners will need to decide what format your discussion will take. For example, do you want the audience to discuss the topic as a large group with one facilitator guiding them? Or would you rather they share in small-group discussion that allows each participant more opportunity to speak?
If you invite guest speakers, how will they be involved in the discussion? Will they present first in front of the audience and then participate in a discussion that follows? You could also invite a guest speaker to rotate around the room to answer any questions audience members may have as they discuss in small groups.

Once you and your partners decide the general format of the discussion, you will need to consider the **spatial configuration** that best suits that format. If you want the participants to be able to see each other, you'll need to move the chairs into a circle. If you don't have chairs that move, you'll need to come up with a different configuration. Or if you choose to have guest speakers, you will need to create a place for them to present that can be seen by everyone.

The most powerful discussion is one in which all participants feel welcome to express their individual views, to ask questions of one another, and to fully engage in the dialog. We've found that certain configurations encourage this type of participation. Participants who are seated in a **circle** tend to listen more carefully and be more willing to share their thoughts. In a circle, everyone is included and anyone is in the position to speak.

**EVENT SIGNAGE, AUDIENCE HANDOUTS AND OTHER DETAILS**

The final details of choosing signage for an event or creating handouts for the audience may feel unimportant. Actually, these details can make a major difference in the impact of the event. Signs can turn an event space into a place that feels welcoming. And handouts with background info and resources make it easier for the audience members to continue the discussion after they've left the event. You and your partners should consider these details and decide who will take on the responsibilities. Here's a list of needs to think about:

- Creating and bringing event signage
- Creating and collecting materials to use as audience handouts
- Creating an event sign-in sheet/running the sign-in table
- Setting up literature table or display
- Setting up the space/cleaning up afterwards
- Greeting audience and distributing audience materials
- Distributing and collecting post-event evaluations
- Greeting/escorting/introducing the facilitator and other guest speakers
- Escorting the press
- Providing food (if applicable)
- Providing child care (if applicable)
- Running audio/visual equipment
- Closing the event and recognizing partners

Once you agree on the details of the event, create an event schedule and list of responsibilities and give a copy to all involved.
FIND YOUR FACILITATORS AND OTHER GUEST PARTICIPANTS
You and your community partners may decide to find others to facilitate or speak at the event. If so, invite your partners to recommend people. Don’t be afraid to ask questions about the potential person and/or ask for a short bio. You need to be comfortable that the person will fit the event and can do the job assigned. This is especially true if you’re paying the person.

Local University, College or Secondary School faculty members could also serve as “guest participants.” However, don’t rely entirely on academics to play this role. Instead, expertise should be defined broadly. The best discussions are generated not only by people who study the topics of your discussions, but also by people who have lived them.

Although you may be reluctant to ask people to talk publicly about their personal experience with a difficult public issue, people are often happy to have a welcoming forum in which they can make their stories known. While it’s always a good idea to include people in the room who can provide basic facts and history, the conversations are most likely to engage people and remain in their memories if they revolve around stories heard in person from actual people.

Whenever possible, invite relevant public officials to become involved in the project and/or to attend the event. Their involvement confers credibility on the event, and very often encourages some people to attend who would not otherwise. Many people view talk as just talk and not a step toward action. But when they know a public official will be in the room, the possibility for significant change is increased and therefore also the incentive to attend.

When public officials are in attendance, encourage them to sit among all the participants, not in front of them. If you’re asking everyone to sit in a circle for the discussion, the officials should as well. The mere position of a public official connotes speaker, not listener, but officials have as much to learn in these situations as ordinary citizens (even though they may be unaware of that fact at the beginning of the event). The community will benefit most if the event can truly become an opportunity for listening to as wide an array of perspectives as possible, not just a chance for officials to tell community members what decisions they have made and why.

Depending on the topic of the discussion, you will need to find spokespeople for “both sides” of a topic. Sometimes it’s not possible but it’s important to try if you want a balanced discussion that welcomes all viewpoints.

Be sure to meet the facilitator or guest participant before the event. At that meeting, communicate the goals of the event and discuss whatever topics you want covered. Provide as much background information as possible so the facilitator has a clear picture of what you need.
Important considerations when working with veterans

The Emotional Aftermath of War:

As veterans speak about their wartime experiences, there may be times when the emotions associated with these past experiences become very raw for them and close to the surface. It may seem odd that so many years later there is this display of raw emotion.

Why are emotions still so raw when this event was so many years ago?

First of all these are normal reactions. It is normal for human beings to react to war's psychic trauma with feelings of fear, anger, grief and horror, as well as with emotional numbness and disbelief. Human beings have longterm, sometimes overwhelming reactions to seeing the trauma of war, death and destruction; the mind just isn’t prepared to process things that are so far removed from normal daily life. Although the same type of post-war symptoms have been recognized since the “Soldier’s Heart” of the Civil War veterans, little was known about Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and the psychological aftermath of wartime experiences. In the United States, the Vietnam War has produced the largest percentage of PTSD cases. In fact, it was after studies of Vietnam veterans were added to studies of civilian post-trauma sufferers that the American Psychiatric Association created, in 1980, the diagnostic category: post-traumatic stress disorder (acute, chronic, and/or delayed). After the Vietnam War, veterans with PTSD were portrayed as dangerous with symptoms out of control or dangerous. Those experiencing troubling symptoms were unlikely to discuss them.

World War II veterans were greeted as heroes and the post-war economy lead them to make a successful entry back into civilian life. It was much different for Vietnam War veterans. The Vietnam War was like no other in American history. The average age of the combat soldier was 19, not 26 as in World War II. The military flew soldiers into duty as individuals not as teams. Once there, nothing seemed straightforward. Those already fighting did not readily accept arriving soldiers. The enemy was not easily identifiable or necessarily in uniform; women and children could kill you in the streets. Women and children civilians were, therefore, sometimes killed by U.S. soldiers. There was no "front line," and soldiers had to win the same territory over and over again. Leadership was young and inexperienced. The object was to kill as many people as possible and survive.

The coming home process of the Vietnam soldier failed to account for the mind's need to assimilate this experience in a slow-paced manner. After 12 to 13 months of combat duty, the military flew soldiers back to the states in a matter of hours and, again, as isolated individuals rather than as teams. This is in stark contrast to the weeks or sometimes months that World War II veterans spent on ships returning to the U.S., while sharing time with other soldiers close to them. In 48 hours the Vietnam combat soldier could go from a unit assault in which he killed four North Vietnamese soldiers...
with an M-16 to sitting on the front steps of his parents’ house in the U.S. While in Southeast Asia, soldiers would dream of that day. But when it arrived they weren’t prepared. The American people for the first time in history turned against its war and the returning soldiers. Anti-war marches replaced ticker-tape parades. A soldier in uniform on the streets of our country might be spat on. The heroes were now the villains.

It is not uncommon for those affected to have developed their own coping mechanisms that have allowed them to function in civilian life for many years. It is also not uncommon for these coping mechanisms to become less effective as years pass and they experience the changes that accompany aging. New grief, hopeless, or feelings of being overwhelmed can serve to “trigger” old events.

Be Prepared
Speaking in public and/or being interviewed is stressful to many. Even if the topic were less overwhelming, the act of talking in front of other people or a camera is stressful. Now, add to that the reality that this is the first time they have told the story of their experiences in battle to anyone. Well, you get the picture.

If someone experiences sadness or other emotional reactions as they relate their experiences to you that does not mean they are suffering from PTSD. Anyone who has ever experienced a great personal loss knows the feeling of sadness and tearfulness that can easily occur when you recall a special memory of a loved one who has died, the length of time between the death and the present does not lessen this melancholy.

Empathy, not sympathy, is needed when listening to stories of combat.

Some helpful things to keep in mind:

- Don’t ask the questions if you are not prepared to hear the answers. The details of their experience(s) may be overwhelming to hear. Veteran’s may have opened up and discussed their experiences in the past, but when they have made attempts the person they were speaking to became overwhelmed by the story. They will not share their experience if they have a feeling it is too much for you, but will open up and be willing to share if you have the courage to listen.

- Allow them time, much time to talk. Hear their entire story.

- If they begin to cry, be quiet. Touch an arm or hand if it feels right. Silence is respectful and eliminates the fear of saying the “wrong thing.”

- Have a box of tissues handy – but not obvious. They shouldn’t feel crying is an expectation.

- Before the veteran leaves, ask them if they see anything positive about being in combat or a part of the war. From even the most horrible of life experiences, time and distance can provide us the ability to see something positive. Some see this experience as life changing in a positive manner (becoming more
mature, value life more, etc). Help them to remember this, too, and leave them with a positive thought in mind, if possible.

- Remember, even 30 years after returning from Southeast Asia, these soldiers need to hear three things from us that weren't said so long ago: "Welcome home," "Thank you" and "Thank God you're alive."

- Finally, you may be left with some mental images after this experience. Prepare yourself for the reality of secondary trauma.

- In general, veterans will not pick up PTSD resources from an information table. Think of ways to include this information in the event packet/activity.

- Thank you for thinking about these veterans and giving them an opportunity to share these life-changing experiences.

Materials provided from:
McFall, E. Everett. (2007). I can still hear their cries, even in my sleep: A journey into PTSD. Outskirts Press.
INVITE YOUR AUDIENCE AND PROMOTE THE EVENT

Don’t be discouraged by a small budget. E-mails and word-of-mouth invitations are extremely effective. Also, USE YOUR PARTNERS TO PROMOTE. Suggest they post the event on their Web sites, mention it in their newsletters or send e-mailed “e-vites” to their members. Ask them to announce the event at any and all community functions they’re attending in the weeks before the event. Remember, you can never promote too much!

Additional ways to promote include:

- Post flyers – a simple one-page document that explains your event – around town
- Send printed invitations to your or your partners mailing list
- Request Public Service Announcements on Radio or TV
- Submit event info to newspapers and/or weekly, alternative papers with community calendars
- Announce at other events or meetings
- Contact educators at community colleges, universities or high schools

Don’t forget to think outside of the box! A few more ideas to get you started …

- If there’s a credit union you’re familiar with, ask if they’ll advertise the event on their ATMs
- Create small, square versions of the event flyer and place at check-out counters in local cafes, coffee shops or library check-out counters. Places that are independently owned are often the most receptive to this.
- Adapt the flyer into bookmarks and distribute.

EVENT TIMELINE:

BEFORE THE EVENT

- Gather materials and equipment you need for the event:
- Several sign-in sheets (one should be on a clipboard that you can pass around).
- Name tags, pens, markers
- Signs for outside of the building to direct audience to the correct entrance
- Signs for inside of the building to welcome audience and list ground rules
- Audience packet of materials (printed or photocopied)
- community partner literature
- Post event evaluations
- Audio/visual equipment to view film
- Microphones (if needed) for facilitator, guest speakers or audience members
- The outreach DVD

AT THE EVENT

After you’ve set up but before the audience arrives …
• Check the audio/visual equipment by running a small segment of the film. Make sure everything looks and sounds okay.
• While you’re checking the audio/visual equipment, view the film from different seats to be sure everyone will be able to see.
• If you’re using microphones, try them out and check the PA system.
• Find the switch for the lights and become familiar with adjusting the setting. Same for the room thermostat.

SHOWTIME!
• Do all that you can to begin the program on time (NEVER start more than 10 minutes late, no matter who is missing or what is happening,) and close on time. Also, let the facilitator know that this is important to you.
• Every event should begin with a welcome and concise explanation of how the event will proceed so the audience knows what to expect.
• Remember to thank your facilitators, community partners and/or any sponsors you may have either in the welcome or closing of the event.
• Encourage the audience members to sign in. You may want to mention how their contact information will be used (perhaps to invite them to future events?) and that it is confidential.
• Leave time for the audience to complete the post–event evaluations. Let the audience know their feedback is important to you.

AFTER THE EVENT
• Send thank-you letters to community partners, volunteers, facilitators and special guests.
• Share evaluation feedback with community partners and sponsors.
• Arrange a meeting with community partners to evaluate the event and brainstorm for future programs.
HOW TO INTRODUCE YOUR SCREENING EVENT:
Before your program begins, it is essential to welcome attendees and offer some brief information about how your screening will be structured. This time also serves as a wonderful opportunity to thank individuals involved in the planning of your program, and can even be used to plug upcoming library events or initiatives.

What should be included in your opening remarks?
- A warm welcome to all those attending.
- Clarification of event (i.e. “… special preview screening of segments from the upcoming program Wisconsin Vietnam War Stories …”).
- Structure of event.
- Acknowledgement of the Reel to Real program
- Gratitude to special guests, program organizers, partner organizations, etc.
- Content warnings if applicable.

Sample Script:
Good Evening! My name is Mary Smith and I am the Director of the Anytown Public Library. I would like to warmly welcome you to tonight’s event; a special preview screening of Wisconsin Public Television’s upcoming Wisconsin Vietnam War Stories, with facilitated discussion to follow. We so appreciate you taking time to be part of tonight’s special event.

Just to give you an idea of how tonight’s program will proceed; in just a moment we will show highlight clips from Wisconsin Vietnam War Stories, a new Wisconsin Public Television program that chronicles Vietnam through the stories of ordinary people from Wisconsin. The program will be broadcast on Wisconsin Public Television beginning in May. This production is from the same partners and production team that created Wisconsin World War II Stories and Wisconsin Korean War Stories.

Following the film, I will invite Vietnam Veteran and Commander of Anytown American Legion Post 76, John Johnson, to come forward and lead a discussion about reactions the film, its topics, and how they relate to all of you. I know that we have many veterans in the crowd, so I anticipate some wonderful stories. Please remember, though, that the discussion portion of tonight’s event is completely voluntary. It is perfectly fine to just sit back and listen to what others have to say.

I would like to quickly acknowledge that tonight’s event is part of the Reel to Real program, brought to you by Wisconsin Public Television and the Wisconsin Library Association. The Reel to Real program, funded by the University of Wisconsin Extension Program Innovation Fund and Alliant Energy Foundation, seeks to create engagement though public television programming by hosting community screenings and events, like this one, in cities throughout Wisconsin. The Anytown Library is planning additional screening events through the Reel to Real program. Information about these upcoming programs is available at the front desk, or on our website.
Before we begin, there are a few people I need to thank. First and foremost, my deepest gratitude to John Johnson and the entire Anytown American Legion for their assistance in planning and promoting tonight’s event. To rely on an old adage; we could not have hosted tonight’s event without you. Additionally, special thanks to Waldorf’s Grocery for so generously providing tonight’s refreshments.

Finally, I should warn you that tonight’s film contains some graphic images of battle, and is definitely not suitable for all audiences.

With that, I present *Wisconsin Vietnam War Stories*. Thank you.
Wisconsin Vietnam War Stories is a partnership of the Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs, the Wisconsin Historical Society and Wisconsin Public Television.

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Thanks also for the in-kind contributions of Schneider National and the Kress Inn in De Pere.

Reel-to-Real community screenings and discussions are a collaboration of Wisconsin Public Television and the Wisconsin Library Association, and are sponsored by the 2009-2010 UW-Extension Program Innovation Fund and the Alliant Energy Foundation.

Any views, findings, conclusions or recommendations expressed in this program do not necessarily represent those of the National Endowment for the Humanities.

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For a Discussion Guide PDF and information about Discussion DVDs visit: www.wisconsinstories.org/vietnam