

Veterans' Day Breakfast & Assembly

Rachel Harrison

**Winters Mill High School, Carroll County
410-386-1500, rkharri@k12.carr.org**

Students at Winters Mill High, as a part of their history classes and the history club, annually host a Veterans' Day Breakfast & Assembly honoring our local heroes. Last year, 45 veterans attended the ceremony. Many were in tears as a multimedia presentation played to the song "Proud to Be An American" and students recited the Pledge of Allegiance and "In Flanders Fields." Congressman Roscoe Bartlett is planning to attend the 2003 event and the school choir will perform several musical selections. Best practices:

Best Practice 1: What recognized community need was met by your project? Veterans in our community felt honored and respected by the event. Many of those in attendance wrote letters to the local newspaper, the Carroll County Times, saying that they had never felt so honored. Prior to organizing and participating in this event, students expressed that they had no idea what Veterans' Day really meant, and many veterans said that they had never felt appreciated by their community, especially the Vietnam Veterans. Through this event, the students gained knowledge and respect for veterans; the veterans felt thanked and appreciated by the students for the sacrifices they had made to defend our country.

Best Practice 2: How was the project connected to the school curriculum and curricular objectives? Our advisory classes read *The Greatest Generation* by Tom Brokaw. The veterans' project related to our study of the book as we had several World War II veterans attending the assembly. Government and history classes were also involved because several dignitaries (local politicians, etc.) attended.

Best Practice 3: How did participants reflect on their experiences throughout the project? Students involved were asked to evaluate the breakfast and assembly as part of reflection on the effectiveness of the event. The numerous thank you letters received from veterans after the event were read to all students in advisory classes or via the PA system. A local television station even interviewed the veterans about what they thought of the project and aired their comments.

Best Practice 4: How did students take leadership roles and take responsibility for the success of the project? Each student involved had a specific job (event planning, invitations, food preparation, greeting, ushering, technology generation, registration, etc.). Since it was a hectic morning, students knew that for the event to run smoothly, they needed to perform their jobs extremely well. They were very excited to honor these brave men and women. Even students who did not have a job stood and applauded when the veterans entered the auditorium.

Best Practice 5: What community partners were worked with on this project? We worked with local Veterans' groups, bought food from a local BJ's store, and solicited donations of carnations for decorations from a local florist.

Best Practice 6: How did you prepare and plan ahead for the project? Students interested in participating worked together to plan the event. The assembly was announced in advance so students could invite relatives. Students auditioned to be speakers in the assembly and contacted local veterans groups to invite them. To help prepare and make the event successful, the veterans also spoke with our students about appropriate dress and greetings.

Best Practice 7: What knowledge and skills did students develop through this project? Students deepened their understanding about the armed services and various historical events through this project. They learned soldiers are people just like them who risked their lives for freedom. They explored the concepts of civic duty and responsibility. Students also learned life skills such as how to plan events and appropriately greet guests, as well as technical skills like creating PowerPoint presentations.