



**Maryland State Department of Education  
Sherry Unger Award Application  
Service-Learning Project**

**Patriot Night**

Old Mill High School, Anne Arundel County,  
Wesley Baker and IB 12<sup>th</sup> grade students,  
Wesley Baker, [wbaker@aacps.org](mailto:wbaker@aacps.org)

**Primary Subject:** History

**Grade Level:** 12th

**Additional Subject Area Connections:**  
English

**Project Title:** Patriot Night

**Type(s) of Service:** Direct

**Project Description:**

The Veterans Oral History Project Act was passed by Congress in October 2000 so that we can learn and remember the experiences of military veterans. The Act says that “It is in the Nation’s best interest to collect and catalog oral histories of American war veterans so that future generations will have original sources of information regarding the lives and times of those who served in war and the conditions under which they endured, so that Americans will always remember those who served in war and may learn first-hand of the heroics, tediousness, horrors, and triumphs of war.” As a result, the Library of Congress is collecting and archiving these interviews for researchers to use in the future.

On Tuesday, March 17, 2009 at 6pm Old Mill High School took action by having an event called the Patriot Night. During this evening, 100 International Baccalaureate (IB) 12<sup>th</sup> grade students in teams of three interviewed 35 veterans who participated in various wars of the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. The interviews were videotaped, cataloged, and sent to the Library of Congress. They will also be posted on the website of a local non-profit group called Creating Communities - Voices of Our Elders, a group dedicated to acquiring the oral histories of war veterans from Anne Arundel County. The evening began with the Navy Information Operation Command MD Color Guard, the pledge of alliance, National Anthem, and a brief welcome. It was followed by a game to break the ice and a catered dinner. After the dinner, the ceremony continued with two

**Maryland State Curriculum  
Indicators Met**

**Content Title: U.S. History**

Analyze the causes of World War II in Europe and the Pacific and the involvement of the United States in the war (5.3.2).

Evaluate the economic, political and social impact of World War II on America’s home front (5.3.3).

Analyze the causes, events and policies of the Cold War between 1946-1968 (5.4.1).

Analyze the economic, political and social changes within the United States during the period 1946-1968 (5.4.2).

Analyze foreign policy and domestic response to events in South East Asia (5.5.1).

Analyze significant events that affected United States foreign policy from 1968-1980 outside of Southeast Asia (5.5.2).

Evaluate the impact of government politics and domestic policy on American society from 1968 to 1980 (5.5.3).

Analyze United States foreign policy from 1981 to the present (5.6.1).

Analyze modern economic, political and social influences on American society from 1981-present (5.6.2).

guest speakers (the Director of the Veterans History Project from the Library of Congress and a WWII/Korean War veteran) and a POW/MIA ceremony. Then the veterans and students broke out to various classrooms throughout Old Mill High School for the interviews with their assigned veteran.

**Potential Service-Learning Action Experiences:**

- Students will learn:
  - Why it's important to preserve oral histories of veterans
  - A first-hand experience in history that is not taught in textbooks
  - Patriotism, heroism, and sacrifice
  - Researching skills
  - How to collaborate with other classmates
  - The techniques of conducting an interview
  - How to treat others with dignity, care, and respect
  - To reflect upon what they've learned

# Alignment with Maryland's Best Practices of Service-Learning: *Patriot Night*

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**1. Meet a recognized community need** (*e.g. What health, education, environment or public safety need was met? How did you determine there was a real need in this area? Who was helped by your project?*)

- What health, education, environment or public safety need was met?

There is a need to get down the stories of veterans before it's too late. We need to remember, appreciate, learn from, and reflect upon their experiences in the future.

- How did you determine there was a real need in this area?

There are no more WWI veterans and WWII veterans are dying off at an alarming rate – 1,000 per day. Korean and Vietnam War veterans are also aging as well.

- Who was helped by your project?

The veterans were able to share their valuable experiences, which will now be documented for all-time sake and be available for researchers at the Library of Congress. Their families will be able to see the interview for generations to come on the internet at [www.VoicesofOurElders.com](http://www.VoicesofOurElders.com). My students will be able to personalize history, learn what personal sacrifice truly means, and be taught something of heroism and patriotism. Many students also will earn CAS (Community, Active, Service) hours which they need in order to receive their IB Diploma.

**2. Achieve curricular objectives through service-learning** (*How did the project reinforce or enhance student academic learning?*)

In International Baccalaureate (IB) 12<sup>th</sup> grade, their history class is called 20<sup>th</sup> Century Topics. In this class, students learn about WWI, WWII, the Korean War, the Vietnam War, and the Cold War. Most of the veterans we interviewed are from these wars. We also interviewed veterans from the Persian Gulf War, Afghanistan War, and Iraq War.

In addition, the IB mission statement encourages students to be active, compassionate, and lifelong learners. They also should strive to meet the goals in the IB Learner Profile, including “inquirers” – developing a natural curiosity; “communicators” – working effectively and in collaboration with others; “caring” – showing compassion, respect, and making a positive difference to others; “reflective” – giving thoughtful consideration to their own learning experience; and “knowledgeable” – acquiring in-depth knowledge. Patriot Night complies with both the IB mission statement and IB Learner Profile.

**3. Reflect throughout the service-learning experience** (*What types of activities did students engage in to reflect on their project?*)

I kept motivating myself by thinking that these veterans have a legacy that should be left behind and that their stories of heroism



should not be untold. Although this project took a great deal of my time, it is the veterans that made the true sacrifice through serving our country and giving up a part of their lives for our freedom.

In addition, comments that people made to me along the journey to completing Patriot Night motivated me as well. One veteran told me that African Americans are not recognized much as participants in our country's wars, even in today's media coverage with the Afghan and Iraq Wars. Another veteran told me that one of her relatives recently died and that she found out after his death something that she had never known --- that he was a Korean War veteran. His wartime experience is lost forever. One of the most interesting comments about the event was a non-veteran parent, who said that Old Mill High School was supposed to be the home of the Patriots, which is our mascot, but that we've never done anything much for veterans. As a graduate from Old Mill High School in '95 and a current teacher there, that was all the motivation I needed.

**4. Develop student responsibility** (*How did students have opportunities to make decisions about the service-learning project and take on leadership?*)

Students helped me to:

- Help me find veterans
- Plan the decorations, music, and events during the night
- Help by bringing utensils, plates, napkins, drinks, salad, and desert to supplement the catered lasagna and ziti dinner
- Research the war the veteran was in and the role that he or she played
- Develop interview questions and conduct the interview
- Dress in homecoming style clothes
- Be personable, outgoing, and knowledgeable

**5. Establish community partnerships** (*With what community partners did you collaborate? Non-profits, civic organizations, businesses that provided donations, etc.*)

- Creating Communities: Voices of Our Elders – non-profit group that assisted with giving my students tips on how to conduct interviews with veterans and brought in a WWII veteran as a guest speaker. The interviews will also be posted on their website that honors Anne Arundel County veterans ([www.VoicesofOurElders.com](http://www.VoicesofOurElders.com))
- Anne Arundel County American Legions – helped with attaining veterans
- The Anne Arundel County Board of Education's Social Studies Dept. and Service Learning Dept., as well as Old Mill High School's IB Coordinator funded the project
- Dreyers Ice Cream donated 200 ice cream bars
- Three Brothers Pizza gave us a special discount on the ziti and lasagna for the dinner
- Giant, Shoppers Food Warehouse, and Mars donated gift cards
- Old Mill's PTA, AACo. Board of Ed's PTA, Athletic Boosters, my student's parents, teachers and staff at OMHS, Glen Burnie Improvement Association (GBIA), Civitan – all helped with attaining veterans and or managing the night's events
- Maryland Gazette – promoted Patriot Night and advertised for veterans to participate

**6. Plan ahead for service-learning** (*How did you prepare and plan for the project?*)

- Reserved time and space at Old Mill High School
- Searched for veterans to participate
- Had students form into groups of three; assigned each group a veteran
- Coordinated the project with my 12<sup>th</sup> grade IB History students and my colleague's 12<sup>th</sup> grade IB History students by calling three assemblies during advisory
  - #1 – Creating Communities gave the students interview tips and had a WWII guest speaker
  - #2 – Explained the details of the project, interviewing techniques, and the responsibilities of the students
  - #3 – Reviewed interviewing techniques and gave final advice
- Searched for funding
- Searched for the lowest cost for catered food
- Got Dreyers to donate ice cream
- Made sure we had enough videocameras, one for each of 35 veterans
- Had parents come in to help with the evening
- Had the students plan the course of the night and decide on decorations; purchased decorations
- Mapped out the locations of classrooms where the students and their veterans would conduct their interviews
- Contacted media sources to cover the event

**7. Equip students with knowledge and skills needed for service** (*What did students learn through the experience?*)

My students learned a first-hand experience in history that is not taught in textbooks. It personalized history and made it come alive to them. In fact, through the whole process of planning, conducting the interviews, cataloging them, and sending them to the Library of Congress my students were making history and doing something patriotic.

I think that my students now have a better understanding of patriotism, heroism, and sacrifice. I'm sad to say that many students today don't stand up and say the pledge of allegiance when they are supposed to at the beginning of the school day. They are too busy or don't care enough to do it. This is not patriotism. Many students today would consider athletic stars, movie stars, and other celebrities to be their heroes. The true heroes are the veterans. Many students think of sacrifice as giving up a night out with friends to do your homework. The veterans that we interviewed sacrificed years of their life and devoted it towards defending our country in order to promote our freedom. Their lives were frequently under threat, many saw their friends die, some were injured, and a few many have even been POWs. After this event, they had a much better appreciation for patriotism, heroism, and sacrifice.

My students also learned researching skills; how to collaborate with other classmates; the techniques of conducting an interview; how to treat others with dignity, care, and respect; and to reflect upon what they've learned.