The CT Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA) and the Center for Public Policy and Social Research (CPPSR) at CCSU recently released the results of a needs assessment of Connecticut veterans returning from Iraq and Afghanistan. The study’s findings include:

- Almost 22% of veterans screened positive for Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).
- Nearly 20% of veterans reported difficulty in relating to their civilian friends.
- Veterans in most need of support are the least likely to seek it out.

Some recommendations from the study are:

- Initiate a public awareness campaign to inform and educate veterans and their families, the general public and non-military caregivers.
- Develop an early identification and outreach system.
- Create an integrated resiliency-based continuum of mental health care that emphasizes natural, non-clinical community supports.

The study has generated national publicity through a recently launched on-line press release. A link to the complete report can be found at [http://www.ccsu.edu/cppsr](http://www.ccsu.edu/cppsr).

I received an unexpected phone call that began, “You don’t know me, but I was trying to research my father’s WWII experience, and I ended up at your website.” The caller’s father, William Carey, Sr., served as Yeoman 2nd Class aboard the ship YP417 during WWII, retiring as a Chief Yeoman. Unfortunately, that is all Bill knew about his father’s WWII past. You can imagine Bill’s delight when he “googled” his father’s ship and landed on Nick Lavnikeyvich’s WWII records on the VHP web site and saw pictures of his dad.

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**VHP Highlights**

- **NEW** — VHP Speakers Bureau unites veterans with schools and other groups requesting speakers about U.S. wars and conflicts.
- **NEW** — CT Schoolteachers provide lesson plans to be highlighted on the VHP website as a resource to schools on veteran issues.

For more information about these programs, Contact Eileen Hurst at 860-832-2976.

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**VHP ENRICHES CCSU CLASSES**

In 2007, CCSU Assistant Professor Mary Collins was asked to develop a new Creative Nonfiction three-course sequence as part of the Creative Writing Minor. Her innovative classes use VHP resources to inspire and support her courses and her students.

In the introductory courses, the students learn basic narrative techniques, like the difference between quoting someone in a news story and dialogue. The advanced class takes the interview skills they learned in introductory classes and applies them to a professional project. The students are each assigned a veteran. They must go on location to the veteran’s place of residence, conduct a 90 minute interview which they also videotape, create a transcript record that researchers can use, learn about legal issues related to interviewing a private person for a public publication or organization (in this case the Library of Congress web page) and more.

Collins often reminds her students “that they have a civic duty to use their literary talents to do things like collect interviews of WWII veterans before their stories are lost.”

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Charlie Brown (a real person) was a B-17 Flying Fortress pilot with the 379th Bomber Group at Kimbolton, England. His B-17, called “Ye Old Pub,” was in a terrible state, having been hit by flak and fighters. The compass was damaged and they were flying deeper into enemy territory instead of heading home to Kimbolton. After flying over an enemy airfield, a German pilot named Franz Steigler was ordered to take off and shoot down the B-17. When he got near the B-17, he could not believe his eyes. He “had never seen a plane in such a bad state.”

Despite having ammunition, Franz flew to the side of the B-17 and looked at Charlie Brown, the pilot. Brown was scared and struggling to control his damaged and blood-stained plane. Aware that the Americans had no idea where they were going, Franz waved at Charlie to turn 180 degrees. Franz escorted and guided the stricken plane to, and slightly over, the North Sea towards England. He then saluted Charlie Brown and turned back to Europe. When Franz landed, he told his Commanding Officer that the plane went down over the North Sea. He never told anybody the truth.

Charlie Brown and his crew told all at their debriefing. They were ordered never to talk about it.

More than 40 years later, Charlie Brown wanted to find the Luftwaffe pilot who saved the crew. It took years of research, but the two pilots finally met in the USA at a 379th Bomber group reunion, together with the 25 people who are alive now—all because Franz never fired his guns that day.

Coincidentally, Charlie Brown of Seattle and Franz Stiegler of Vancouver, BC had lived less than 200 miles apart for the past 50 years.
**ADDITIONS TO THE VHP STAFF**

**Wittawat “Wit” Meesangnil** is the new archivist for the Veterans History Project. He became involved with the VHP during his internship at Elihu Burritt library while pursuing a master’s in Library Science at Southern Connecticut State University (SCSU). He has an undergraduate degree in Communication from Chiangmai University in Thailand and recently completed an M.S. Degree in Library Science at SCSU. Wit is interested in digital libraries and digital preservation. Asked for an international perspective on the VHP project, he said, “I find it fascinating. Thailand played a major role in the Vietnam War, providing military bases and supplies for U.S. Troops. The Vietnam War is a very significant event in Thailand.”

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**“Donut Dollie” Volunteers at VHP**

As a young college graduate, **Jeanne Marie Bokina Christie** joined the American Red Cross Supplemental Recreational Activities Overseas (SRAO) during the Vietnam War. Often referred to as “Donut Dollies,” she and her colleagues cheerfully befriended, entertained and consoled soldiers. This experience fueled Jeanne’s life-long commitment to studying, teaching and promoting veterans and military history. Her accomplishments include scholarly research, writing and lectures on women from the Civil War and the Iraq War, to White House Advisor on Women’s Health on behalf of civilian women serving in Vietnam, to consultant on the TV program *China Beach*.

A resident of Bethel, CT, she has completed six veteran interviews, the first of which was with her husband. “I was able to make all my mistakes on him!” Jeanne joked. Jeanne feels a responsibility to reach as many veterans as possible in the western part of the State. She drives around with flyers in her briefcase and hands them out to people she sees wearing WWII baseball caps. She is presently lecturing at Manhattanville College and WCSU. Despite her many commitments, Jeanne is devoted to doing more volunteer work for the VHP.

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**Marcy Cain and Bob Kagan** bring more than 30 years experience in writing, directing, producing and editing to their work as volunteers for CCSU and the Veterans History Project.

“We conducted our first interview in early April with a Navy veteran who served in WWII and in the Korean War, and it was terrific,” says Marcy. “We can’t wait for our next assignment,” adds Bob.

Marcy has worked as a broadcast journalist and has held leadership positions in communication at United Technologies Corporation and at the University of Hartford. She is a member of the Association of Personal Historians and runs her own communication and public relations company.

Bob is a communication and media professor at Manchester Community College and an adjunct professor at Central Connecticut State University where he teaches film and video production. He has worked in commercial broadcasting and is active as a documentary filmmaker.

Marcy and Bob earned B.A.s in Anthropology from the State University at Albany (New York) and Masters Degrees in TV, Radio and Film from Syracuse University’s Newhouse School of Public Communications.
Reunion, Continued from page 1

Bill was eager to connect with Nick so he could learn more. When I contacted Nick, he excitedly agreed to a reunion.

Bill, Jr. and his wife, Lois, traveled from Mendon, MA to Nick’s home in Simsbury, CT. Nick and Bill, Sr. had not stayed in touch, so Bill filled in Nick on the rest of his dad’s Navy career and his own career in the Navy during the Vietnam War era, where he served as a Yeoman, like his dad. Nick told Bill many stories about the war years, including how he planted a melon garden on Florida Island, part of the Solomon Islands in the western Pacific Ocean.

Bill, Jr. shared his father’s WWII pictures and journal. Nick was not aware that Bill, Sr. kept a journal and was surprised and amused to see his own name appear in many of the entries in the journal. It was clear that these two men share a special relationship, the bond between sailors, made stronger between generations because of the VHP. Creating these opportunities through the VHP is one of the many rewards of this work.

Nicholas P. Greci, Jr., resident of Avon for the past 54 years, died on February 5th 2009 at the Avon Health Center at the age of 85. Nick served in the U.S. Coast Guard during WWII on the USS PC 469. After hearing about the bombing of Pearl Harbor, he and a childhood friend decided to enlist in the Coast Guard. His first tour of duty was beach patrol in Florida but shortly afterwards he volunteered for overseas duty. He worked on escort duty in the North Atlantic until he was assigned to the USS PC 469. On the USS PC 469, he served in Miami running convoys from Guantanamo Bay to Panama, spent a couple of months in San Diego and then left for Pearl Harbor and later became a gunner’s mate. He served in the Pacific at Iwo Jima and Okinawa until the end of his service in March of 1946.

After discharge, he worked as a milkman, in construction and then as a water meter technician for Avon Water Company until retirement in 2008. He was actively involved in VFW Post 3272, the Iwo Jima Survivors, Boy Scout Troop 87 and other organizations. He was married for 51 years and is survived by his two sons, daughter-in-law, four grandchildren, and his loving companion.

For more information or to participate please contact:

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