On September 15th, one hundred WWII veterans were treated to a free trip to Washington D.C. to visit the WWII Memorial. For many of these octogenarians, this was their only opportunity to see the memorial that opened in 2004 to dedicate their service. The trip, sponsored by American Warrior, was largely due to the efforts of Christopher Coutu, founder of American Warrior and himself a veteran. Veterans traveled on a chartered flight to Reagan International Airport and were then transported by motor coach to the WWII Memorial for lunch and a tour. Veterans also enjoyed a motor tour of the Iwo Jima Memorial, the See Bees Memorial, Arlington National Cemetery, Embassy Row and the Pentagon and a stop at the JFK Performing Arts Center. Fifty “Guardians” accompanied the veterans to assist with their comfort. By all accounts, the trip was a huge success and immensely enjoyed and appreciated by everyone who attended. Norm Southergill, one of the veterans who was interviewed for the VHP, speaks for many when he said, “Chris Coutu did a wonderful job. I don’t know how he accomplished it, with all the logistics that went into it. What a job!” Another Honor Flight is scheduled for the spring as soon as American Warrior raises the $40,000 that is necessary to send another 100 veterans. If you are a WWII veteran and would like to apply for the next Honor Flight, please contact Christopher Coutu at P.O. Box 337, 35 Main Street, Versailles, CT 06383.

On Friday, October 12th, Central Connecticut State University (CCSU) and the Connecticut Department of Veteran Affairs (DVA) co-hosted a Veterans’ Summit to address the medical, psychosocial, economic, and higher education needs of veterans who have recently returned from Iraq or Afghanistan.

The Summit, convened by Governor M. Jodi Rell, is one component of a larger state-wide Veterans’ Needs Assessment being conducted by the Center for Public Policy and Social Research (CPPSR) at CCSU. In this broader initiative, Drs. Marc Goldstein and James Malley of CCSU have conducted several focus groups throughout the state with veterans and their family members.

Continued on page 2
Additionally, a lengthy survey was mailed to one thousand veterans seeking their input, and another one thousand veterans will be receiving the survey soon. The preliminary findings were presented at the Summit.

The Governor’s summit provided an opportunity for veterans to voice their concerns and to be heard, to make a difference and help shape the creation of necessary programs, services and legislation. Recognizing that the needs, challenges, and barriers of our current veterans are different than those faced by veterans of previous wars, the Connecticut Department of Veteran Affairs (DVA) is working proactively to identify those needs and is committed to implementing the necessary measures to ensure a successful transition back to civilian life for our dedicated service men and women. Commissioner Linda Spoonster Schwartz of the DVA, a veteran herself, strongly believes, “There is no substitute for hearing from veterans directly on issues that affect them. This is a unique opportunity for policy makers and program managers to listen, first and foremost. The message to our returning veterans is simple but powerful– ‘your input is important, and you can make a difference in your future care and benefits.’”

The Summit featured presentations by nationally-recognized experts on veterans’ issues. Attendees participated in one of eight focus groups being offered to discuss the issues of health care, mental health and substance abuse, employability training, education and benefits, family, transition issues, women veterans’ issues and traumatic brain injuries. By sharing their own relevant concerns, experiences, ideas and recommendations in these areas, participating veterans were instrumental in informing policy makers and helping create policy changes that address the needs of all Connecticut veterans.

“How important it is for us to recognize and celebrate our heroes and she-ros” –Maya Angelou

VHP UPDATE

- Please visit our web site at www.ccsu.edu/vhp to see if your records are activated.
- Professor John Tully’s class, History of American Foreign Relations and Professor Heather Prescott’s Class, Senior Seminar: Disability History are participating in the VHP during the fall semester as an extra-credit project.
- The Ken Burn’s documentary on World War II aired this October. Mr. William Blair, a veteran from Waterbury who was interviewed for our VHP, was interviewed during the making of the documentary.

Creation of VHP project
October 27, 2000

First interview by Eileen Hurst
November 20, 2003

CCSU became archive partner with the Library of Congress
September 2005

Dedication of VHP at CCSU
November 21, 2005

Students of CCSU classes began interviewing veterans
Fall 2005
Shane Matthews, the newest member of the Veterans History Project Staff, is a lifelong resident of Connecticut where he became an Eagle Scout. In 2000, Shane earned the distinguished rank of Eagle Scout, and also began his tenure in the U.S. Navy. Shane served in the World's Finest Navy from 2000-2005, the last two years of which were aboard the USS Dallas, a submarine based out of Groton, CT. Upon receiving a medical discharge from the U.S. Navy in 2005, Shane transitioned to work as a full time contractor at Pratt and Whitney where he applied his naval nuclear power training to testing jet engines. In 2007, Shane began his studies in Political Science at Central Connecticut State University (CCSU). Shane is expected to graduate from CCSU in the Summer of 2008. Upon graduation Shane plans to continue his education with the pursuit of a law degree. Most importantly, he plans on continuing to develop and expand his efforts to advocate for fellow veterans and to ensure that they receive the support and respect that they have earned. Shane is a staunch supporter of the VHP and said, "The Project is of great importance, not only for the sake of history, but also for the message it sends to all veterans. We are saying loud and clear that regardless of how you served, or where, we honor you, your service, and we want to listen to you." Shane resides in Glastonbury with his wife, Natalie.

History does not long entrust the care of freedom to the weak or the timid. – General Dwight D. Eisenhower

CCSU Students Awarded Medals at the Veterans’ Summit

During the Veterans’ Summit held at CCSU on October 12th, Governor M. Jodi Rell and Veterans’ Affairs Commissioner Linda Schwartz pinned medals on several Connecticut servicemen and women. Three CCSU students were amongst the veterans who were awarded the Connecticut Veterans Wartime Service Medal. Robert Madden, a corporal in the U.S. Marine Corps, served as an aviation ordnance specialist working on helicopter armament systems and ordnance and is now a full time student majoring in Political Science. Robert plans to graduate in December, 2008 and go on to law school. Petty Officer 3rd Class Shane Matthews served aboard the U.S.S. Dallas, a nuclear submarine, as a nuclear Machinist Mate Engineering Laboratory Technician and is now a senior at CCSU majoring in Political Science. Shane also intends to continue his education in law school. JoelPatrick Leger, a helicopter crew chief, served in the Army for six years, reaching the rank of Specialist E-4. JoelPatrick has served in Korea, Iraq, the Bahamas, and Egypt. He is presently a full time senior and looks forward to teaching History at the high school level after his graduation in December, 2008.

Veterans Needs assessment
Summer/Fall 2007

Summit for Returning Veterans
October 12, 2007

100 veterans interviewed
July 22, 2007

50 veterans interviewed
January 18, 2006

50 veterans interviewed
January 18, 2006

Hire of VHP archivist
July 7, 2006

Launching of VHP webpage
Fall 2006

Purchase of server and software for archiving oral histories
July 2006

L-R: Robert Madden, JoelPatrick Leger, Gov. M. Jodi Rell, Commissionair L. Schwartz, and Shane Matthews
While processing all of the supplemental material from our veterans for the VHP, we sometimes stumble across some real treasures. Recently, we acquired a memoir, entitled “Love Letters,” put together by a World War II Veteran’s daughter, Kate Alling. Her father, Charles, was stationed in Washington when she was born in 1943, and then was gone for three years of her life, seeing Kate sporadically when he could come home. During this time, Charles and his wife, Anne, exchanged love letters and kept them for years to come.

Kate, now a grandmother herself living in Florida, gathered the love letters in addition to other letters to and from Charles’s mother, and telegraphs from the war, and compiled a memoir to pass on the story of the young Alling family during World War II. Below is a letter Charles sent from overseas for Kate’s second birthday:

Dearest Kate:

This year your Daddy can’t do anything about your birthday except to write a few lines to wish you happiness on that happy day. You are two years old, and I’m afraid you hardly know me. I remember you, Kate. I remember all the good times we had in Alabama, you and Mommy and I. Remember the picnics, the rides in the car, playing peek before you went to sleep? I remember it all, Kate. You have always been a good little girl. Everyone says so. You have been a great help to your Mommy and a profound joy to me. If you just wait patiently for me we’ll make up for all the good times we’ve missed.

You will be the oldest of all your brothers and sisters. Your mommy and I will count on you to help us with our family. You will, won’t you?

Grow, Kate, this is a busy world and you have a niche to fill. Do as your mother bids, help her, comfort her, and wait for me.

Your Daddy loves you dearly.

As an archive partner with the Library of Congress, it is our privilege to collect and preserve the personal accounts of the service and sacrifice of our Connecticut heroes.

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We are sad to report that another WWII veteran who shared his history with us has passed away this summer. Stuart W. Franklin, a lifelong resident of Putnam, CT died on June 14, 2007, at Day Kimball Hospital. Stuart served in the U.S. Army with the 135th QM Truck Company during WWII. He was stationed in England, France, and Germany where he survived a bomb attack and witnessed several air raids. During his time of service, Stuart earned the rank of Staff Sergeant. He was awarded four Battle Stars, a Presidential Unit Citation, the Good Conduct Medal and was honorably discharged.

"Again I ask, who really are our heroes?
They are the men who have, since the first day of our great country, left their families and friends and gone to war asking for nothing and giving all."

- Gary Walker

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For more information or to participate please contact:
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www.ccsu.edu/vhp