

The National Service Ride Project

*Veterans strengthening and helping move America
forward through citizenship and service to community
and country*

[Christopher Holshek](#), Colonel, U.S. Army Civil Affairs (Ret.)

Author, *Travels with Harley* and Founder of the National Service Ride Project

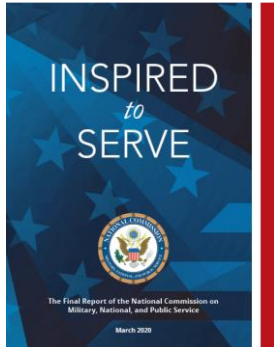
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The Meaning and Value of Service

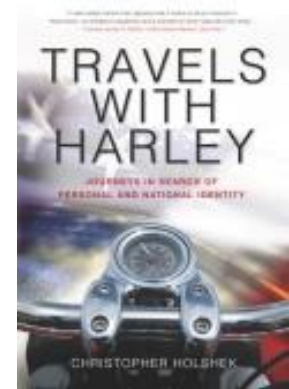
- [National Commission on Military, National, and Public Service](#) defines service as:



- “a personal commitment of time, energy, and talent to a mission that contributes to the public good by protection the Nation and its citizens, strengthening communities, or promoting the general social welfare...”
- “From the earliest days, service has been a central part of what it means to be an American. Civic engagement and service are critical to the health and well-being of the Nation; by bringing people together to tackle common problems, service makes communities stronger and strengthens American democracy.”

Travels with Harley – Journeys in Search of Personal & National Identity:

“It is only through service to others and personal engagement within and beyond the known worlds of our communities and our nation that we can gain a true sense of ourselves, refresh our own sense of a connective national identity, transcendent of social divisions, and keep them both balanced and strong.”



Meanwhile...

- ✓ Growing public interest in a national service bill and overcoming national divisiveness
- ✓ Growing school community service requirements, e.g., NY State Seal of Civic Readiness Program
- ✓ Growing recognition of the personal, economic, and social values-added of service from the pandemic
- ✓ Growing youth interest in personal (vs. virtual) connectivity and in volunteerism



About the Project

- **Veteran-led initiative to mobilize American youth to serve their country through their communities, help themselves by helping others, and create a better future in which they are the largest stakeholders**
 - **Adaptive, two-part platform, developed with Orange County Youth Bureau, for schools to leverage veterans and other resources to implement a school-led multiyear service-learning curriculum strategy:**
 - Interactive service-learning assemblies, starting at elementary and junior high school levels, to acculturate an inclusive and empowering ethos of service to prepare students for volunteering
 - High school volunteer fairs for student interaction with local veteran, community, and volunteer service organizations to “shop” for service-learning opportunities that best suit them
- In addition:
- Virtual extensions, e.g., [Dutchess-Orange United Way Volunteer Portal](#), school web media, etc.
 - Supporting events – (social studies) class discussions, motivational speakers, Youth Bureau workshops
 - Concept socialization with key education constituencies (faculty, Board, PTA, parents, student groups) and community and volunteer organizations to build support and momentum
- **Interactive assemblies utilize veterans and other adult role models as well as peer examples for youth to better understand the personal as well as collective benefits of volunteerism**
 - **Fosters an empowering and unifying narrative of citizenship, service, and social responsibility to pass the generational baton of leadership – from service veterans giving back with young citizens paying it forward**
 - **Offers meaningful advancement to those in back of the classroom as well as the front: “servicship” (not just scholarship) as a path to social inclusion and economic success**

Check out the [video](#), the [website](#) or [Facebook page](#)!



School Service-Learning Events



- **Provides motivational context for service volunteering – maximizes student interest in community service as part of their curriculum goals and school year plan**
- **Conversational and interactive – explores what is service and why it matters to them**
- **Value proposition process that runs from philosophical to practical reasons to serve**
 - “Thank you for your service” – passed from military to police, fire, first responders, health care and social workers, educators, etc. to demonstrate service diversity and universality
 - Thanking veterans for their service by giving them a country worth defending
 - Building a narrative of service through storytelling from adult role models to peer exemplars (2 min. “elevator speech” on their service experience, why they serve, and what they got out of it)
 - Explore “what’s in it for me?” – personal and professional benefits of volunteerism

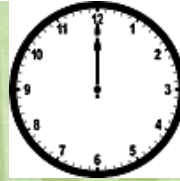
Then...

- School guidance counselor (and Youth Bureau) explain:
 - School service-learning curriculum and graduation/award requirements - e.g., [New York State Seal of Civic Readiness](#), [National Honor Society](#), Boy/Girl Scouts, [JROTC](#), etc.
 - Volunteer fair concept, organizations, and volunteer portal
 - In addition...



- **Community and public awareness: focus group discussions (faculty, school board, PTA meetings); school and local media coverage (using student journalists); school and community social media**

How School Assemblies Round the Bases



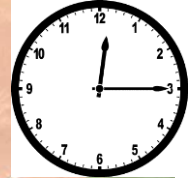
Thought Provocation – “What Is Service?”

- What is it and why does it matter?
- Stories of service – usual and unusual local adult role models and peer examples
- The service value in what you already do



Value Proposition – “What’s In It for Me?”

- Personal and professional/career benefits
- Helping yourself by helping others – self-esteem, personal connectivity, and social inclusion
- Obtain skills, build resumes, and find vocations



Grounding and Focus

- The best way to thank veterans...
- “Thank you for your service” passed from military to civilians



Call to Action – Sign-Up to Service-Learning

- Review of school service curriculum requirements
- Heads-up on the Volunteer Fair, organizations and web-based resources
- Goal: Sign youth up for community service!





Key Message Points



- The best way to honor veterans is to give them a country worth their service and sacrifice – and when you serve your community, you serve your country
- Service doesn't require a uniform, a change of address, or a good grade point average
- Service is a way of living that belongs to all of us – there are many ways to serve, from random acts of kindness to full-service careers, and to see the service in what you already do
- Service helps you find out who you are and what you're about – it builds self-esteem and character
- The most successful people are not always the smartest or the richest, but those most willing to learn – service is learning and leading; all it takes is courage and humility
- Service learning is a free pathway to personal growth, build a resume, obtain vital skills (teamwork, collaborative problem-solving, leadership/interpersonal), get references, and grow a network
- In today's service economy, service learning helps you become a more attractive investment
- You help yourself best by helping others – and get back much more than you give!
- Like charity, citizenship begins on the block – and good citizenship makes for good governance
- You can't save the world, but you can save your corner of it...
- You've heard their stories – what will yours be?





Volunteer Fairs



- Provides easy-to-access, one-stop personal/virtual pathways to service learning
- Two components – on-site and virtual – maximum opportunity, minimum pressure
- School based full day Volunteer Fair event
 - One-on-one discussions with representatives from volunteer organizations
 - Participating organizations include - Volunteer Fire and Ambulance, Police Youth, Food Pantries, Animal Shelters, Libraries, Therapeutic Horse Riding, Nursing Homes, Veterans Groups, and many more.
- Virtual extensions – e.g., [JustServe](#), [United Way Volunteer Portal](#) and school social media linked to local community service organizations
- Community resource to link organizations with (youth) volunteers at local level
- Schools and county youth bureaus can collect data on student participation to feed school reports on service-learning curriculum outcomes and verify graduation/program
- Students can obtain certificates of service and build resumes
- Great source of material and testimony for local, mass, and social media!



Organizational Partnering Scheme



Schools: It's *Their* Program

- Middle schools, high schools, community colleges, BOCES and universities
- Adaptive to school curriculum and schedules; organized with school admin, guidance, JROTC
- One-stop sourcing event to motivate and integrate students in the community
- Use of virtual platforms extend both the service-learning fair and opportunity access



Veteran Motorcycle Groups

- American Legion/VFW Riders, 'Nam Knights, Buffalo Soldiers, Rolling Thunder, Blue Knights...
- Great source of service role models – military, police, fire, first responders...
- Makes events highly visible and media-friendly
- Motorcycles appeal to freedom, adventure, finding identity, moving forward together...
- Enables greater veteran contact with youths

Local Organizations

- Veterans: American Legion, VFW, etc.
- Community: Interact, Kiwanis, Leos... volunteer groups (parks, police, fire, ambulance)
- Chambers of commerce – local, county
- County: Youth and community development – e.g., Orange County Youth Bureau
- State: Education, Youth, Environment, etc.
- National: Americorps, United Way, etc.



Shared Program Benefits



- **Adaptable and flexible to fit the curriculum needs, aims and constraints of schools and veteran/community service organizations – helps veteran, community service and volunteer organizations gain greater access to schools, attract younger members, and build organizational depth**
- **Schools like its holistic and synergistic motivate-and-integrate platform to connect youth with service-learning opportunities efficiently and effectively – enhancing educational outcomes to produce citizens who are positively engaged with their local communities.**
- **Low overhead, high impact (short and long term) – brings together and synergizes like-minded and -limited organizational programs through shared goals and platforms**
- **Helps military veterans, police, firefighters, first responders, medical services, etc. connect with their communities in a positive and meaningful way, improving community relations and enhancing generational partnering – in order to pass the generational baton of leadership**
- **Mass and social media friendly platform – helps organizations raise public visibility and awareness, with impacts on branding, membership, volunteerism, and fundraising**
- **Instills a greater sense of community and national cohesion and resilience – helps mitigate related socioeconomic problems and the costs that come with them**

Only one restriction – No politics, political leaders, parties, or groups!



Current Status



- Supported by Orange County NY American Legion & Legion Riders
- In partnership with the:
 - Hudson Valley Veterans Task Force
 - Hudson Valley Veteran Riders Network
 - Orange County Veterans Service Agency
 - Orange County Youth Bureau
 - Orange Ulster BOCES
- Orange County school districts so far committed:
 - [Cornwall Central High School](#)
 - [Middletown High School \(New York\)](#)
 - [James I. O'Neill High School](#)
 - [Tuxedo Union Free School District](#)
 - [Monroe Woodbury Central School District](#)
 - [Pine Bush High School](#) (Leadership & Law Academy)
 - [Port Jervis City School District](#)
 - [Valley Central High School](#)
 - [Washingtonville Central School District](#) (2021 and 2022)
 - Additional County and Hudson Valley schools in the works...
- Media coverage in the Hudson Valley
 - *Straus News* syndicate local newspapers
 - WJFF "Let's Talk Vets," WTBQ, WALL, WHUD, WPDH
 - *The Motorcycle Channel* – HUDSY network TV series; TV12 news





Lessons So Far



- Incorporate NSR, Youth Bureau, veteran and community organization and volunteer group capacities and resources into a comprehensive multiyear service-learning curriculum strategy – avoid *ad hoc* approaches!
- Socialize this strategy and its components with key education constituencies (faculty, Board, PTA, student groups) and community and volunteer organizations to build support and momentum; consider guidance counselors as the main planning, coordination, and networking hub
- Consider the role parents can play in encouraging student participation – have them think of joining as a family to enable quality time with their kids to teach important social virtues and values
- Front-load a series of service-learning assemblies and focus group sessions at the elementary and junior high school levels to acculturate an inclusive and empowering ethos of service to prepare students for volunteering opportunities as a rite of passage when they reach high school
- Hold an annual volunteer fair at high schools as a major student orientation event for especially freshman and sophomores – best at the school gym and at the start of the school year
- Use virtual tools like the [Dutchess-Orange United Way Volunteer Portal](#) to extend student decision-making on service-learning opportunities in annual course/curriculum and extra-curricular activities planning
- Incorporate community and public awareness into the socialization strategy: video the assemblies and fairs to post on the school website (for students and parents to watch); promote local media coverage (using student journalists); feature outstanding students, volunteer groups, and organizations
- Look more closely at veteran service organizations (youth programs, veteran assistance programs, motivational speakers, scholarships, awards, etc.) as well as chambers of commerce (internships with local businesses) as important resources for your service-learning curriculum strategy
- Minimize political leader or party involvement in public events to mitigate politicization



Way Ahead



- **Locally...**

- Expansion from Orange County, NY into Lower and Mid-Hudson Valley
- Development of a County “serviceship” award?
- Events at NYMA and U.S. Military Academy – involvement of cadets?
- Grow local/regional media interest and coverage – print, radio, television

- **New York State...**

- Continue local/regional socialization with school districts, county youth bureaus NY veterans organizations (American Legion, Veterans of Foreign Wars, etc.) in the Hudson Valley
- Introduce this initiative to our NYS partners serving youth throughout the State
- Prepare and conduct orientation/training seminars (on-site and online) for regional and state organizations interested in adopting the project locally
- Conduct follow-on consultations, on-site and online, throughout the year

- **Nationally...**

- Grow national media interest through New York City based media
- Visit/inform (non-political) Washington-based organizations

- **Long-term:**

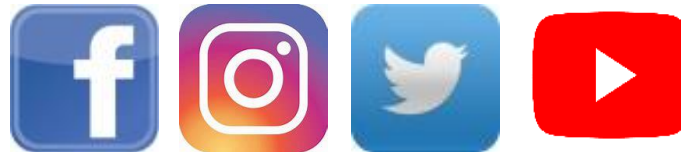
- Make the National Service Ride project a National Veterans Organizational program (e.g., American Legion Riders, VFW Riders, etc.)



How You Can Help



- **Help us get the word out to and socialize the initiative with**
 - School districts, faculty, boards of education, PTA/PTO, BOCES, etc.
 - Recruit more veteran/community organizations, volunteer/advocacy groups, etc.
 - Influential persons or groups – teacher/student alumni, chambers of commerce, etc.
 - Generate local mass and social media interest



- **Join the NSR Facebook page/group**, “like” and share NSR posts that help promote a narrative of service on your social media pages, and **post or send your stories of service and related activities** (again: No politics!)



Questions?

