**Macon County Veterans Oral History Project**

*in collaboration with students at Tuskegee Public School*

Auburn University

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**Project Period**

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**PROJECT FOCUS**

Building on the 2017-18 ATP project and continued relationship with Tuskegee Public School, Auburn University ATP students will work with the school principal, 6th grade teacher, and students to interview military veterans and produce digital content as part of the Library of Congress Veterans Oral History Project.

**PROJECT DETAILS**

**Course Number, Name, and Instructor:** CCEN 2000: Introduction to Community and Civic Engagement, Mark Wilson

**Community Partner(s):** Tuskegee Public School Principal, Teacher, Students, and military veteran volunteers for interviews and collaboration. A journalism/media club at the school will have a critical role in the project.

**Need**

Macon County is a distressed county within the ARC region, and the economic distress is often best recognized through the school system, with nearly 100% of students eligible for free and reduced lunch. But economic poverty does not completely define this community, which has leaders and young people who are eager to participate in opportunities that contribute to skill development related to workforce development, communication, and leadership. Citizens in the county welcome partnerships that contribute to a sense of place, and the participants in the project—military veterans—welcome the opportunity to contribute to the lives of young people. The veteran community in Macon County has wisdom to share with young people concerning vocational opportunities, the value of hard work, service to country, and much more.

**Overview of the project, including its central focus**

The Library of Congress Veterans Oral History Project is an effective model that provides volunteers an opportunity to collect oral history interviews that are added to a national collection and made available to the public via the Internet. The interview process is clearly outlined in a handbook, and the technological needs are minimal. For last year’s ATP project, we worked with students in Tuskegee Public School’s Media Club so that they shadowed college students who interviewed veterans. We also planned and executed a Veteran’s Day program and included one TPS student as co-moderator of a panel with veteran interviewees. We learned a lot regarding scheduling and integration of students as interviewers, and this next year we will implement changes to more effectively include TPS students in the shadowing process. Because of LOC guidelines and the nature of interviews, TPS students cannot be the lead interviewer, but we plan to expand the number of questions that students ask veterans. Training for interviews will occur through either classroom sessions or college student interactions with TPS students during the Club’s afterschool sessions. We cannot fully develop the plan until we determine college student schedules and Club schedules.

A 2017 ATP student is preparing a Website of 2017-18 for launch soon, and college students and 6th grade students will be able to utilize and build on that work. In addition to the skills developed for interviewing and producing audio files and a Web site, the project will provide a leadership opportunity for 6th graders to develop cultural resources from their community. One significant plan for expansion of the project from last year includes developing existing and future interviews as social studies classroom lessons. We experimented with a model at the very end of our 2017-18 project when we hosted the Media Club at Auburn for a field trip related to technology production. In a computer lab, TPS students listened (individually) to veteran interviews and answered questions from specific sections of the interview related to the veteran’s service and their reflection on the service. For the 2018-19 project, college students will develop worksheets for each interview and test them with TPS students in classrooms.

**Community Visit Timeline**

*Note: In addition to these “group visits” described below, college students who are available during the Media Club meeting times will travel to Tuskegee to participate in Club meetings and further develop the project and partnership.*

**Late August: 6th Grade class visits; hour-long sessions on the following questions:**

* What is the Library of Congress?
* What is the Veterans Oral History Project?
* What interests 6th graders about the military service of citizens?

**Early September: 6th Grade class visits: hour-long sessions developed using the interviews from the 2017-18 project.**

* What can be learned from an interview with military veterans?
* Identify the ways in which military service shaped the veterans’ character and future career.

**Early October**

Interview veterans at Tuskegee Public School. Our goal is to collect ten interviews overall during the semester, and we hope the majority will be collected on one day in early October in cooperation with the school. We will use our existing veterans contacts for developing interviewees, and we will submit a press release on the project to the local newspaper.

**Late October**

Make-up days for veteran interviews. We know that not all ten veterans will be able to attend a particular day of interviews in October, so we are prepared to follow up and coordinate as needed.

**Around Nov 11**

Building on the success (and learning from the challenges) of the November 2017 program, we will coordinate with principal and teacher an opportunity for all 6th grade students to meet veterans and hear their stories. Five veterans participated in 2017. We conduct the program so that students have a chance to ask questions of veterans, and we also provide the opportunity for veterans to ask questions of students.

**At the ATP Conference**

We plan to travel a day early so that we can conduct a virtual meeting between staff of the Library of Congress and students at Tuskegee Public School. In 2017, we were able to facilitate interaction, and we believe we can have a more effective plan (and technology) to make the meeting as meaningful as possible.

**Goals/Objectives**

* Goal 5: Leadership and Community Capacity: Veterans are an underutilized educational resource in Macon County, since they have experiences and wisdom that can provide positive contributions to the lives of young people. Participating in interviews with local citizens aligns well with Action Objective #2 of Goal 5: “Empower and support next-generation leaders and encourage authentic engagement in local and regional economic and community development.” Although the interviews are primarily related to military experience, we have veterans reflect on how their military experience shaped their post-military lives. One interviewee, for example, is an entrepreneur who recently established a bed-and-breakfast in Macon County. Another interviewee volunteers extensively with senior citizens in the community to increase the quality of life for all. Interviews provide next-generation leaders a view of community members that they might not receive otherwise.
* Goal 4: Natural and Cultural Assets: We will underscore for students that veteran interviews are a cultural asset worth saving and that the people who have served the country in the armed forces continue to serve as community assets. The project connection with the Library of Congress helps underscore that interviews are a national as well as community asset. Next-generation leaders in Macon County benefit from knowing that people outside of the county benefit from the cultural assets that are developed as a result of the project. The project site [www.maconcountyveterans.org](http://www.maconcountyveterans.org) will be officially launched during the project period, and we plan to announce via a press release and social media.

Short-term goals of the semester project:

* Introduce college students to community engagement through a process that includes collaboration with 6th grade students, military veterans, and school personnel.
* Increase confidence and competency of students (college and 6th grade) for interviewing ten members of the community regarding military life experiences.
* Increase student appreciation of their community as a place where successful people find a meaningful and fulfilling life.
* Utilize a Web site that was created as part of the 2017-18 ATP project that will serve as a repository for the ten interviews and a basis for classroom activities utilizing the interviews.

Goals of the project:

1. Students will summarize their work at the ATP conference in Washington, D.C., on November 30-Dec 1, 2018. All students who attend the conference will be active presenters.
2. Students will create a poster for presentation at poster sessions at the Washington, D.C. conference.
3. Students will present their research to their primary partner, faculty and staff of Tuskegee Public School.
4. Students will present their research to an appropriate community organization or national conference.

**PROJECT IMPACT**

* Build on the collaborative relationship between our unit at Auburn University and Tuskegee Public School that has developed over the course of the past ATP project years, especially the Veterans Day event held in November.
* Establish a permanent, growing electronic repository of veteran interviews that will raise the profile of Macon County as a place where hardworking, successful, committed individuals live, work, and play, since we know that community perception is a critical element of community development.
* Increase long-term interest among students in vocations that are introduced to them as a result of participation in the project (e.g. media production, museums and archives, Web development, journalism, military careers).

Budget:

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Airfare | 6 fares | 350 | 2100 |
| Hotel (3 nights x $200 per night) | 3 rooms | 600 | 1800 |
| Mileage |  | 111 | 111 |
| Food |  | 489 | 489 |
|  |  | **Total** | **$4,500** |