

PUBLIUS PUBLICATIONS

HISTORICAL REVIEW EVOKES AN EMPOWERING RESPONSE

by Evelyn Candor@publius.publications.com 11:15 a.m. April 21, 2018

War has been around for more than 3,400 years and has claimed the lives of more than 108 million people in the twentieth century alone. It is estimated that anywhere between 150 million and one billion lives have been lost in wars throughout all of human history.

Depending on the circumstances, 65 to 85 percent of the American public will support a military action when it begins. In 1965, the Vietnam War had 64 percent of public support. However, as American casualties mounted, public support waned. Both the Korean and Vietnam Wars ended with less than 30 percent approval, while World War II support levels never fell below 77 percent. The Gulf War enjoyed similar levels of support. President George Washington, one of history's greatest Generals once said, "The willingness with which our young people are likely to serve in any war, no matter how justified, is directly proportional to how they perceive veterans of earlier wars were treated and appreciated by their nation."

Wars are never popular. As a matter of fact, the mere utterance of the word typically evokes a negative or adverse reaction. In a recent study, 87 percent of civilian Americans associate war to death and destruction. While images of casualties and destruction affect us all, decrying the overall mission diminishes the life, service and sacrifice of the fallen warrior. Very few civilians take the time or make the effort to find the good or the positive effect of military action.

That is not the case however, if you are lucky enough to land in Ms. Annamarie Marro's 8th grade social studies class at Mount Olive Middle School. In addition to reviewing the public's perception of past military actions and their reaction towards returning service members, Marro wanted to give her students another perspective of the benefits and undocumented successes of our military presence and intervention. Her candid approach to examine the social shunning bestowed upon our Korean and Vietnam Veterans by their own countrymen and the long term after-effects from such maltreatment was a mere springboard into the interactive workshops she had in store for her students.

Open discussions comparing past wars, the public's perception and reaction at the end of the war, and their treatment of service members shifted the student's eagerness to learn - to a sudden desire to act. As soon as Marro achieved her goal to combine academic learning with personal growth and civil responsibility, she called upon Charlie Wood Uhrmann, the founder of the All Veterans Memorial, a local non-profit organization that promotes military outreach, community awareness and service.

Uhrmann began her program by showing a PowerPoint presentation that focused on the positive impact the United States military had in the Middle East during Operation Iraqi Freedom. The students experienced a compelling transition between the Iraqi people's initial reluctance and fear of our men and women in uniform into an unwavering dependence and trust. After the presentation, Uhrmann led the students into an open discussion about the vast difference between Middle Eastern and Western culture; specifically as it relates to the lack of freedom, education and worldly possessions. She shared how her organization participated in the U.S. and Iraqi Bridging Campaign by sending more than 1,200 shipments of needed supplies to service members as a show of support. She further provided some survival techniques used on the battlefield.

Not only did the students learn about the challenges of transitioning from military to civilian life, but the trials and tribulations of wounded warriors which encompasses physical injuries and emotional struggles. Uhrmann spoke about the positive impact on a service member's recovery when they receive continued support from someone they have never met. In response, Marro and her students initiated a letter writing campaign to express their own appreciation and support to veterans who are currently hospitalized due to war related injuries at Lyons Veteran Hospital in Lyons, New Jersey. Several 3" x 5" notecards carrying messages of sincere gratitude and goodwill from the students will be delivered to the veterans on their trays during mealtime. Student(s) Zavier writes, "I have learned about the honor and respect you deserve. You are my hero", while Courtney expresses, "Thank you for fighting for me and for our freedom." Melvin hopes they are feeling better and is "grateful for all you have done", while Brandon hopes he "can repay you for your sacrifice."



The students were quizzed about their knowledge and understanding of what it is like to live on the battlefield, what it meant to give the ultimate sacrifice, the impact to the fallen warrior's loved ones and society's role during and after the war. After the discussion, the students were asked to show their support by handcrafting clay poppies to be added to one of the newest monuments being added to the AVM; the

Veteran's Remembrance Wall. Understanding that each poppy represented the life of a fallen warrior, the students took extraordinary effort to make sure their poppy was perfect enough for the wall.

Recognizing and appreciating something that cannot be seen or held cannot be assumed; it must be taught to future generations. One cannot be expected to understand what it is like to be without freedom, if they have never experienced anything else. Learning to appreciate the good qualities of people and things benefits everyone. The students in Marro's 8th grade social studies class are fortunate to have gained a personal and empowering perspective as to why we all need to be mindful of the past treatment of those who were willing to give their full measure for their countryman and how they can be the change.