



VETERANS HERITAGE PROJECT™

BUILDING CHARACTER • HONORING SERVICE • PRESERVING HISTORY

Connecting Students with Veterans™ in order to Honor Veterans, Preserve America's Heritage, and Develop Future Leaders

ANNUAL IMPACT REPORT 2022-2023



*L to R back row: Vietnam Veteran, Chris Sandner, Steph Sandner (daughter-in-law), Nic Sandner (grandson), Jeff Sandner (son)
L to R middle row: Diana Sandner (wife), Peyton Sandner (granddaughter and student interviewer)
Front row: Nina Edillo (mother-in-law)*





STRENGTHENING OUR MISSION

Awareness, growth, and sustainability are the cornerstones of our strategic plan. Over the past several years, your support accomplished much in these areas, including the creation of a new website, program curriculum embedded in a learning management platform that supports scalability, and stewarding relationships through veteran presentations and fundraising events.

This year, you strengthened our mission even more.

AWARENESS

For the first time, the chapter program has been promoted beyond word of mouth. Brochures for student recruitment and veteran outreach were developed for chapter use, and an educator brochure was created and sent to principals, history teachers, and English teachers at 157 high schools in districts where we currently have a school chapter. This resulted in 7 new school partners for FY 24, and 3 additional schools expressing future interest. This initiative will continue to expand with the aim to partner with 50 schools by FY 26.

GROWTH

Your support is helping to document how students' skills and character are enhanced each year they participate and interview veterans. Utilizing the Badgr Digital Credential system, students now earn VHP badges as they reach milestones in areas of leadership, interviews, civic engagement, scholarship, publishing, and character. Students can add the digital badge, which is embedded with skill and achievement data, to a resume, LinkedIn profile, or even a college application.

Veteran legacies inspire students to set goals and work hard to achieve their potential, which is why scholarships are an important component of our program. The Ahern family generously established the Boeggeman/Jones Civic Engagement Scholarship. This \$2,500 award recognizes a student's volunteerism and service to the community, through their participation in both VHP and activities with additional organizations.



The Character Badge is awarded after students earn any combination of four badges.

SUSTAINABILITY

Your belief in the benefits of Connecting Students with Veterans™ continues to build the financial and human capital required of a sustainable program. Three critical positions were added to our staff, in support of programming, operations, and fundraising. Gift acceptance and finance policies, and a reserves structure are maximizing our financial health. Thank you for making a difference. You are preserving history, strengthening family bonds and providing healing for our veterans, while instilling character in our next generation of leaders.

Michelle DiMuro, CFRE
Executive Director





ENRICHING EDUCATION



Over 500 community members came together to celebrate our veterans.



CHAPTER PROGRAM

23

School Partners

178

Student Participants

139

Veteran Legacies Preserved

10

Scholarships

39

Civic Engagement Activities



TEACHER FEEDBACK

95%

of students improved academics (writing, history, research)

80%

of students improved 21st century skills
(listening, critical thinking, collaboration, public speaking)

100%

of students improved character

86%

of students improved leadership skills



Chapters were excited to get back into the community, participating in Veterans Day parades, 9/11 memorial events, Wreaths Across America, and events to commemorate the 50th Anniversary of Vietnam War Veterans Day.

"This program is a must for you, especially for language or history teachers. It is a lot of work, but it is real-life history and will provide experiences for all that can't be recreated anywhere else."

—Heather Jones, 7th and 8th Grade Language Arts and History Teacher, Montessori International School

"Students need opportunities to show initiative, learn communication skills, and demonstrate respect for elders; VHP enables students to overcome challenges and to grow important skills."

—Kim Flowers, 9th Grade English Teacher, Fountain Hills High School

"This program means so much more than what you think it will when you start out. The impact it has on the students and the veterans is something that will stay with you forever."

—Nickey Page, 12th Grade English Teacher, Payson High School



BUILDING CHARACTER

STEVEN ROURICK

2023 Shadow Mountain High School Graduate
VHP Chapter President and Lead Student Editor



"Growing up, I did not have a support system. I braced every impact with force and extreme strain. My neighborhood was littered with crime at every doorstep and police on the sidelines. I was born into a small space that felt like a cage I had been trapped inside of for too long, trying to split open the metal bars of poverty. Abuse was not a stranger, and addiction became a friend to the people I knew close to me. I knew I had to escape this way of life, and the only way of breaking free was by seeking a higher education. Entering high school, I challenged myself to get involved, succeed academically, and find a means of building a sustainable future. This led me to joining VHP.

VHP has achieved wonders for my character, leadership, and communication skills. Comparing my first day of freshman year to now, I am no longer shy, I speak confidently and

proudly, and I have become a stronger leader. VHP has sparked a devotion that is unmatched because it filled the missing piece I had inside of me. It gave me three things—mentors, purpose, and guidance.

The biggest lesson I learned was from Admiral Hal Pittman. The lesson: Life has its defining moments. You will be stretched like a rubber band. You will be pushed, challenged, and face obstacles. But no matter what, look for those defining moments and succeed above all else.

Over these past four years, I have grown into an individual who earned a scholarship to Yale, when it seemed more than likely I was going to fail. VHP gave me the drive to push forward in the face of adversity to believe in myself and to explore my educational opportunities."



GRADUATING STUDENT FEEDBACK

100%

of high school seniors are pursuing continuing education

95%

developed a mentor relationship with at least one of their veterans

100%

increased leadership skills

85%

improved collaboration

80%

improved critical thinking

"There is a difference between being told you have a civic responsibility as a US citizen and hearing first-hand what it means to carry out that responsibility. It really changes your perspective."

—Annalise Masino, Collegiate High School at NWFSC

"It gave me a better insight into how much civic duty has truly impacted our lives. I learned that tough times don't last, but instead, tough people do."

—Ruben Cajigas, Ironwood Ridge High School



HONORING SERVICE

JOHN A. REPATY

Vietnam Veteran, USMC

2023 *Since You Asked XIX*

"I had avoided this experience for decades. Looking back, I don't know why. As a US Marine Corps Veteran, Veterans Heritage Project (VHP) provides the best healing and nurturing effort I have ever encountered. I served in combat in Viet Nam and have personally felt and witnessed the acknowledgement for the service of my generation, those that preceded mine, and those who have followed. VHP unites young and old across generations and provides students the experience of



John first connected with VHP in 2016, looked for ways to volunteer, and when his health allowed him, attended our annual book reception, reveling in the joy of his fellow veterans. We are so thankful John experienced the same joy this year, and that his service legacy is preserved for his family. Sadly, John passed on July 21, 2023.



VETERAN FEEDBACK

19%

shared their service story for the first time

68%

found the experience to be cathartic or healing

86%

felt the overall experience exceeded their expectations

100%

felt the book reception exceeded their expectations

98%

would recommend the program to other veterans

learning "Living History" with our Veterans. My family and friends may have heard bits and pieces of my USMC legacy; however, this is the most cogent and concise account to finally be summarized in one place. Watching the sparkle restored in the eyes of many Veterans as the students engage with them, provides value without equal. While the word "unique" has been overused, the intent and spirit of its true significance was created to describe our VHP. VHP continuously strives to improve, revitalize its value to our community, and produce experiences and relationships that cannot be created through any other efforts. Anywhere."

"I've been hesitant to share my story with many people. Moreover, my family struggled to inquire about my life, fearing it might cause distress. However, the interviews have gathered my experiences and presented them in a way that resonates with my friends and family."

—Evan Martin, Army Veteran, Iraq & Afghanistan

"As a disabled combat veteran, I think it very important to share my story and the many others that came before me and will charge hard after me. This was the best event from the initial ask, down to interview, edits, and publish.... but the event to sign was incredible... the stories, color guard, chorus all of it. MAGNIFICENT... I cannot thank you enough and I am soooo HAPPY to have been a part for this book series."

—Michael Long, Army Veteran, Desert Storm



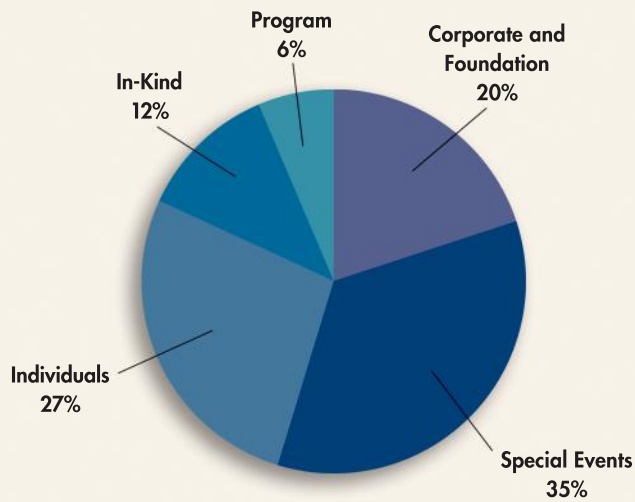
VETERANS HERITAGE PROJECT



FY 23 FINANCIAL SUMMARY

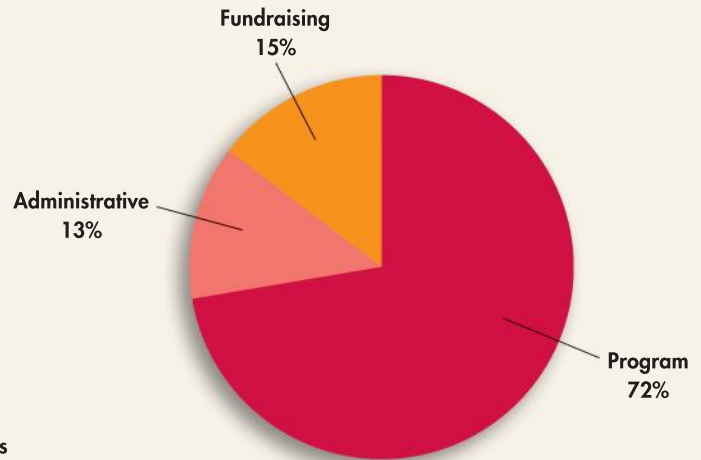
FY 23 REVENUE \$656,911

(Ending June 30, 2023)

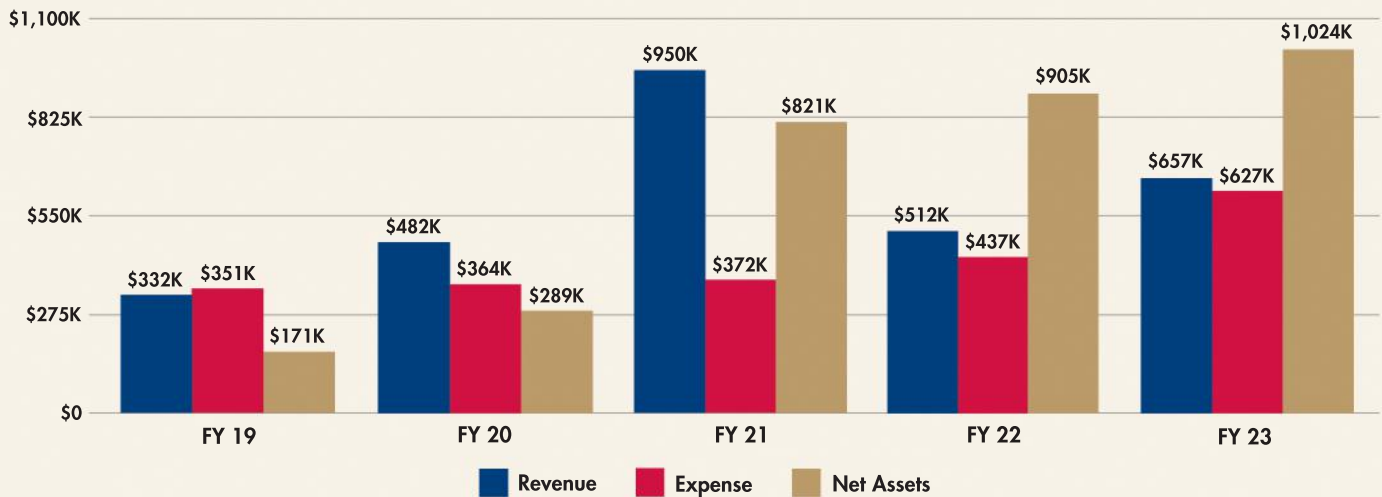


FY 23 EXPENSE \$627,904

(Ending June 30, 2023)



5-YEAR FINANCIAL SUMMARY



VHP Veterans at the 2022 Parade:
Dylan Dalzotto, GWOT; Deborah Carr, Gold War;
Courtney Scott, Vietnam; Sam Baker, WWII;
James Sharp, Korea



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* FY 24 only

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10210 N. 32nd Street, Suite C2, Phoenix, AZ 85028
602.218.4036

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