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Remembering Our
VETERANS



CAF EDUCATION CONNECTION

by Bill Shepard

Next year will mark the 75th anniversary of D-Day. It seems like only yesterday that the CAF commemorated the 70th anniversary of victory in Europe at the epic Arsenal of Democracy flyover of our nation's capital. With each passing year, our CAF Education mission to educate the next generations about veterans' service and sacrifice becomes that much more important.

Our experience in running education programs shows that a small group approach is one of the most effective ways to reach the youth audience. Not only that, but our honored guests find it greatly beneficial to them as well.

If you haven't done so already, your Unit might benefit from hosting a "Meet a Veteran" event and letter writing activity. Many CAF units experience great success from programs that bring together veterans and kids, literally introducing students to a vanishing asset and encouraging them to express gratitude to veterans through letters of thanks.

The CAF Dallas/Fort Worth Wing, in conjunction with the Dallas-based CAF Red Bird Squadron, has delivered over 4,000 letters to veterans in the Dallas/Fort Worth area in the three years we have been involved with this project. This engaging program helps kids understand the importance of honoring and respecting our military veterans, thank our veterans for their service, and strive to live by the CAF "Rise Above" principles. When preparing our veterans to speak to our groups, we encourage them to share their personal stories and relate to these principles: Aim High, Believe in Yourself, Use Your Brain, Be Ready to Go, Never Quit, and Expect to Win.

Hearing about these ideals from those who lived them is better than any textbook lesson on World War II. When I've watched this

experience unfold between veterans and high school students in particular, it's always interesting to see the awe on students' faces when they realize the veteran was most likely not much older than them when they answered the call to service. Time and again, I've been amazed at how many students leave this experience with a new perspective. It's so rewarding.

This event can also tie in nicely to a "Flight Plan for Life" goal-setting activity. Depending on time allotted, CAF members can create an additional activity station that encourages students to think critically about their future aspirations and write down a plan for how they can achieve it based on the "Rise Above" principles. Both activities are low-cost, easy to implement, and impactful.

We have found that veterans not only appreciate being honored, but they are also grateful for the opportunity to share their experiences in this setting. By including a "Meet a Veteran" event, your CAF unit can create another outlet for elderly veterans in your community to be valued, make an impact on youth, and showcase the CAF's commitment to educating our communities through honor and remembrance.

"Meet a Veteran" and "Flight Plan for Life," along with detailed instructions for other engaging outreach activities, can be found in the "Resources" section of www.CAFeducation.org.

Do you have ideas to share about a veteran activity or other interesting program? You can follow the steps on the "Share your resource" section of the website to send us your materials and we'll add them to our collection on CAFeducation.org. ■