



Veteran Motorcyclists Joining Forces to Promote Service Learning

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The National Service Ride Project is joining forces with the Orange County Youth Bureau and Orange County American Legion Riders as veteran motorcyclists roar into schools to help mobilize youth to better themselves, their community, and their country through service-learning—at assemblies, social studies and health classrooms, volunteer fairs, a virtual volunteer portal, and other resources. The adaptive, community-based initiative synergizes a coalition of government, veteran, community, and volunteer organizations to assist school districts integrate service-learning into their multiyear curriculum strategy.



The project helps schools foster an inclusive, self-empowering narrative of service, from grade to high school by learning its meaning and value from role models and peer examples—how service is kindness, serving your community is serving your country, and how service doesn't require a uniform, a change of address, or a good grade point average. Service

learning helps them gain the self-confidence and leadership, teambuilding, problem-solving, and other practical skills they need no matter their pathway forward. In addition to growing social connections and networks beyond their smart phones, they can build resumes and gain valuable experience and personal references.



In support of New York State's Seal of Civic Readiness Program, the Youth Bureau helps schools identify county community service and veterans' organizations, volunteer groups, and local businesses for the high school run fairs. With access to the United Way of the Dutchess-Orange Region's virtual volunteer portal, youths can better find community service-learning opportunities after school, over the summer, or beyond graduation. Schools can track and certify service-learning hours, gathering data on curriculum outcomes.

Adaptable and flexible to fit growing educational community service requirements and the constraints of each school, the project's platforms extend curriculum in a continuous effort to help students efficiently and effectively find volunteer opportunities best for them. Participating schools like its one-stop resourcing to encourage and empower young people to help themselves by helping others, whether they sit in the front or the back of the class. So far, the project is working with at least nine Orange County school districts to leverage its resources to build a multiyear service-learning curriculum strategy.



The project also features focus group discussions among faculty, school boards, PTAs as well as school and local media coverage to grow constituency and public support—including parents wanting their kids to learn critical social virtues and values. Veteran, police, firefighter, first responder, and other volunteer groups that schools source gain new and younger members, strengthening the communities they serve. Connecting service veterans giving back with young citizens paying it forward also promotes an empowering and unifying narrative on citizenship, service, and social responsibility. Passing the generational baton of leadership

this way gives our youth the best chance to go forward together in a complex and challenging world.

Working closely with the County Youth Bureau, Veterans Service Agency, Veterans Coalition, and Hudson Valley Veterans Task Force, the project looks to scale up regionally, statewide, and nationally. To learn more, go to www.nationalserviceride.net or call Colonel (Ret.) Christopher Holshek, the project's founder, at 1.845.800.6880. To leverage the program at your school or college, contact Michael Bark at the Orange County Youth Bureau at: www.orangecountygov.com/657/Youth-Bureau or call 1.845.615.3614.