

Woodbridge History Essay

"This is a war to end all wars"- President Woodrow Wilson, 1917. In 1914, the Great War, otherwise known as WWI (World War I), began. Franz Ferdinand, an Austro-Hungarian Empire noble, and his wife were murdered on June 28, 1914. This killing caused a plethora of domino-like effects, which led to a global war. The two opposing sides in WWI were the Central, and the Allied Powers. Germany, the Ottoman Empire, Bulgaria, and the Austro-Hungarian Empire were part of the Central Powers. Britain, France, Russia, Italy, Japan, and the USA were part of the Allied Powers. The United States of America didn't join the war until 1917, the year before the war ended. German U-ships were attacking American passenger boats, thus leading to America joining the fight. The US joining WWI was the climax of the fighting as we provided fresh soldiers who weren't battle-worn, economic relief, and supplies to the Allied Powers. During World War I, new revolutionized war technology, and fighting called trench warfare was used. This caused over 8 million soldiers to perish. 13 million innocents also lost their lives during the war because of starvation, disease, and military killings/encounters. Although WWI brought on a time of conflict, violence, sorrow, and melancholy, Woodbridge residents still came together and helped in any way they could during the war.

One way that Woodbridge residents helped with war efforts was by buying "Liberty Bonds." Liberty Bonds were somewhat like IOUs that were bought from the US government. The government promised those who were willing to buy Liberty Bonds

their money back at a certain date and interest that would grow. The main goal of Liberty Bonds was to help raise money for the war. They were useful because they helped improve the living conditions of American soldiers. "This same money invested in a Liberty Bond will be used to add comforts to the life of our boys in the trenches and possibly save the lives of our wounded." (Perth Amboy Evening News October 9, 1917.) Without the money collected from Liberty Bonds, living conditions would have been harsher than they were for American soldiers fighting overseas. The money collected from the sales of Liberty Bonds was also used to buy medical equipment. Without this medical equipment, more people with war-related injuries could have lost their lives. In addition, the purchase of Liberty Bonds was helpful because it facilitated the construction of new military ships. "The ships we have built and are building should persuade the most cautious investor to put his money into Liberty Bonds of the fourth issue." (Perth Amboy Evening News October 3, 1918) The vast amount of military ships that were being fabricated using the Liberty Bonds money was highly encouraging. Those who were hesitating on buying Liberty Bonds should've been assured that their money wasn't being put to waste. The money coming in from the purchase of Liberty Bonds was, in fact, helping the production of military ships exponentially.

The second way that Woodbridge residents helped with war efforts was by participating in the American Red Cross campaign "Knit Your Bit." The American Red Cross targeted the campaign toward women who wanted to help with the war efforts. Back then, women could not go abroad and fight for their country, so being involved in these programs was the only way that they could help during the time of war. Women knitted socks, sweaters, wool helmets/wristlets, socks, and scarves for soldiers. The

American Red Cross provided information and standards that knitted clothes would have to follow in newspapers. For example, the socks that were knit for the soldiers could have been in any color, but the knitted outerwear should've been in gray or khaki. This Knit Your Bit program was helpful because the socks knitted by the women were used to keep soldier's feet warm while they were standing in the trenches. "Next winter those warm, woolen socks will be an untold comfort to the lad who has to stand out the long dreary watches in the cold, damp, trenches." (Perth Amboy Evening News August 13, 1918) Having these woolen pieces of clothing helped the soldiers have some comfort while residing in the terrible conditions of the trenches. Another way that this campaign helped war efforts was because the knitted garments helped soldiers feel that even though they couldn't fight, women were still supporting them. "These things help us to feel that the women are with us." (Perth Amboy Evening News December 1, 1917) If the knitted garments helped soldiers feel supported, then they would be more determined to lead the Allied Powers to victory.

The third way that Woodbridge residents helped with war efforts was by joining one of the many Comfort Committees. These committees hosted fundraising events such as carnivals, block parties, block dances, bazaars, and festivals. The money collected from the events was mainly used to buy tobacco for soldiers abroad. Buying tobacco with the money raised was helpful because it helped bring happiness to the soldiers. "When the fact is considered that a twenty-five cent package of tobacco will afford a soldier a week's pleasure." (Perth Amboy Evening News August 28, 1917) As you can see, the small purchase of tobacco could provide so much pleasure to soldiers fighting and in trenches. Besides hosting fundraising events, Comfort Committees also

prepared comfort kits for soldiers. These kits were helpful because they provided them with supplies that they may not have received. "These comfort kits are splendid things, and they lend greatly to the material welfare of the gun toting fighters." (Perth Amboy Evening News November 26, 1917) Soldiers who had their necessities filled and had the supplies they needed, fought better than those who didn't.

In conclusion, if I was a township resident during the time of WWI, I would've helped by participating in the Knit Your Bit program. Fighting in trenches, and facing the bitter cold without having protective outerwear were some of the many anguishes that I would never have to experience. The best way to help soldiers feel less cold during the winter was to knit them protective outerwear. Women not being allowed to register for the draft is another reason why I would've participated in the Knit Your Bit. The Knit Your Bit program was important because it helped provide comforts to soldiers. Likewise, knitted garments would protect them against harsh winter climates. Ultimately Knit Your Bit gave women who couldn't apply for the draft an opportunity to fight for their country without being on the battlefield. Woodbridge residents doing whatever they could to support the war efforts is a remarkable example of local community members coming together to help a cause that they're passionate about. Woodbridge residents helped make soldiers feel cared for even if that meant doing their part in different ways. Think about a cause you're passionate about and try helping out. Who knows maybe you'll end up having a great impact on someone's life, or just putting a smile on their face?