

VOICES



The Newsletter of the Touchstones' Discussion Project

www.touchstones.org

We build critical thinking, communication, leadership, and community through respectful, engaging discussion-based programs for all people.

- New Veterans Initiative with the National Endowment for the Humanities
- Touchstones Week 2017
- Expanding Programs in Public Schools Across the Country
- Touchstones in Elder Care



Completing the Odyssey: A New Touchstones Program for Veterans

Touchstones is proud to be receiving a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) to develop and run a discussion program with 45 veterans in three groups this coming fall. The award comes through the NEH Education Division funding opportunity "Dialogues on the Experience of War," which aims to bring veterans together to connect meaningfully through the humanities and in relation to their service.



NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE
Humanities

Our program, "A Journey Home: Completing the Odyssey," includes eight sessions run by discussion leaders trained by Touchstones plus an additional session at the Library of Congress. Each group will explore selections from Homer's *The Odyssey* that are juxtaposed with contemporary works touching on parallel themes of leadership, courage, loyalty, and the challenges soldiers face when returning to civilian life. As part of their program engagement, all participants will be invited to create a permanent project reflecting their own odyssey to be entered into the Veterans History Project, a permanent collection at the Library of Congress.

large part due to a great article about Touchstones Week in **The Capital Gazette**. To read the full article please click [here!](#)

Although registration is closed online, if you would like to host a discussion group or attend the Annapolis-area discussion on May 2nd, just let us know by emailing jm@touchstones.org.

We're looking forward to sharing photos, insights, and updates of how collaborative discussion is fostering community and understanding throughout Touchstones Week.



Not Sure How to Host a Group? Here's a little inspiration...

This group of friends from the Bay Forest Senior Community in Annapolis, MD will be participating in Touchstones Week. If they can do it, so can you! All it takes is a gathering area and a few friendly faces. As Diane Flemming, a Bay Forest member, said:

"I certainly agree with 'It makes one think!' and we've become a close knit group of friends through our Touchstones experience!"



Touchstones Week: A 7-day celebration bringing people together to share ideas and foster understanding and connection!

Email Jenn Macris for More Information about Touchstones Week!

Touchstones Expands in Public Schools Around the Country!

Touchstones programs engage hundreds of new students of all ages every month. Here are some of the most recent implementation sites:

Roseland University Prep High School, Santa Rosa, CA; Salida Montessori, Salida, CO; Graham and Park Elementary, Cambridge, MA; Kent County School



District, MD; University of Maryland Baltimore County, MD; Aberdeen High School, Aberdeen, MS; Highland Park Middle School, Highland Park, NJ; Columbia Secondary School, NYC; Renaissance Charter High School, NYC; Victor Intermediate School, Victor, NY; Brevard High School, Brevard, NC; Twin Valley Elementary, Elverson, PA; James Simons Elementary and Malcolm Hursey Elementary, Charleston, SC; Middle Tennessee State University Graduate School of Education,

Murfreesboro, TN; Floris Elementary, Herndon, VA; and Bayside Middle School, Bayside, WI.

In addition, Touchstones staff has a busy coaching and training schedule this spring and summer, including the Community Montessori School of Charleston; Columbia Secondary School in NYC; Learning Community Charter School in NJ; Wilmington Montessori School in DE; and Two Roads Charter in Arvada, CO.

We will be running two Open-Enrollment Workshops at our offices in Stevensville, MD on May 6 and August 23. There are seats available in both workshops, so please contact schoolprograms@touchstones.org for more information

Using Discussion and Connection to Foster Resident-Led Care

For about 20 years, Touchstones has been running programs with older adults. Our school programs materials were introduced into a residential facility on Long Island in



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New York in the mid-1990s thanks to a friend, and there was instant recognition of the value that discussion offered that population. Older adults benefit from the social engagement, intellectual stimulation and exposure to new ideas, while feeling a sense of belonging and relevance with people from potentially very different backgrounds. These are three of the four most important factors identified for successful aging.

Over the decades, many thousands of seniors have participated in Touchstones discussions run by our staff and by volunteers—from Maryland to California. But what would it mean to develop a Touchstones program specifically for adults diagnosed with dementia? Thanks to an introduction from our partners at [ETC Montessori](#) in Houston, TX, we are exploring that very question with Dr. Cameron Camp from the [Center on Applied Research in Dementia](#). Dr. Camp's work focuses on shifting to resident-led care wherein people with dementia retain a greater degree of self-efficacy and purpose by purposeful activity and participation in decision-making. Using methods from Montessori education combined with a belief that environment is itself part of treatment, Dr. Camp proposes to revolutionize how people with dementia are understood. His method looks closely and critically at all aspects of care—from the physical surroundings to the forms of treatment and patient engagement. We are excited to investigate how Touchstones' experience and programming can support this vital and pressing work in elder healthcare.

Touchstones: Building critical thinking & collaborative leadership



Touchstones is a registered 501 (c) 3 organization that relies on your support and partnership to ensure that our proven educational programs are accessible to all people. Support this crucial work in education with your gift today.

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