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

Touchstonesis 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 groupsthis coming fall. The award comes through the NEH Education Division fundingopportunity "Dialogues on the Experience of War," whichaims to bring veterans together to connect meaningfully



Humanities

through the humanities and in relation to their service.

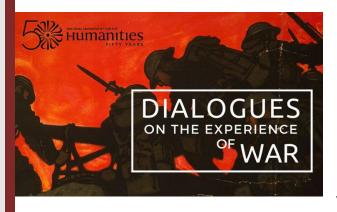
Our program, "A Journey Home: Completingthe Odyssey," includes eight sessions run by discussion leaders trained by Touchstones plus an additional session at the Library of Congress. Each groupwill explore selections from Homer's *TheOdyssey* that are juxtaposed with contemporary works touching on parallelthemes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

Indesigning and conducting this unique program, Touchstones is assisted by adistinguished advisory panel. Maryland State Sen. John Astle, Col. USMA (Ret)and Dr. Chris Howard, Col.USAF (Ret), President of Robert Morris University, bringtheir experience in military and civilian leadership, while Capt. Jeff Macris, USNA;Roger Carstens, Col. US Army (Ret).; Erinn Woodside, Capt. USAF (Sep); and MSgt.Danielle Harmon, USAF afford the program their perspectives on recent service and thetransition to civilian roles. Capt. John Ralph, Ph.D., USNA who specializes inmental health of military personnel and Michelle Montemayor, Ph.D., M.D., NYUMedical School contribute their expertise in mental health issues related to service and the return to civilian life. Margareta de Grazia, Ph.D., ProfessorEmeritus, University of Pennsylvania, supports the academic elements within theprogram.

Lookfor more reports about this exciting program in the months to come. To view our press release please click <u>here</u>.

Formore information about this program, please email Stefanie Takacs, Touchstones Executive Directors @ st@touchstones.org.

Any views, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed in this article do not necessarily represent those of the National Endowment for the Humanities.



To learn more about the important work the National Endowment for Humanities has done with veterans and the program we are proud to be part of, please visit their site.



To learn more about the Veterans History Project, a part of the American Folklife Center at the Library of Congress in Washington D.C., please visit their <u>site</u>.



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Touchstones Week: Building Community Through Discussion

Touchstones Week is just around the corner (May 1st -7th), and we are so excited! We have 22 groups registered—from Ontario, Canada in the north to South Carolina in the south, California to the west and New York to the east, and many places in-between. Based on a great response to our own locally hosted discussion in Annapolis on May 2nd, we're anticipating 30-40 people at that event.

Some Touchstones Week participants are already friends and supporters of Touchstones, but many are just getting introduced to the Touchstones method, thanks in

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 agreewith 'It makes one think!" and we've become a close knit group offriends through our Touchstones experience!"



Touchstones Week: A 7-day celebration bringing peopletogether 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



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.



Touchstones Discussion Project | (410) 604-3309 | www.touchstones.org

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