



City of Arts & Innovation

News Release

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Riverside Public Library Urges Veterans to Document War Memorial Tattoos

“War Ink” exhibit will show how veterans commemorate experiences in Iraq and Afghanistan

RIVERSIDE, Calif. – The Riverside Public Library is part of an innovative drive to create an online exhibit of how California veterans who served in Iraq or Afghanistan are using tattoo art to commemorate their experiences at war.

“War Ink” is a multimedia exhibit that will feature 30 veterans from throughout the state explaining the significance of their wartime tattoos to the StoryCorps Military Voices Initiative, a nationally acclaimed platform for veterans, service members and military families.

The project seeks to honor the voices of veterans, amplify their experiences and let them know the nation is listening. Riverside was invited to participate in the effort by the Contra Costa County Library, which helped create the project.

“The Riverside Public Library is honored to be involved in such a dynamic and innovative effort,” Riverside Library Director Tonya Kennon said. “Riverside ranks among the top 5 counties in the state and among the top 20 counties in the nation that Iraq and Afghanistan vets call home. It is my hope that local veterans will come forward to tell their stories through ‘War Ink.’”

Veterans interested in the project are encouraged to contact Jason Deitch, the project’s curator and scholar, directly at jasonadeitch@gmail.com or 510-593-8423. Deitch, a former combat medic and sociologist, created the project along with Project Director Chris Brown of the Contra Costa County Library.

The initiative is an opportunity for veterans to tell how their tattoo art serves as reminders of experiences they and the people they served with had in Iraq and Afghanistan. Organizers noted that veterans often have tattoos that celebrate their service by depicting what they choose to remember.

“War Ink” tattoos will be photographed by Shaun Roberts, a San Francisco-based photographer whose work has been featured in various magazines.

The Placer County Library will display “War Ink” at www.placer.ca.gov/library beginning on Veterans Day, which will be observed on Tuesday, Nov. 11 this year. The online exhibit will be linked to the Riverside Public Library website at www.riversideca.gov/library

“War Ink” is being organized by an ever-growing collaborative that includes nationally renowned StoryCorps; grant-makers Cal Humanities and the Pacific Library Partnership; and many of the state’s library systems.

“We are delighted to be partnering with Contra Costa County Library to celebrate the diverse and vibrant stories of California’s veteran and military community,” said StoryCorps Founder and President Dave Isay. “In doing so, we remind one another of our shared humanity, strengthen and build the connections between people, teach the value of listening, and weave into the fabric of our culture the understanding that every life matters.”

“War Ink” was made possible through two grants awarded to the Contra Costa County Library.

Cal Humanities, an independent nonprofit state partner of the National Endowment for the Humanities, first saw the potential of the project and awarded the library a \$10,000 Community Stories Grant to supplement the commitment of StoryCorps to record the stories of 18 veterans for its Military Voices Initiative.

Pacific Library Partnership more than doubled the project’s resources with a \$15,000 Innovation and Technology Opportunity Grant, allowing the project to expand beyond Contra Costa County.

For more information, please contact Placer County Director of Library Services Mary George at 530-886-4550 or send her an e-mail at mgeorge@placer.ca.gov.