According to statistics provided by a CNN report, each day in the US, 22 returning veterans commit suicide. A frightening and horrific statistic that Craig Klawuhn and Larry Anmuth were not aware of when they started a pilot Peace Education Program for military veterans in Asheville.

Finding Peace on the Battlefield of Existence

Special Report

Craig and Larry had become friends when they met in Asheville, finding many similarities. Both went to Penn State University and served during the Vietnam War in the '60s. They know how war wrecks your heart and feelings, not to mention the physical wounds.

So when the Peace Education Program (PEP) started reaching into the community arena, they knew they had to do something for veterans. In Buncombe County, North Carolina, where they live, there are over 6000 veterans from Vietnam, Iraq, and Afghanistan Wars. They started with a small pilot program with 5 veteran participants.

"As the PEP progresses, you can see how everyone becomes attentive and still. You see the expressions on the face of participants. It touches their hearts," says Craig Klawuhn. "Having been to Vietnam for two tours in the US Marines, I feel humbled to have the opportunity to be a part of this Peace Program, and I, too, am benefiting immensely from listening and sharing with the other veterans. When I walk out after each session, I feel the peace and gratitude that Prem Rawat speaks about. I am in heaven."

Larry Anmuth explains that the program is straightforward, "The PEP has a simple message; it appeals! I love the expressions on their faces. 'Valuable' is a word they use a lot."

Like Larry and Craig, the participants are from the Vietnam era. As Craig puts it, "They have processed their war experience, and each one of these people are confident and committed that the PEP should be brought to younger veterans who are back from Iraq or Afghanistan."

Among the other veteran participants are Darryl Hansome, who is a 28-year veteran and officer in the Air Force; Alyce Knaflich, who served in the Women Army Corp for 19 years; Jacob Lyons, a Naval Officer who was kind enough to provide the Wysteria Inn meeting room to have the PEP workshops; Reve Shannon, who served in Da Nang for 3 years in the Air Force; and John Beirle, Bronze Star recipient in the US Army.

Reve Shannon said, “Each one of us wants to facilitate this. Over time this message just sinks in.” He adds that he loved the group. “It is easy to get isolated in your life. It brings us together with different people, and it opens things up, which is rewarding. I am going to miss it!”

With the help of Alyce Knaflich, an appointment with the doctors at the local VA Hospital has been arranged for another presentation to a larger audience consisting of young veterans returning from Afghanistan and Iraq. Alyce wants others to experience what the Peace Education Program has done for her: “Doing this program, I feel I came home, that there is a home for me.”