

Ventura's Big Read event starts March 7; featured book honors our returning veterans



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Big Read, a community-wide reading program, is presented by the city's Department of Parks, Recreation & Community Partnerships in partnership with the Ventura County Library and grant funding from the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA). The focus of this year's program is Tim O'Brien's short-story collection "The Things They Carried" described as "one of the finest books ever written about combat and the human heart – how it fares under pressure, and what it can endure." Complete event information online at www.cityofventura.net/bigread.

March 7th kicks off Ventura's third Big Read with comments by Mayor Cheryl Heitmann at an exhibit of art by veterans, a video screening plus a featured book giveaway to the first 75 people in attendance. The opening event takes place at the Bell Arts Factory, 432 N Ventura Avenue at 5:30pm, during the First Fridays Ventura gallery crawl.

Mayor Heitmann, declaring in her recent State of the City address "no veteran should be homeless in the city of Ventura," inaugurates the Big Read on the same day a new resource center for veterans opens at E.P. Foster Library. Vietnam veteran and "Tortilla Flats" muralist Moses Mora is the curator of the opening art exhibit "From Hell to Healing: The Art of Vietnam Vets." Filmmaker and Ventura Film Society (VFS) founder Lorenzo DeStefano will screen the premiere of a video compilation edited by Foothill Technology High School senior Will Randall of the best of videos created by recent students across the nation inspired by the featured book.

"We hope for a big turnout of residents," said Julie Maechler, Ventura's Big Read Coordinator. "They will find information at the opening about our community partners, upcoming events and innovative ways that aim to engage our community in this collection of stories exploring the experiences of young soldiers at war and their adjustment difficulties upon returning home."

The Big Read two-month calendar of activities, all free and open to the public, includes ten discussion groups, a theater world premiere, four visual art exhibits, six author talks, three film screenings, art making, writing and design challenges for kids and high school students, and many events for veterans provided by the Ventura County Library, Ventura College, California Lutheran University, Ventura County Arts Council, Bell Arts Factory, Ventura County Veterans Services Office, Cal Vets Veterans Home, Museum of Ventura County, Barranca Vista Center, Ventura City Hall and Ventura County Government Center. Complete event schedule at www.cityofventura.net/bigread.

This release is available on the City of Ventura website at www.cityofventura.net. ###