

02/05/2014

*For Immediate Release*

February 5, 2014

Contact: Julie Maechler, 805-677-3925

Richard Newsham, 805-658-4706

### “Ventura’s Big Read” celebrates returning veterans, beginning with Feb 9 auditions & seeks community service groups to host discussion groups

A CALL FOR ACTORS, DANCERS & ESPECIALLY VETERANS—male and female, ages 18-35 years old—to audition on Sunday, February 9 at 11 am, at Aloft, 1793 E Main St in Ventura, begins a busy Big Read calendar. “Under Fire: Stories of Combat Veterans Across Generations” is a new multi-media theatre piece based upon the collected stories of combat veterans from U.S. foreign wars from WWII to Afghanistan, written and directed by Michael Arndt, with choreography by Pam Pilkenton and music composed by Christopher Hoag, to be performed as a world premiere at the Ventura College Performing Arts Center, Friday & Saturday, April 18 & 19 at 7:30 (admission free). More Info: 805/658-4720 or [glees@cityofventura.net](mailto:glees@cityofventura.net).

JOIN US FROM FEBRUARY THROUGH MAY 2 as thousands of Ventura residents will read and discuss Tim O’Brien’s short-story collection “The Things They Carried” as part of Ventura’s 3rd “Big Read.” The City of Ventura Department of Parks, Recreation & Community Partnerships, in partnership with the Ventura County Library, received a \$7,500 grant for The Big Read, a bold initiative designed to restore reading to the center of American culture by encouraging an entire community to read, discuss and participate in activities inspired by the featured book. The Big Read is a program of the National Endowment for the Arts in partnership with Arts Midwest: [www.NEABigRead.org](http://www.NEABigRead.org). More about the Big Read author and book at: <http://neabigread.org/books/thethingsthey carried/>.

### SCHEDULE of BIG READ events, to date:

**February 23-May 4** Buenaventura Art Association (BAA) group exhibit E.P. Foster Library, 651 E Main St

**February 28-March 23** Artists’ Union exhibit “The Art of the Book 5” The Sylvia White Gallery, 1783 E Main St

**March 3-28** Art Tag Design Challenge E.P. Foster Library, 651 E Main St

**March 7**, 5:30pm 1st Fridays Ventura: Bell Arts Factory exhibit: “From Hell to Healing: The Art of Vietnam Vets”

Mayor Cheryl Heitmann opens the exhibit, followed by a screening of new documentary by Lorenzo DeStefano, hosted by Bell Arts Factory, 432 N Ventura Ave, and distribution of free books to the first 75 people

**March 10**, 6-7:30pm Veterans’ Benefits Seminar and how to apply at E.P. Foster Library, 651 E Main St

**March 14**, 7pm Film Screening of Vietnam classic featuring Robin Williams at E.P. Foster Library Topping Room

**March 19**, 7pm Library Talk: CUSCI Professor Kevin Volkan takes a Psychological Look at Armed Conflict

**March 21**, 7:30pm Poet Elijah Imlay reads from his “Monsoon Blues” at E.P. Foster Library Topping Room

**March 22**, 3-5pm Author: “Return to Eden” by Army Airborne soldier at Bank of Books, 748 E Main St

**March 23**, 2-4pm Writers’ Workshop for Veterans, Elijah Imlay, Cal Vets Veterans Home, 10900 Telephone Rd

**March 25 & 26** “Little Read: Story Time at the Library” for young children at 3 different times

**March 29**, 1pm Author: “Ventura Co. Veterans: WWII to Vietnam” Jannette Jauregui Museum of Ventura Co.

**April 5**, 7-8:30pm Author: “POWs, Internees & Stragglers from WWII in the Pacific” Craig B. Smith at library

**April 7**, 7pm Film Screening Tom Cruise portrays Ron Kovic’s journey E.P. Foster Library Topping Room

**April 18-May 2** (5:30-7pm closing) Art Exhibit: “War Stories” group show at Co. Government Ctr

**April 18 & 19**, 7:30pm “Under Fire: Stories of Combat Veterans Across Generation,” at Ventura College

LOOKING FOR DISCUSSION GROUP HOSTS “We are still looking for individuals and service groups to step up and volunteer as hosts for ten discussion groups that will provide the essential thread connecting several months of author talks, film screenings, art exhibits writers’ workshops, poetry readings and other activities,” said Ventura’s Big Read Coordinator Julie Maechler. Contact Julie at 805.677.3925 or [jmaechler@cityofventura.net](mailto:jmaechler@cityofventura.net) if you or your group can help at TBD meeting dates.

“We are happy to have so many community partners provide so many innovative ways to engage our community to read this still-relevant-today collection of stories exploring the experiences of young soldiers at war and their adjustment difficulties upon returning home,” continued Maechler. Below are some Big Read highlights. All events are free and open to the public. For the complete schedule visit <http://www.cityofventura.net/bigread>.

This release is available on the City of Ventura website at [www.cityofventura.net](http://www.cityofventura.net). ###