



*Report on the Response of the Virginia War Memorial to the  
Impact of the Aging of Virginia's Population*

**Submitted on:  
November 15, 2007**

*Pursuant to legislation enacted by the Virginia General Assembly of Virginia, the Virginia War Memorial submits this report on its progress in addressing the impact of the aging of Virginia's population.*



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Virginia War Memorial*

***15 November 2007***

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*Date Submitted*

# **Virginia War Memorial**

## **Executive Summary**

The programs of the Virginia War Memorial are offered and utilized by all age groups equally. The fact that Virginia's population is aging has no impact on the Memorial's programs. Since the Memorial is utilized by a substantial number of senior citizens, accessible parking has been increased to 10% of available parking.

Internally, the Memorial faces an entirely different scenario. With a staff of four, incumbents of two of the positions are likely to retire within the next five years. Both individuals filling these positions are vital to the organization and provide a wide range of services that would be very difficult to replace without causing major interruption in the Memorial's operations. The two critical positions are the Memorial's Executive Director and Education Specialist.

The Executive Director is responsible for overseeing the Memorial's construction and renovation projects, managing the three staff members, developing the educational programs, oversees the Memorial's public relations program, and acts as the Foundation's Chief Administrative Officer. The incumbent has been active in veterans' organizations for years and is well known in the veterans' community. His retirement would leave a void between the Memorial and the veterans' community.

The Memorial's Education Specialist has many different functions, including scheduling school field trips to the Memorial, organizing and conducting student seminars as well as teacher institutes, organizing Memorial events, expanding and enhancing the Memorial's educational programs, as well as directing the volunteer program. When this position becomes vacant, the years of networking with the education and tourist officials state-wide would be lost.

Both positions are closely tied in with the Memorial's continuing operation and both require a high level of experience and knowledge both of the complexities of the duties themselves as well as interacting with the veteran community in general and how these duties each impact the visitors to and supporters of the Memorial.

The recommendation of how to assure a smooth succession would be to hire a part-time assistant to the Education Specialist and a full-time Deputy Director. The part-time assistant to the Education Specialist would help in the ever-more demanding task of organizing events, tours and seminars and learn the complexities of the position. While working with the Education Specialist, this person would become familiar with the necessary contacts and various processes of planning the different events. The Deputy Director would become known in the tight knit veterans' community as well as increase efficiency by helping handle things on site while the director is off-site giving presentations, in meetings, and developing educational programs. While doing so, both persons would learn more about the intricacies of the Education Specialist and Executive Director positions and be ready to either help someone else take the position down the road or step into it themselves.

In addition, training and involvement of the Office Manager and Artifact Collections Manager is recommended so that they can both be improved at their own jobs and be more ready to handle increased job responsibility in the face of a retirement. On-going involvement with management issues will also help prepare both employees for the future.

## Virginia War Memorial

### Agency Description

**Mission:** The Virginia War Memorial is a state monument dedicated to the preservation of the memory of Virginians who have served in the armed forces or in civilian support roles in wars and conflicts, starting with World War II, in order that liberty might live.

The Virginia War Memorial preserves the memory of these Virginians by using private and public funds to present permanent and temporary exhibitions, historical presentations, displays of military artifacts, lectures, educational outreach programs and by carefully maintaining the Memorial facilities and grounds.

The Memorial continues to improve the educational programs and facilities to keep alive forever the memory of those who made sacrifices so that Virginians and all the citizens of the United States will remain free.

**Roles and Responsibilities:** The Virginia War Memorial's role is to honor Virginia veterans by teaching this and future generations what veterans in the past and present sacrifice and fight for so that the nation can remain a free country. The Memorial does this through many educational programs and events.

Through the year, the Memorial holds numerous events open to the general public. All events are family friendly, free to attend, honor veterans, teach history and instill patriotism. In addition, the Memorial also conducts four student seminars, a JROTC week, and will conduct six teacher seminars in 2008.

The centerpiece of the Memorial's educational programs is *Virginians at War*. This is an award-winning project for which over 800 veterans have been interviewed on camera about their wartime experiences. These interviews are then used to create fifteen to twenty minute long documentary video segments (a time frame that easily fits in teachers' class schedules) about a specific history-changing wartime event. To date, fourteen films have been produced with another nearly finished. The first six films were packaged together into a Volume I package, along with lesson plans tying each to the Virginia Standards of Learning (SOLs), and sent at no cost to the schools to every middle and high school in the Commonwealth. The *Virginians at War* series has aired on PBS channels across the state and has received much praise from students, teachers and others who have seen it.

Another educational program in development is *Into Battle*, a near-virtual reality film that will place the audience on a virtual battlefield. The vision is to, with the use of surround sound, strobe lights, vibration machines and other technology, to make bombs explode under the viewer's chair and snow fall from the sky, placing the viewer in as realistic as possible battlefield setting so they can learn what the average soldier lives through during war.

The Memorial's other educational program is *Salute to Virginia Veterans*, which is an online database of Virginia veterans, including those whose names are engraved on the Shrine of Memory's walls and those still alive. Anyone who has served in the US Military and have lived in Virginia can be entered into the database and veterans, friends and family members alike have submitted entries into the database. The hope is that the database would impress upon a user the vast scope and sacrifice necessary to keep the country free.

## Virginia War Memorial

### Data Requested

1. 22,000 people have received services from the agency in the past fiscal year.
2. The programs of the Virginia War Memorial are offered and utilized by all age groups equally. The fact that Virginia's population is aging has no impact on the Memorial's programs. Since the Memorial is utilized by a substantial number of senior citizens, accessible parking has been increased to 10% of available parking.
3. No programs are specifically designed to serve seniors 65 and older. The Memorial's programs are open to and utilized by all age groups.
4. The Virginia War Memorial conducts the majority of its programs during daylight hours in an effort to be "senior-friendly."
5. The effect of the Memorial's own aging workforce on its ability to deliver services has a current potential to be very great. Two of the Memorial's four employees are nearing retirement age, both positions being vital to the on-going operation of the Memorial. One of these positions is the Executive Director, who is the Virginia War Memorial's agency head, leads the Memorial's educational programs, and is the sole staff manager. The other is a wage position, the Educational Specialist, who is also vital to the on-going success of the educational mission.

It is recommended that the Memorial recruit both a full-time Assistant Director and a wage assistant to the Education Specialist. These two new positions would serve to not only help to expand programs and services, but could also be mentored and take additional training. These individuals would then be ready to either step into their counterpart's position themselves when (s)he chooses to retire or greatly help someone else take the position more seamlessly.

It is also recommended that all positions continue to be as involved with management as possible so that each can better be prepared for the Executive Director's upcoming retirement and take outside training so that they can continue improving at their own jobs.

The operational costs of the Virginia War Memorial would be increased by the hiring of two additional staff, but it would save from potential severe interruption in day-to-day operations in the long-term. Currently, no one is capable or prepared to take over the Executive Director position should he retire. There is also no one fully aware of the intricacies of the Educational Specialist's duties to take over hers.

6. No additional services or programs have been implemented to address the impact of the aging of Virginia's population.