

# U.S. MILITARY VETERANS CONTRIBUTE TO ARCHAEOLOGY

June 29, 2012 aeadams83 Community Archaeology, Day of Archaeology, Day of Archaeology 2012, Digital Archaeology, Education, Excavation, Periods, Prehistory, Survey Anthropology, Archaeology, Collection Management, Curation, U.S. Corps of Engineers, Veterans

Veterans and archaeologists work side-by-side on a daily basis at the Veterans Curation Program (VCP). Although this is Day of Archaeology 2012, the focus of the VCP is always on the veterans. Helping these men and women who served our country in the military is our ultimate goal. In the process, these individuals preserve archaeological collections and associated documentation generated by U.S. Corps of Engineers projects.

Many veterans leave their military service wounded and disabled, facing the daunting task of transitioning from the military to civilian life. They need of a comfortable environment to learn new skills and build confidence as they identify and pursue a career path. That's where archaeology comes into the picture. The staff members of the VCP hire and train veterans who served in all branches of the U.S. military to rehouse and catalog archaeological collections. A majority of the participants in the program served during the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan. Like so many veterans, some of the participants have experienced Traumatic Brain Injuries and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. Each day is a new learning experience as the archaeologists teach the veterans about processing the collections, and the veterans teach the archaeologists about their experiences and military culture. This give-and-take process helps us tailor the program to the needs of these deserving men and women.

Founded in 2009, the Veterans Curation Program began to as a way to provide valuable job skills to veterans while preserving culturally significant archaeological collections owned or administered by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Veteran participants are hired as archaeological laboratory technicians for up to six months and trained extensively on archaeological and collections management principles by archaeologists, archivists, and

historians. Educational lecturers are invited to the laboratories to help the veterans put their contribution into a broader context so that they more fully appreciate our national patrimony and understand the disciplines of archaeology and collections management.

There are three VCP laboratory locations: Alexandria, Virginia, Augusta, Georgia, and St. Louis, Missouri. The staff archaeologists are responsible for having the labs open five days a week. Schedules are set by veterans to take into account various necessary medical visits and other commitments, such as meetings with counselors and therapists, other employment opportunities, and school schedules for individuals pursuing degrees. Typically each day, veterans work on stations that include document rehabilitation, artifact processing, data entry, report writing, digital photography of artifacts, and digitization of documents. This is an abbreviated list of some of the activities that take place in our labs. Many of the tasks are ones that occur in any ordinary archaeology lab, but the staff also assists veterans with professional growth and development. Time is allotted for resume writing, job searches, interview practice, and researching possible educational opportunities. Veterans are also encouraged to attend job fairs and network in the community.

Our measures of success are factored on how many veterans have been helped and the amount of collections that have been processed. The best news is that the Veterans Curation Program has trained and employed 102 veterans as of this post. Of the veterans who have completed the program, 82% are successfully employed and/or continuing their education in various degree programs. In terms of the collections, over 51 linear feet of archives and 669 boxes of artifacts have been rehabilitated. A digital collection is being created with the intent to eventually make data available online to researchers, educators, and the public. To learn more about the VCP, please visit our website at [www.VeteransCurationProgram.org](http://www.VeteransCurationProgram.org).



