



SUBMISSION FORM

All submission forms must include the following information. Separate submission forms must be turned in for each eligible program. **Deadline: July 1, 2023.** Please include this submission form with the electronic entry. If you do not receive an email confirming receipt of your entry within 3 days of submission, please contact [Gage Harter](#).

PROGRAM INFORMATION

County: Chesterfield County

Program Title: Chesterfield Remembers Oral History Project

Program Category: Communications

CONTACT INFORMATION

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SIGNATURE OF COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR OR DEPUTY/ASSISTANT COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

Name: Joseph P. Casey, Ph.D.

Title: County Administrator

Signature: Joseph P. Casey, Ph.D.

Digitally signed by Joseph P. Casey, Ph.D.
DN: cn=Joseph P. Casey, Ph.D., o=Chesterfield County, ou=County Administration,
email=caseyjoe@chesterfield.gov, c=US
Date: 2023.06.27 12:42:11 -04'00'



Chesterfield Remembers Oral History Project VACO Application 2023

Executive Summary

Chesterfield County Public Library (CCPL), situated in central Virginia, is a library system with ten locations throughout the county. The library's mission is to enhance the lives of our citizens by providing tools for a lifetime of learning. The Chesterfield Remembers Oral History Project supports this mission by providing an accessible avenue for citizens and those with ties to Chesterfield, Virginia to record their stories for posterity. These recollections of first-hand experiences of historical events as well as everyday life provide customers now, and in the future, with an all-encompassing picture of local history.

While oral history projects are not new, this one quickly went from concept to implementation using the uniqueness of the existing Your Personal Librarian (YPL) model. The librarian supports the would-be storytellers by establishing a relationship through conversations and meetings. The library is traditionally a trusted community institution and a place that provides access to resources and this project exemplifies that long-standing belief. The collaboration allows participants to openly share not just their stories but reveal human emotions and vulnerabilities to help the audience reinterpret or reexamine history or events. Normally lost outside of family gatherings or holiday celebrations, these stories are actively preserved in a project like Chesterfield Remembers. Seeing and understanding diverse and sometimes marginalized perspectives create opportunities for compassion and tolerance which allow for individual and community growth.

Brief Overview

Chesterfield Remembers is an oral history project devoted to capturing and sharing remembrances about the people, places and events that paint a vivid picture of Chesterfield County. These audio and video vignettes are included in Chesterfield County Public Library's digital collection and are available to all.

With a focus on gathering diverse and impactful recordings, the stories become a powerful, inclusive collection created by Chesterfield's vibrant community members. These members, whether prominent or everyday citizens, share stories rich in history, drama and excitement to demonstrate the evolution of Chesterfield into the dynamic community it is today.

Problem, Challenge or Situation

Chesterfield County Public Library proposed this program whereby audio or video recordings are created in-house for inclusion in its digital collection. This initiative is a way to collect, retain and present firsthand stories for future generations to explore, understand and appreciate. These distinctive viewpoints, memories and experiences could be otherwise lost or forgotten. The library proposal included creating a small audio and video recording space at the Central Library where residents can share remembrances of their lives, military service or experience during historical events. This project strongly supports CCPL's strategic initiatives by inviting unheard voices to contribute to the county's local history repository.

Description of the Program

CCPL identified the oral history project as a priority in June 2022 with objectives of providing ways for veterans as well as those with ties to Chesterfield to share their memories, enhance the local history collection and make the files easily accessible through the library's catalog. Initially focusing on military service, the project grew to include other areas of interest such as Business and Development, Centenarians, Chesterfield History, Civil Rights Movement, Coming

to Chesterfield, I Remember When and School Days. One of the most important aspects of the project is to ensure a multicultural representation of community voices. With the scope defined, other important objectives included identifying and outfitting a space at the Central Library and purchasing appropriate technologies to capture quality recordings.

With a goal of launching the program on Veterans Day in November 2022, the first step was identifying the appropriate space within Central Library to house the recording studio and store equipment and supplies between uses. The library's business suite, a collaborative space with computers and smaller meeting tables, was selected and outfitted with sound absorbing panels and a backdrop. A mobile cart was purchased to store the video camera, audio recorder, microphone and ring light. CCPL's videographer was instrumental in creating, refining and then teaching the recording process. Staff training on how to use the video and audio recording equipment as well as the editing software began in mid- to late 2022. Additional Central staff were identified in early 2023 to be trained to make the project sustainable.

With input from CCPL's Collection Management and Tech Management teams, it was determined that the video files should be short, approximately 10 minutes, for the optimal viewing experience and to meet catalog parameters. With the equipment purchased, training underway, and interdepartmental collaboration established, the next step was to reach out to the community to find potential storytellers and start recording.

The already successful Your Personal Librarian service model makes CCPL a natural fit to coordinate this recording experience. The YPL service is a one-on-one interaction between a librarian and customer that can be as simple as printing from email or as complex as setting up a detailed plan for genealogical research. Facilitating a Chesterfield Remembers recording is conducted in a similar fashion. This process allows the librarian to support and encourage novice storytellers. The participant and librarian have a series of conversations or appointments to discuss the topic, narrow the focus of the story and if needed, conduct dress rehearsals.

Librarians emphasize the storytelling approach rather than a traditional interview. As participants consider their topic and how they will tell their story, staff encourage them to begin with an introduction and include their connection to Chesterfield. If a participant needs more assistance, staff can provide targeted, thought-provoking prompts. As each story offers a unique perspective, the participant comes with a certain comfort level and varying needs. It is up to the staff to assess and deliver individual assistance.

Chesterfield Remembers' initial collection of stories include an Iraqi war veteran, a Chesterfield real estate developer, an immigrant success story and an African American teenage race car driver. Following these initial storytellers, the second group consists of a retired dentist who became an artist, a lunch counter sit-in protester, two members of the Little League Girls Softball World Series Championship team, a percussionist with the band Kadencia and a passionate local historian specializing in Chesterfield's African American history.

Initial rollout of the project also included collaboration with CCPL's Community Services team which created the webpage, social media posts, marketing deliverables and organized informational meetings with other county departments like Aging and Disability Services and Citizen and Information Resources. With some of the stories recorded, preserved and available to the public, Director of Library Services Dr. Michael Mabe presented Chesterfield Remembers to the county's Board of Supervisors during a public meeting. As the project grows, plans include working with veterans' groups, community organizations and especially regular citizens with extraordinary stories.

Financing

With an initial investment of \$5,546.64, the sound-absorbing panels (\$1,454.88), video camera (\$949), audio recorder (\$339.96), microphone (\$179), two Adobe Creative Cloud subscriptions (\$900x2/year) and lights (\$29.99) were purchased. Additional items included the micro-SD cards (\$27.98), XLR cable (\$9.94), black muslin backdrop (\$52.95), the backdrop support kit

(\$264.95) and the presentation cart (\$437.99). Staff hours for the project are part of Central Library's regular allocation.

Program Results

Seven months after the project launch, there are completed recordings on CCPL's digital platform which are ready for viewing. The second group is in various phases of editing and near completion with more participants in the scheduling phase. The intangible success of Chesterfield Remembers is in the preservation of these distinct voices. The voices capture the feelings and emotions of an event, lifetime or snippet in time. Hearing the firsthand accounts of a soldier surviving a helicopter crash or a young Black man dreaming of being a NASCAR driver while wondering how he will be treated at the track allows listeners to transcend race, situation or time. A former flight nurse and member of Chesterfield EMS, who now works at the Richmond Veterans Affairs (VA) Medical Center, describes her medical fieldwork, while another participant describes the gut-wrenching ordeal of fleeing his native country due to guerilla warfare and drug lords. Gathering and safeguarding these stories while providing access to everyone are the core components of Chesterfield Remembers.

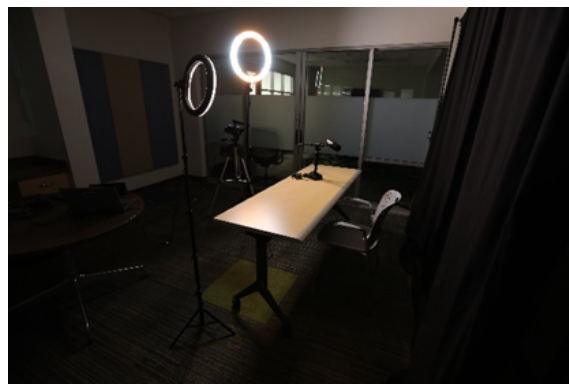
Supplemental Materials

[Access Chesterfield Remembers videos](https://bit.ly/ChesterfieldRemembers)
bit.ly/ChesterfieldRemembers



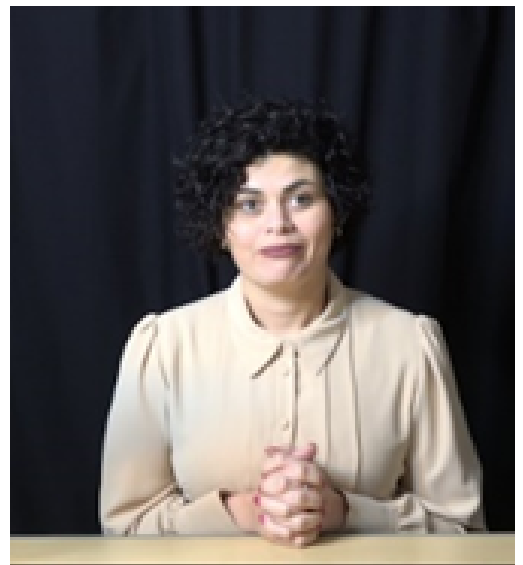
Business card that can be handed out at community events, encouraging community members to share their stories.

Recording Studio





Participants



Sample Prompts

Centenarians

- What is the most amazing thing you have seen in your lifetime? Why did that stand out?
- How has your daily life/routine changed from the time you were in your 30s and 40s?
- What was the best decade of the past 100 years? And the worst?
- Nowadays, many couples meet on dating apps. What was dating like when you were young?
- How much has Chesterfield County changed in the time you have lived here?
- What would be your advice to your younger self?
- What is the secret to your longevity?
- How did you celebrate your 100th birthday?

Journey to Chesterfield Prompts

- There is a story behind every decision to migrate. What was yours?
- Why did you choose to come to this country instead of somewhere else?
- Why did you choose to come to Chesterfield County?
- What was the most difficult part about leaving?
- What was your journey to this new country or community like?
- What was the most difficult part of coming here?
- What was it like when you first arrived?
- What most surprised you?
- What do you miss most about the country you came from?
- Can you think of times when you have felt unwelcome? What about when you have felt welcomed?
- What does your future look like?

Military Service Prompts

Adapted from <https://www.loc.gov/vets/kit-generalquestions.html>

- In which branch did you enter? Why did you choose that branch?
- Where did you serve?
- What are your recollections of that experience?
- Were you in a combat, combat support, or combat service support role?
- Is there a particular incident that you think of when you think of your time in the service?
- What kinds of friendships and camaraderie did you form while serving, and with whom?
- Do you recall any particularly humorous or unusual events? What was the best part of your service experience?
- What was the best part of your service experience?
- How did your military service experiences affect your life?
- Is there anything you've always wanted to share about your service or veteran experience that you never have?