

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

October 12, 2015

(Photos and cast interviews available)



MEDIA CONTACT: Allison Alvarez Hedrick

Vice President of Communications

P: 800.354.9338 ext. 2240

E: ahedrick@wedu.org

WEDU PBS and the Florida Humanities Council Premiere an Original Documentary Featuring Local Veteran Stories

Tampa, FL — Six Florida military veterans and one military spouse recently told their personal stories through dramatic performances on stage around the Tampa Bay area. The diverse cast of service members spent five months learning their dramatic cues, cultivating friendships and reconnecting with emotional memories.

The project titled “Telling: Tampa Bay” is part of the national **The Telling Project**, founded in 2008 to help bridge the communication gap in an American society in which less than 1 percent of the population has served in the military over the past dozen years of war. The performance script is based on interviews with the veterans conducted by **Jonathan Wei**, founder of The Telling Project.

During the project, Florida military veterans told their personal stories through dramatic performances on stage. To help deepen community understanding of their experiences, the six veterans and one military spouse talked about how and why they served, the injuries and challenges they’ve had to overcome, and how they are transitioning back into civilian life.

WEDU PBS, in partnership with the **Florida Humanities Council**, captured the five month long project and produced a documentary titled, **VETERANS – THE TELLING PROJECT**. The documentary is set for an on-air broadcast premiere on **Thursday, November 5 at 9:00 p.m.** on WEDU PBS.

WEDU and the Florida Humanities Council will also host a free community advance preview screening event on **Wednesday, November 4 at 7:00 p.m.** at **Tampa Theatre** (711 N Franklin Street, Tampa). Following the film preview, the cast will take the stage for a round table discussion and Q&A from the audience. Tickets and more information for this free community event are available online at www.wedu.org/thetellingproject.



-more-

MEET THE CAST:



Terri Davis

Served six years (1982-1988) as a Navy cryptologic technician in Washington, D.C., and Iceland. The Bradenton resident has degrees in business administration and criminal justice, is a graduate of the Florida Department of Law Enforcement Executive Leadership Academy, and has served in Manatee County law enforcement for 15 years. She is CEO of Key Konnections, whose mission is connecting companies with causes.



Michael Dunlap

Served six years (1976-1982) in the Marine Corps and, upon honorable discharge, roamed the country. He eventually found assistance at the VA domiciliary program in St. Petersburg. After vocational rehab, he became a specialist with the nonprofit Service Source Warrior Bridge, assisting disabled, unemployed, and homeless veterans seeking employment. He lives in Largo.



Jessica McVay

Served five years (2005-2010) in the Marine Corps as an Airframes Mechanic, was medically retired, and has a service dog named Radar. The Palmetto resident's top priority now is motherhood, but she sees the Marines as an ongoing part of her life; she has been adjutant and commandant for the Marine Corps League, Desoto Detachment #588 and does service work with veterans.



Scott Owens

Served nearly nine years (2000-2009) as an infantryman with the Army's famed 101st Airborne Division, including two tours in Iraq. The Largo resident, who has traveled the country advocating for veterans' employment and housing, received the Tampa Bay Lightning Community Hero Award and directed the \$50,000 grant to the Abilities Foundation to help disabled veterans. He is a fulltime college student studying political science.



Shannon Owens

As wife of Scott Owens, she has one of the hardest jobs in the military—that of a spouse. The couple became engaged in 2002 and married in 2004 after he returned from Iraq. She made sure he got counseling help when he needed it. They have three children, and she served as an active member of the Family Readiness Group.

-more-



Ryan Simonson

Served 13 years (1998-2011) in the Army, including multiple tours in Iraq during Operation Iraqi Freedom, and was commissioned as a second lieutenant in the armor branch. A Florida native, he joined the Army at age 17 by accepting a nomination to the United States Military Academy at West Point. He lives with his wife, also an Army officer, and three children in Sarasota, where he teaches at Sarasota Military Academy Prep.



Taylor Urruela

Served 6½ years (2004-2011) as an Army infantryman, including service in Iraq, where he was wounded by two roadside bombs, resulting in the loss of a leg below the knee. After four years of rehabilitation, he transitioned into civilian life and encountered issues with veterans' health care and PTSD. Now a Tampa resident, he co-founded the nonprofit VetSports to encourage injured veterans to participate in sports, has begun a career as a personal trainer and model, and is writing a novel.



Lisa Powers Tricomi

Director for the Telling: Tampa Bay stage productions. Powers has worked extensively as a theater professional, drama therapist, and educator and is well known in the Tampa Bay area for her work as an actor and former artistic director at American Stage. She has also worked as director of the Florida Humanities Council's "Dreamers and Schemers" historical stage productions around the state.

"Telling: Tampa Bay" is produced in partnership with **The Telling Project** with support from the **National Endowment for the Humanities**, the **Bob Woodruff Foundation**, the **Saunders Foundation**, **Bright House Networks**, and the **Barbara Ann Cole Fund** within the **Community Foundation of Tampa Bay**.

ABOUT WEDU PBS

WEDU is West Central Florida's primary PBS station reaching 16 counties through media platforms including on-air programming and online experiences that broaden horizons, transport and transform and open gateways to new ideas and new worlds. Financially supported by the community, the organization offers a wealth of award-winning inspirational, educational and enlightening content over a variety of multi-media platforms including: television programming, station website, www.wedu.org and various social media platforms, monthly member magazine *Premiere*, educational outreach activities and a myriad of special events. WEDU's focus on the local community has resulted in the station being regarded as a beacon of trust for men, women and children of every walk of life no matter their age, ethnicity or socio-economic status. WEDU is a treasured community resource; a window to the world for the homebound and a vital educational source for the youngest members of society. WEDU prides itself on its position in the Tampa Bay community as a leader, partner, informed citizen and a member of PBS, the most trusted institution in America (ORC International's DualFrame CARAVAN, January 2015). For more information, program schedules or to support WEDU visit www.wedu.org; WEDU Public Media on Facebook and Twitter (@wedupbs) or call (813) 254-9338.

ABOUT THE FLORIDA HUMANITIES COUNCIL

The Florida Humanities Council, independent affiliate of the National Endowment for the Humanities, sponsors programs and resources that explore the stories of Florida, its history and cultural heritage, literary and artistic life, environment and development, issues and ideas, communities and traditions. For information about current programming visit floridahumanities.org.

-WEDU-