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NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Veterans Storytelling Event Presented by American Legion Post #187 and Elmhurst Public Library

ELMHURST, IL — The first time Russ Strahan of Oak Brook spoke publicly about his time stationed in Vietnam was when his granddaughter invited him to come visit her middle school classroom. “She was nervous about approaching me,” remembers Strahan. “She said, ‘Grandpa, my teacher’s looking for someone who was in Vietnam, and I told her I knew someone. Would you be interested?’”

Strahan didn’t hesitate. He told her, “I’ll do it for you.”

Strahan served in the United States Navy from 1961-69, serving as an electronics technician on two different ships during the Vietnam War. Strahan talked to the class and answered questions. It went so well that the teacher invited him to stay for three more classes. One young girl raised her hand and asked, “Did you ever kill anyone?”

“I don’t know,” answered Strahan.

“Good,” she answered.

Post commander John Scudder, a retired First Sergeant in the Army after 30 years of service, says this event is a way for veterans who served in a variety of ways to get their stories out to the community.

“The American Legion is an important resource in our community,” says Kimberly Calkins, Programming Coordinator at Elmhurst Public Library. “It provides an important connection to the veterans in our community, giving crucial support to those coming back from service. This event is a great way to celebrate the bravery and service of these great men and women.”

‘History from people who lived it’

The roster of storytellers will prepare their stories under the mentorship of Scott Whitehair, founder of Story Lab Chicago.

Whitehair created Story Lab Chicago in 2011. He is an international storyteller, producer, and instructor living in Chicago and was featured on NPR, Risk! Podcast, Sirius XM and is a 2-time Moth Slam Winner.

“[Storytelling] is about connection,” says Whitehair. “In a world where we’re often pulled apart by technology or geography, it’s a chance to come together and talk to each other. Hearing their story gives us a chance to walk in their shoes, understand them for a moment.”

Whitehair recalls seeing a teenager in deep conversation with an 85 year-old storyteller. “They were totally connecting over a story,” he says. “At the heart of it, we’re all humans.”

Whitehair does storytelling events for all ages, for businesses, and creative purposes, but to him, the veteran storytelling events are uniquely memorable.

“It’s an honor for me to have a small part in helping vets have a platform to tell their stories. These are not stories you normally get to hear,” he says. “This is history from people who lived it.”

What: Veterans Storytelling Event

When: Friday, Nov. 17 at 7 p.m.

Where: American Legion Post #187, 310 W. Butterfield Rd., Elmhurst

This event is presented by the American Legion Post #187 and Elmhurst Public Library. Free. Register by calling (630) 279-8696, or online: elmlib.org/veterans.

Elmhurst Public Library enriches life in Elmhurst by providing opportunities to connect, create, and explore. EPL provides the support, resources, and environment for Elmhurst patrons to: pursue a love of reading; access information; explore interests; engage with technology; connect with others; and create and innovate. Elmhurst Public Library is the place for discovery at the heart of the community.