

# history theatre

## **The Things They Carried: Welcoming Veterans and Sharing Stories** **By Jill Vaughn, Audience Development Manager, History Theatre**

*(This post is a part of series highlighting the work of recipients of TCG's Blue Star Theatres grant program. History Theatre is a recipient of Blue Star Theatres grant funding to support discounted or free admission to The Things They Carried and related speakers.)*

In November, 2015, History Theatre produced the one man play *The Things They Carried*, based on the semi-autobiographical novel by Tim O'Brien about the Vietnam War.

We welcomed over 800 student and adult groups through our doors during matinees. The audiences' thirst for knowledge and story was overwhelming! Everyone stayed long after the show ended listening to stories and sharing with one another. Veteran Jerry Miron shared that the suicide rates of veterans are high—1,500 each month. Jerry's comments really opened the minds and hearts of students and adults, inspiring deeper conversation. Pearce Bunting (*Boardwalk Empire, Radioman*) shared that playing this iconic character was an honor and deeply moving for him as a non-veteran. Students, veterans, and the public reacted to this moving theatre experience:

- *The actor did a great job of narrating a story in a way to connect us emotionally to the story. He talked to us and not AT us, and it made me feel for the characters.*
- *The discussion was fantastic... Jerry made me cry. I love Jerry.*
- *The Vietnam veteran's ending remarks were very powerful. It made you look at the play differently.*
- *Getting to hear from the veteran at the end was incredibly impactful.*
- *The History Theatre serves our communities and multiple generations by bringing recent history to life.*

Through TCG we were able to offer students a personal and powerful look at the impact of the Vietnam War from the viewpoint of a combat soldier. Some of the veterans that came as a part of a group didn't talk much during the discussion but afterward shared stories with staff and in small groups of peers. History Theatre felt privileged that veterans were willing to tell their stories. Support from TCG enabled veterans and students who otherwise may not have been able to attend to see this meaningful show for free or at a discount. We were also able to offer veteran Jerry Miron a stipend for his time as a speaker at nine performances. We were thrilled that we could show our appreciation for him both verbally and financially. Thanks, TCG!



**MetLife Foundation**

