

# AHEC volunteers are 'the heart of the institution'

*Spc. Jennifer Rick, Army War College Public Affairs Office*

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*Ed Boggs and Karl Smith are two of many dedicated volunteers at the Army Heritage and Education Center. They research and respond to the many inquiries AHEC receives about family history, military operations and more. Photo by Spc. Jennifer Rick.*



March 4, 2009 – At the core of every successful operation are the dedicated people who put their time and energy into making things happen.

At the Army Heritage and Education Center, many of these people are unpaid volunteers who enjoy being surrounded by years and years of history.

More than 30 volunteers help out at AHEC, and put in more than 5,600 hours in a nine-month period, explained Nora Lupold, AHEC's volunteer director.

"All our volunteers are very loyal and they love what they do here," she said.

The thought is echoed by the volunteers themselves.

"We have fun here," said Karl Smith. "The most interesting thing is the unknown; never knowing what you're going to run into." Smith has been volunteering at AHEC ten years.

Ed Boggs, who has also been at AHEC for more than ten years, works with Smith responding to inquiries to the institution. People request information on many topics, ranging from their personal family histories to authors researching topics for books.

The pair will spend two to three hours per query, finding up to eight pages of information to mail or email to the requestor.

"We learn so much from helping people find information," Boggs said. "The only hard part is that there is so much information here, and we can't take the time to learn everything."

***Stephen Barley volunteers at AHEC creating custom book covers for the institution's older, more fragile books in the collection. Photo by Spc. Jennifer Rick.***

Upstairs at AHEC is Stephen Barley, who has been volunteering there for three years. He works hands-on with some of the older books in the collection, making custom protective covers for them to prevent further damage.



"Each cover is like an envelope for the book, built specifically for that book to keep it in as good of condition as possible," he said. "We also put photos of the front, back and spine of the book on the cover so you know what you're looking at."

Jane Smith Stewart, paper conservator, stressed the importance of protecting the historic books.

"Making these custom enclosures for the books not only protects them, but it also sends a good message to the public," she said. "It tells them that we know the books have some structural problems and a fragile, and that we care – and so they should too. Some of the books here are very rare, and need to be preserved as much as possible."

From sorting donations given to the institution to helping people learn about their family's military history, the volunteers at AHEC are there to lend a hand.

"These people are the heart of the institution," Lupold said. They are a huge asset and we couldn't do this without them."