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VETERANS DAY: Local student interviews veterans; signs up for Army



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By Vyto Starinskas

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COTTONWOOD – A local high school student interviewed local vets for a Veterans Day project, before he went to Prescott on Friday, Nov. 5, to sign the paperwork to enlist in the U.S Army.

William Demankowski, a senior at American Heritage Academy, decided to interview five to six veterans for a mini-documentary at Cottonwood Village, a senior-living center, which has about 40 veterans living there.



William Demankowski at this apartment in Cottonwood on Saturday, Nov. 6, 2022.
(VVN/Vyto Starinskas)

The video will be shown at their annual Veterans Day Ceremony.

Samantha Noelle, activities director of Cottonwood Senior Living, said the senior at American Heritage came to her because he wanted to do a senior class project.



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“He facilitated it, he figured out what questions he wanted to ask them,” she said. “He came in and interviewed five or six residents.”

It’s a 20-minute video of the senior living facility which houses a large number of U.S. military veterans going as far back as World War II.

“Not only are they sharing their time in service, they are mentoring him and telling him advice for the future,” she said.

He interviewed two Army and two Marine veterans among those he spoke to.

Demankowski said the most interesting part of the project was learning the veterans’ stories.

He interviewed some Vietnam and Korea-era veterans. Some of them were drafted and had no choice, he added.

Since he is only 17 years old, the high school student still will have to graduate before he can actually enter the Army. So he is filling out the paperwork. His parents have signed the releases so the senior can join the Army once he gets his diploma.

He said he’s been wanting to join the military for a while now, so the senior project was an interesting way to get some background.

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