

12-Year-Old Harrison Johnson Launches Pearl Harbor Virtual Reality Experience

Student surpasses \$100,000 goal to create educational tool for peers

HONOLULU, HI, UNITED STATES, January 21, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Pacific Historic Parks (PHP) celebrated the public launch of Harrison's Heroes: Pearl Harbor Virtual Reality Experience at Pearl Harbor National Memorial on Friday, January 16, 2026. When he was just 8 years old, North Carolina native Harrison Johnson set an ambitious goal to raise \$100,000 to build a new way for students to learn Pearl Harbor history, and then exceeded it. Now 12 years old, the young historian and entrepreneur spent the past year working with engineers to develop the experience in partnership with Pacific Historic Parks. The educational tool was unveiled at 8:06 a.m., timed to the moment the first bomb struck the USS Arizona on December 7, 1941.



(Left to right) Tom Leatherman, Clinton Johnson, Harrison Johnson, Aileen Utterdyke and Cheznee Johnson with the \$110,000 tribute check to Pacific Historic Parks.

The program featured a tribute check ceremony, a special message from Governor Josh Green delivered by Lt. Governor Sylvia Luke, a flag ceremony and moment of silence, and a guided student visit. To commemorate Harrison's accomplishment, Honolulu Mayor Rick Blangiardi proclaimed the day "Harrison Johnson Day."

"This launch showed what happens when a young person puts passion and hard work into preserving history," said Aileen Utterdyke, President & CEO of Pacific Historic Parks. "Harrison used today's technology to bring World War II's lessons to classrooms and families in a format students understand. We are proud to stand with him and the National Park Service to continue sharing this story with the next generation."

After the launch, Johnson spoke with local students to share the virtual reality program. “I wanted more students to learn what happened here and why it matters. I’m grateful to everyone who helped bring my vision to life so more kids can learn, honor, and understand,” he said. Johnson also met 97-year-old World War II veteran Melvin Herold, who was on his first trip to Hawaii.



12-year-old Harrison Johnson engages with the new VR program alongside local students

Pacific Historic Parks

Pacific Historic Parks (PHP) partners with the National Park Service to offer

the only complimentary day-of, in-person Navy-operated shuttle boat tickets to the USS Arizona Memorial. As the official 501(c)(3) nonprofit partner of the Pearl Harbor National Memorial—home of the USS Arizona—Pacific Historic Parks helps preserve Pearl Harbor’s history through education, interpretive programs, research, preservation and restoration. Every year on the anniversary of December 7th, 1941, PHP works closely with the National Park Service and U.S. Navy to honor the legacy of all WWII veterans, and commemorate the sacrifices made by our nation’s Greatest Generation during one of the most pivotal events in American history.

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*Aileen Utterdyke, President
and CEO of Pacific Historic
Parks*

Pacific Historic Parks operates the official USS Arizona Memorial Narrated Tour Desk, where visitors can join the free shuttle boat standby queue and purchase the only self-guided audio tours available of the Memorial grounds, Museums and USS Arizona. Visitors can grasp the

magnitude of the Day of Infamy through four separate virtual reality experiences offered by PHP, and peruse books, apparel and memorabilia in the Museum Store. Pacific Historic Parks is open daily from 7:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. For more information, call toll-free at 1-866-332-1941 or visit www.pacifichistoricparks.org.

NOTE TO MEDIA: B-roll and soundbites from the launch can be found [here](#). Please courtesy Pacific Historic Parks.

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