



U.S. Department
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News Release

VA Long Beach
Healthcare System

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Veterans Share Their Emotions through Video and Win First Place

The powerful video was created as part of a class offered by VA Long Beach Healthcare System

LONG BEACH, Calif. – Two Veterans won First Place in the *Drama: Multimedia Video* category of the 2021 National Veterans Creative Arts Festival with their video *It's not Just Photography* created as part of the Creative Arts and Humanities Program of VA Long Beach Healthcare System.

The video features two female Veterans, Linda Hicks and Raine Jackson, sharing their pain, fears and emotions while photographing their surroundings in a path to recovery. “The camera is just my distraction, my vehicle to help me move forward,” said Hicks in the video. “I came to the VA to seek help to mend my brokenness. It's not just photography.”

VA Long Beach introduced the Creative Arts and Humanities program in 1990 to incorporate non-traditional rehabilitation therapies to the Veterans' treatment plans. In alignment with the Whole Health holistic approach to health care, it offers music, video, photography, visual art and writing classes to help Veterans recover from and cope with physical and emotional disabilities.

The Veterans Digital Photography is one of these therapeutic classes. It empowers Veterans with techniques of digital photography and image editing, so they can express their emotions through photography. As stated by Jackson in the awarded video, “I am grateful to be on the path of healing, and I know that there is something of value inside of me... but not quite sure what it is or where it belongs.”

The Story Corps is another class that encourages self-expression by providing a nurturing and safe environment for Veterans to revisit their past stories and potentially traumas. In a blend of storytelling and video production, Veterans tell their stories, and the monologues are recorded. Even though the main goal is therapeutic, the final product has also revealed many talents.

The Creative Arts and Humanities Program is not permanently funded but relies on Special Funding Grants that the Department of Veterans Affairs makes available to VA facilities across the nation.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, as the need and demand for mental health support increased, VA Long Beach Healthcare System applied for and was awarded many grants to support pre-existing and to expand its Creative Arts and Humanities program.

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