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News Release

VA Long Beach
Healthcare System

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

VA Long Beach Announces First-Place Winners at National Art Competition

LONG BEACH, Calif. – VA Long Beach Healthcare System is proud to announce that five of its enrolled Veterans won first place at the National Veterans Creative Arts Competition, which received nearly three thousand entries.

Their names in alphabetical order: Linda Hicks, Raine Jackson, Michael McCann, Robert Richert and Leo Zabala.

Linda Hicks and Raine Jackson shared their pains, fears, and feelings through a very emotional video, while photographing their surroundings in their path to recovery. “I know that there is something of value inside of me... but not quite sure what it is or where it belongs,” said Jackson in the video. Hicks adds, “I came to the VA to seek help to mend my brokenness. It’s not just photography.” Their video, “[It’s not Just Photography](#)” won first place in the Multimedia category.

Michael McCann, in his hilarious act as the “Supreme King,” as crowned by the Veterans of Foreign Wars Annual Baby Show in 1947, drew an analogy between himself and Prince Harry who also abdicated his royal status. While wearing a glamorous royal garment and performing “[On the Throne](#),” McCann proclaims: “No bowing, no kneeling. No need to kiss my ring or any other part of my body.” Even today, he wonders, “How did my parents get me into this?” McCann was awarded first place in the Comedy Prose category.

Robert Richert respectfully played with words, expressions and scriptures associated with Christianity to tell his dilemma to wear or not to wear the sandals that are best known as the Jesus Christ sandals. His creative and clever writing “[J. C. Saves my Sole](#)” received first place in the Humor category. Richert has published a book about his experiences in the Vietnam War entitled “Open Wound.” In addition, he is a professional artist and has several landscape and seascape paintings exhibited at fine art galleries throughout California.

Leo Zabala reached deep down into his roots, all the way to his ancestors, both Maya and Yuki, to carve and paint the “[Bird of Thunder](#)” in an organic piece of wood. The legendary creature is said to create thunder by flapping its wings and lightning by blinking its eyes. Zabala thought, “I never thought it would happen,” but the magically detailed art piece received first place in the Transfer Engraving Art Kit category.

Veterans who want to start utilizing art as a form of therapy or are just curious to give it a try are encouraged to check [The Bulldog](#) to find available classes. The Bulldog is the VA Long Beach Health Education Catalog.

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