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# News Release

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Media Relations

Washington, DC 20420  
(202) 461-7600  
[www.va.gov](http://www.va.gov)

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## VA hosts music therapy retreat in Nashville to help Veterans heal

*‘Operation Song’ connects professional songwriters, former service members to help participants improve their lives*

**WASHINGTON** — Aimed at helping former service members process some of their military experiences, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and the nonprofit [Operation Song](http://www.operation-song.org/) launched the first of a series of national music therapy retreats Nov. 14-17 in Nashville, Tennessee.

In collaboration with [VA Voluntary Services](http://www.va.gov/volunteer/) and [Veterans Canteen Service](http://www.va.gov/veterans-canteen/), the four-day songwriting retreat connected Veterans from around the country with professional songwriters and VA therapists, as they translated their service experiences into songs, which will be recorded in a music studio for the Veterans to keep.

“VA is always striving to find unique ways to help Veterans build on their military experiences, and music therapy is just one component of VA’s robust [Recreation Therapy](http://www.va.gov/recreation-therapy/) programs, which serve Veterans around the country,” said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie. “Music can provide an outlet for expression of feelings, as well as be an avenue of communication for those who find it difficult to express themselves.”

Founded by Grammy and Dove Award-nominated songwriter Bob Regan in 2012, Operation Song brings professional songwriters together with Veterans to help create music from often difficult experiences. To date, Nashville-based Operation Song has created more than 600 songs with Veterans of nearly every military conflict, to include World War II, Korea, Vietnam, the Gulf War, Iraq and Afghanistan.

Veterans who wish to participate in the Operation Song retreat program must be referred by their VA health care provider. Operation Song officials said no musical background is necessary to participate in the program; Veterans only need a desire to tell their story.

For more information about [VA’s Recreation Therapy programs](http://www.va.gov/recreation-therapy/), visit <https://www.prosthetics.va.gov/recretherapy/index.asp>. For more information about VA Voluntary Service, visit <https://www.volunteer.va.gov/>. For more information about Operation Song, visit <http://www.operation-song.org/>.

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