



ArtsGram

October 18 - 24, 2010 * La Crosse, Wisconsin * Hosted by the Tomah VA Medical Center

Monday, October 18, 2010

Welcome to beautiful

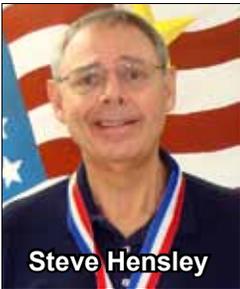
Wisconsin

Our Veterans Welcome You!

by James Theras, Public Affairs Officer, Tomah VA Medical Center

“Welcome to La Crosse! We are excited that you are here.” That is the sentiment of all five local Veterans attending this year’s Festival. It’s hard to believe it was over a year ago that we accepted the baton to host the 2010 National Veterans Creative Arts Festival. It’s been full steam ahead (pardon that gratuitous Mississippi River reference), ever since.

“With the leaves turning colors, it’s a beautiful time of year in La Crosse,” said five-time participant Steve Hensley from Tomah. In 2002, Hensley first appeared in Minneapolis with his rendition of “Let There be Peace on Earth,” followed by trips to Salt Lake City in 2004, Denver in 2005 and Rapid City in 2006. This year, he won for “Love and Marriage” in the Vocal Solo or Group Comedy category.



Steve Hensley

“I’ve been singing since I was four years old,” said Hensley, a Vietnam Veteran. “Almost before I could even talk.”



Mel Brinkley

Talking is how Army Veteran, Mel Brinkley earned his first appearance at the Festival. Having moved to Tucson, Ariz., he was employed as a chaplain at the Tomah VA when he entered his winning entry, “Two Pieces of the Puzzle,” in the Humorous Essay category. Although he won’t perform his award-winning piece at the Oct. 24 show, he will

serve as a chorus member and audition for various narration and speaking roles.

Another first-timer is Army Veteran, Mitch Parrish from Castle Rock, Wis. He took home the gold for his beadwork piece entitled, “White Buffalo.” Parrish, who volunteers in the Tomah VA’s Occupational Therapy Clinic helping with

See “Wisconsin Veterans,” page 2

Of Special Interest Today:



- * The Opening Ceremonies start this evening at 7 p.m. in the La Crosse Center Ballroom. Pre-dinner music begins at 6:30 p.m. (See “The Week Begins Tonight!” on page 3.)
- * This year’s Show Master of Ceremonies is country music star Michael Peterson. He will be spending the week at the Festival

and will also be our emcee at this evening’s Opening Ceremonies. (See article about Peterson on page 6.)

- * The only meal served today is the Opening Banquet. Don’t hesitate to stop by the Hospitality Room, located in the Radisson Hotel’s Mississippi Suite #823 for a snack provided by the wonderful ladies of the American Legion Auxiliary.

Letter of Greeting from Liz Mackey...



Elizabeth Mackey
National Director
National Veterans Creative
Arts Festival

The Veterans gathered this week in La Crosse, Wisconsin are all national competition medal-winners from 57 VA facilities nationwide. They are part of a total of 3,625 Veterans from 123 VA facilities who originally entered categories within the divisions of art, creative writing, dance, drama and music during the local level competition phase this past winter. Following the local judging, their entries advanced to the national level where they achieved medal status in their specific category. These Veterans have definitely experienced a remarkable journey to the Festival, which continues as we come together in La Crosse.

The week ahead will be filled with rehearsals, workshops and alternate activities. It's a wonderful time to get to know people from around the country who all share a love for the arts. It's also a chance to demonstrate to the communities of the Tomah and La Crosse area the depth of artistic talent and skill that our nation's Veterans possess, and how artistic expression promotes healing and enhances quality of life.

Thanks to the staff and volunteers of the Tomah VA Medical Center and the surrounding community for your warm hospitality. A special thanks to our co-presenters, the American Legion Auxiliary and Help Hospitalized Veterans. Everyone, be sure to get to know and express your gratitude to these wonderful organizations as well as the other gracious sponsors who will be joining us later in the week.

Congratulations to the Veterans! We are here because of you, and we thank you for allowing us to share this part of your journey. You represent all of the Veterans who participated in the 2010 competition and are extremely worthy of the recognition you are receiving this week. Best wishes for a rewarding and artistically inspiring experience in the days ahead.

"Wisconsin Veterans," continued from page 1

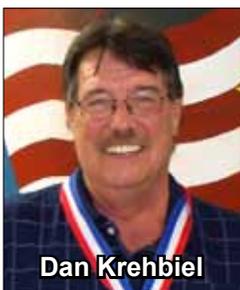


Mitch Parrish

arts and crafts, has a shout-out to his good friend Dan Krehbiel, who encouraged him to compete in the Festival. "Dan's a good friend and it is an honor to attend the same Festival with him," Parrish says.

So what about Krehbiel? Yup, he'll be here, too. This is his third trip to the big stage, having wowed the crowd in Rapid City in 2006 with

"New York, New York," and then brought the house down with laughter and applause with his original piece, "Middle Aged Blues" in Riverside, Calif., in 2008. Krehbiel, who



Dan Krehbiel

lives in Black River Falls, is an active volunteer at the Tomah VA and has been on quite a singing schedule over the past few months, supporting local VA events. He sang the national anthem at the 3rd Annual Heroes Freedom Run on Sept. 11 and performed his 2010 gold-medal winning piece, "The High Ground" at

the POW/MIA ceremony a week later. He later performed the "Middle Aged Blues" at an "After 5" event in the Hall of Honor at Veterans Memorial Stadium on the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse campus. That prompted Public Affairs Officer James Theres to query, "Well, Dan, we better

give you a rest so you can perform at the Festival." His response, "No way, I'll do anything and everything I can to promote the Festival!"



Maureen Howell

Another great Festival promoter is four-time attendee from Tomah, Maureen Howell. She has the honor of being the only Veteran from Tomah to attend the Festival as both a visual artist and as a performer.

And guess what, she's still breaking records. This year she won two gold medals—for Stained or Painted Ceramics and Combined Kits.

So, from our five talented local Veterans and all of us at the Tomah VA Medical Center, "Let's turn up the Ooom-pah (another gratuitous reference to Festival week) and have a glorious time!"

The Week Begins Tonight!

by Susan Varcie, Program Specialist, National Programs and Special Events



Attending Opening Ceremonies at the 2010 National Veterans Creative Arts Festival is a bit like previewing one of the greatest shows on earth. Nationally known for some of the best talent and artwork in the country, this annual Festival is the premier showcase for the 115 uniquely talented military Veterans (45 visual artists and 70 performers) who were invited to La Crosse from 56 VA facilities.

Be sure to arrive early for tonight's "Welcome to Wisconsin" celebration, with pre-ceremony music beginning at 6:30 p.m. in the La Crosse Center Ballroom. The Onalaska Handbell Choir will provide a special pre-festivities concert they have designed just for you. On your way into the ballroom, please stop by the exhibits from local vendors displaying the best of Wisconsin products including: Fast Cooperation, McPherson Guitars, Cranberry Growers Association, and the La Crosse Convention and Visitors Bureau. We will also enjoy the following local royalty who are here to welcome you: Miss Seven Rivers, Miss Stoddard Royalty, Chaseburg Snowtrailers Royalty, Wild West Royalty, Viroqua Ridge Runners Royalty, Westby Snowflake Ski & Golf Royalty and Warrens Cranberry Royalty.



At 7 p.m., the Opening Ceremonies festivities and banquet will start. The program begins with a welcome from our hosts and introductions, followed by dinner. Master of Ceremonies for the evening is country music star, Michael Peterson. (More information on him is located on page 6.) Medical center leaders and other top VA officials, including Assistant Secretary for Operations, Security and Preparedness Jose D. Riojas, will make welcoming remarks. At the conclusion of the ceremony, participants will be introduced to this year's team leaders and national steering committee members. Following the formal ceremony, all artists and performers are asked to remain in the La Crosse Center Ballroom for the first meeting with Festival team leaders and fellow team members. Important information about the upcoming week will be shared at that time.

So come early and enjoy the music and tonight's other activities. See you this evening!

Welcome from Tomah VA Medical Center Director

One year ago, we accepted the baton from the South Texas Veterans Health Care System to host the 2010 National Veterans Creative Arts Festival. It seemed like a long way off then, but how quickly that time has passed. I hope you are as excited as we are that this week has finally arrived.

La Crosse is a beautiful city nestled along the mighty Mississippi River. If you've never been to western Wisconsin, there is nothing quite as alluring as this riverboat paradise with colorful characters, riveting bluffside views, soaring bald eagles and the historic charm of 19th century brick buildings and homes, antique shops, boutiques and restaurants. You are in a city that the famous American author, Mark Twain, once called, "a charming little community."

This year we have planned events to showcase La Crosse's wonderful history and heritage. A trip to Norskedalen Nature and Heritage Center to learn woodcarving and rosemaking might catch your fancy, or maybe an authentic riverboat cruise followed by fireworks on the Mississippi. How about an excursion to a genuine cranberry bog or celebrating Oktoberfest just like they did in Bavaria in 1810? These activities and more are on the itinerary to ensure your week with us is a memorable one.

On behalf of the 25,000 Veterans we serve at the Tomah VA Medical Center, our 1,000 employees, 400 volunteers, family and friends, thank you for your service to our country. Welcome to Wisconsin. It is truly an honor!



Jerald D. Molnar
Director
Tomah VA Medical Center

Wisconsin Series:

Wisconsin

How did it get its name?

by James Therres, Public Affairs Officer, Tomah VA Medical Center

The word was first used by Europeans when Father Jacques Marquette entered it in his journal in June 1673 during a voyage he made with fur trader Louis Joliet across Wisconsin and down the Mississippi. They stayed several days with the Menominee Indians in Green Bay, and then with 3,000 Miami, Kickapoo and Mascouten Indians in Green Lake County. On June 10, 1673, led by two Miami guides, they traveled through the upper Fox River to modern Portage in Columbia County.

“The river on which we embarked is called Meskousing,” wrote Marquette. “It is very wide; it has a sandy bottom, which forms various shoals that render its navigation very difficult.” Joliet used the name “Miskonsing” on a map that he drew in 1674.

In the 1820s, the U.S. government began to refer to the territory in debates and legislation, gradually introducing the uniquely American, “Wisconsin.” On July 4, 1836, the territory officially became “Wisconsin.”

During the 19th and early 20th centuries, many different meanings of the word were advanced. Elderly Indians,



French residents, or fur traders claimed it meant “Stream of a Thousand Isles,” “Gathering of Waters,” “muskrat house,” “grassy place,” and even “holes in the bank of a stream, in which birds nest.”

When it was first written down by Marquette and Joliet, it was the Miami Indians who spoke the word aloud. The Miami nation left Wisconsin soon thereafter, and the last native speakers of the language died in the 1960s. In 2003, Michael McCafferty, a specialist in the Miami language, combined historical and linguistic evidence to prove that the name’s meaning was akin to the English phrase, “river running through a red place.” Red-colored stone is a characteristic part of the Wisconsin River shoreline and confirms the appropriateness of the Miami word “Meskonsing.”

Fun fact question: Name the modern states that made up the Wisconsin territory in 1836.

Wisconsin, Minnesota, Iowa, North Dakota, South Dakota, A:

Welcome, Artists!

More than 40 Veterans are expected to be at the Festival this week who won first place in an artistic category. We are happy to see you in La Crosse!

We have many activities scheduled for you including workshops in creative writing, chip carving, rosemary, basket weaving, needle felting, and craft kits from Help Hospitalized Veterans.



Your week’s activities will also include the Festival’s Opening Ceremonies this evening, the Closing Ceremonies Sunday evening, and in between these activities, you can

tour the Minnesota Marine Art Museum; take a trip to Norskedalen Nature & Heritage Center and Skumsrud Heritage Farm; take a Mississippi River boat cruise; see an American bald eagle up close and hear Kenny Salwey speak of his adventures on the Mississippi River; observe demonstrations of glass blowing and soap making; visit an authentic Wisconsin cranberry bog and even take a trip to the mall for some serious shopping. We have even thrown in some Festival fireworks and a traditional Oktoberfest celebration on Saturday night!

Welcome, artists! We know you’ll enjoy your week in Wisconsin!

Welcome from the Host Site Coordinator

Welcome to La Crosse, Wis.! The Tomah VA is thrilled to welcome each and every one of you. It is my pleasure to serve as the host site coordinator of this event and I extend my personal welcome as well. We hope you enjoy every minute of your time with us.

As the week unfolds, you will have opportunities to see the very best of western Wisconsin: the rivers, the bluffs, the coulees and even a cranberry or two! We are excited to share our area with you and hope you enjoy the experience.

The majority of the week's festivities will take place in downtown La Crosse but we'll also venture into the neighboring cities. Ours is a unique area and so interesting to explore! Thursday we will celebrate the Mississippi River and Saturday we will don our lederhosen, tap the golden keg (of root beer!) and celebrate Oktoberfest-style. Sunday is your day to showcase your artistic achievements and we know this will be a wonder-



ful art exhibit and stage show. La Crosse and the surrounding communities have been eagerly anticipating your show for the past year (or more)!

This is your Festival. Please enjoy every opportunity—from rehearsals to karaoke, art workshops to storytelling, Dave's Guitars to Sunday jazz worship and river cruise to glass blowing! You will experience a wonderful environment of learning, sharing, exploring and healing throughout the week. Our goal is to make this your Festival. Please don't hesitate to contact me or any of our local staff and volunteers at any time if we may be of further assistance. We are so honored to have you join us.



Jean Calhoun
Host Site Coordinator

Welcome to La Crosse and the 2010 National Veterans Creative Arts Festival!

Welcome, Performers!



This week, we expect to see more than 70 of you and we are thrilled that you are here in La Crosse!

Cultural expression can define a nation's

image, presenting an enduring look at the spirit and creativity of a people. Who better to help define that image than you!

This week is sure to be both fun and rewarding as you prepare for Sunday's stage presentation at Viterbo University Fine Arts Center. In addition to coachings, costume fittings and rehearsals, you will get to experience Wisconsin at its best. A great week lies ahead!

As you prepare for the stage show, here are a few tips to remember:

- Always be on time for your rehearsals
- Work hard to improve by listening to critiques and suggestions
- Practice on your own
- Encourage other performers
- Keep smiling – no matter what

We hope this week will not only help you become an even better performer, but allow you to meet many other wonderful and talented people as well.

Please get to know as many of them as possible, have a fantastic week and enjoy the excitement of being part of a wonderful show!

Master of Ceremonies

Michael Peterson

by Laura Bishop, Voluntary Services Coordinator, Tomah VA Medical Center



Veterans and friends of the National Veterans Creative Arts Festival will have the unique opportunity to meet this year's Festival emcee at various times during the week.

Michael Peterson is an accomplished musician, public speaker and friend of our Nation's Veterans. He's received Grammys and has been nominated for CMA awards; he has recorded 16 albums during a 25-year career; and writes both gospel and country music.

Peterson was "discovered" by this year's Festival host site coordinator while attending the American Legion's national convention in Louisville in August 2009. A member of the American Legion Auxiliary and Festival friend, Sandy Wagner, approached Jean Calhoun of Tomah at the convention and said, "There is someone you have got to meet!"

Calhoun and co-worker Laura Bishop went to Peterson's booth at the convention exhibition hall and met him and his partner/manager, retired U.S. Army Col. Jill Chambers. There they discovered a genuine man who truly appreciates Veterans and the sacrifices they have made. They met a man who is down-to-earth and would spend hours on his feet, meeting fans, signing autographs and walking around visiting people at the convention. The fact that he is a musician, has starred in USO shows and written songs for the American Legion (that provide income to the Legion's Legacy Fund) didn't hurt, either.

Calhoun and Bishop looked at each other and asked, "Could he be the emcee for the 2010 Festival?"

They approached Peterson and Chambers about it and the rest, as they say, is history. Peterson will be in La Crosse for the entire Festival Week and will emcee the stage show on Sunday. Festival participants will have ample opportunity to visit with him and learn more about his work both on and off the stage. Be sure to ask him about his "MY REAL LIFE TOUR" and the "TAG, YOU'RE IT!" program. If you don't get a chance to ask about these programs, be sure to "Google it," or, as he says, "Giggle it" when you get home.

Welcome, Michael Peterson, to the 2010 National Veterans Creative Arts Festival!

More Wisconsin Fun Facts

- * Wisconsin became a state on May 29, 1848.
- * Wisconsin has 7,446 streams and rivers for a total of 26,767 miles. That is more than enough to circle the globe at the equator.
- * The state is nicknamed the Badger State.
- * The first practical typewriter was designed in Milwaukee in 1867.
- * Wisconsin snowmobile trails total 15,210 miles of signed and groomed snow highways.
- * Belleville is the Unidentified Flying Object Capital of Wisconsin.
- * Wisconsin is the dairy capital of the United States. Wisconsin produces more milk than any other state.
- * Milwaukee is home of Harley Davidson Motorcycles.
- * The state's constitution is the oldest of any state west of the Allegheny Mountains. It was adopted in 1848.
- * The Republican Party was founded in Ripon in 1854.
- * Famous Wisconsinites include: Harry Houdini, famous magician and escape artist; Douglas MacArthur, well known World War II and Korean War general; Frank Lloyd Wright, America's most famous architect; William H. Rehnquist, Chief Justice of the United States Supreme Court; and Don Ameche, actor and winner of an academy award for his performance in "Cocoon."
- * Sheboygan is the Bratwurst Capital of the World.

Things (you need to know)

► The **Hospitality Room**, sponsored by the ladies of the American Legion Auxiliary, is open today from 10 a.m. - 11 p.m. in the Radisson Hotel, Mississippi Suite #823. Snacks will be served. Don't hesitate to stop by, as the only meal being served today is the Opening Banquet.

Tuesday – 9 a.m. - 11 p.m.
 Wednesday – 9 a.m. - 11 p.m.
 Thursday – 9 a.m. - 11 p.m.
 Friday – 9 a.m. - Midnight
 Saturday – 9 a.m. - 6:30 p.m.
 Sunday – 10 a.m. - Noon; 10 p.m. - Midnight

► The **Medical Room** is located in the Iowa Room, on the second floor of the Radisson Hotel.
 - Daily hours are: 8 a.m. - 10 p.m.
 - Use ext. 459 inside the Radisson Hotel; outside of the hotel please call (608) 784-6680 and ask for ext. 459.
 - After 10 p.m., call room 214 for emergencies.
 - During the Festival, please let your team leader know of any medical concerns. They will help you.
 - Medical personnel, wearing bright blue jackets, will accompany Veterans on all trips and tours.



► The **Festival Internet Café** is once again sponsored by HP and is located in the Radisson Hotel, Minnesota Room on the second floor.

Tuesday	7 - 8:30 a.m.; 11:30 a.m. - 2 p.m.; and 7 - 9 p.m.
Wednesday	7 - 8:30 a.m.; 11:30 a.m. - 2 p.m.; and 7 - 9 p.m.
Thursday	7 - 8:30 a.m.; 11:30 a.m. - 2 p.m.
Friday	7 - 8:30 a.m.; 11:30 a.m. - 2 p.m.; and 7 - 9 p.m.
Saturday	7 - 8:30 a.m.; 11:30 a.m. - 2 p.m.
Sunday	7 - 8:30 a.m.; 11:30 a.m. - 2 p.m.

Thank you, HP, for providing this valuable service to our Festival Veterans.

NVCAF Web site
www.creativeartsfestival.va.gov

Opening Banquet Tonight

7 p.m.
 La Crosse Center Ballroom

Banquet Menu:

- ~Organic Spring Greens with Sherry Walnut Vinaigrette
- ~Onion and Leek Strudel
- ~Bacon Wrapped, Wild Rice and Gouda Stuffed Chicken in a Mornay Sauce
- ~Yam Soufflé

Vegetarian Option:

- (Must present a green ticket)
- ~Moroccan Sweet Potato Stew with Brown Rice
 - ~Oven Roasted Potatoes
 - ~Fresh Steamed Vegetables
 - ~Fresh Baked Rolls

Dessert:

- ~Double Cappuccino Cheesecake
- ~Coffee, Hot Tea, Iced Tea

Tuesday Meal Times:

Breakfast

Artists and Performers — 7 - 8:30 a.m.
 Radisson Hotel Ballroom, first floor

Lunch

Artists — 12:15 - 1:30 p.m.
 La Crosse Center Ballroom
 Performers — Noon - 1 p.m.
 Radisson Hotel Ballroom, first floor

Dinner

Artists — 6 - 7 p.m.
 Performers — 5:30 - 6:45 p.m.
 Radisson Hotel Ballroom, first floor

M Festival Menu



Today's Festival Schedule

Artists

Performers

Monday, October 18 - All Day Arrivals	
10 a.m. – 11 p.m.	Hospitality Room Open at Radisson Hotel - Mississippi Suite #823 (Snacks served)
Noon – 6 p.m.	Registration at the Radisson Hotel – Ballroom Foyer, 1st Floor
5:30 p.m.	All team leaders and team support meeting - Zielke Suite, 2nd floor (between the Radisson Hotel & the La Crosse Center)
6:30 p.m.	Pre-Dinner Music – La Crosse Center Ballroom
7 p.m.	Opening Banquet and Ceremonies – La Crosse Center Ballroom
8:30 p.m.	Team Meetings – Team leaders, team support & Veterans - La Crosse Center Ballroom

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Tuesday, October 19	
7 – 8:30 a.m.	Breakfast – Radisson Hotel Ballroom, 1st floor
7 – 8:30 a.m.	Late Registration – Wisconsin I, Radisson Hotel, 1st floor
9 a.m. – 11 p.m.	Hospitality Room Open – Mississippi Suite #823
8:30 a.m.	Teams 8 and 9 report to Radisson Art Center Building for photos
9 a.m.	Teams 10 and 11 report to Radisson Art Center Building for photos
9 – 10 a.m.	RCTV videotape interviews – Radisson Art Center Building
10 – 11:15 a.m.	Artist Interaction Session begins – La Crosse Center Ballroom, 2nd floor
11:15 a.m.	Break
11:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.	Interaction Session continues and completes
12:15 – 1:30 p.m.	Lunch – La Crosse Center Ballroom
1:30 – 2:30 p.m.	Performers view visual artwork – Radisson Art Center Building
2 p.m.	Board buses for the Minnesota Marine Art Museum in Winona, Minnesota
6 – 7 p.m.	Dinner – Radisson Hotel Ballroom, 1st floor
7 – 9 p.m.	Caricaturists – Radisson Hotel Ballroom Foyer
9 – 11 p.m.	Karaoke & Social Time – Radisson Hotel Ballroom, 1st floor

Tuesday, October 19	
7 – 8:30 a.m.	Breakfast – Radisson Hotel Ballroom, 1st floor
	Late Registration – Wisconsin I, Radisson Hotel, 1st floor
8:20 a.m.	Check in with team leaders – North Hall, La Crosse Center, 1st floor
8:30 a.m.	Introductions, announcements and rehearsal begins for ALL stage performers and staff – North Hall, La Crosse Center, 1st floor
9 a.m. – 9 p.m.	Chorus vests/costume fittings – North Hall, La Crosse Center (break for lunch from Noon - 1 p.m. and dinner from 5:30 - 7 p.m.)
Noon – 1 p.m.	Lunch – Radisson Hotel Ballroom, 1st floor
1 – 2:30 p.m.	- All solo & group acts have pictures taken IN COSTUMES – North Hall, La Crosse Center - Performers view visual artwork – Radisson Art Center Building - Rehearsal and sign up for audition solos and narration – Zielke Suite, North Hall, La Crosse Center
2:30 – 5 p.m.	- Rehearsals continue (Act 2) – North Hall, La Crosse Center - Chorus music rehearsal with chorus leader & sectional assistants - North Hall, La Crosse Center
3 – 4 p.m.	RCTV videotape interviews – North Hall, La Crosse Center
5:30 – 6:45 p.m.	Dinner - Radisson Hotel Ballroom, 1st floor
7 – 9 p.m.	Chorus number rehearsal with music director (All show participants) – North Hall, La Crosse Center
7:30 p.m.	Auditions begin for solos & narrations – North Hall, La Crosse Center
9 – 11 p.m.	Karaoke & Social Time – Radisson Hotel Ballroom, 1st floor



Artists and Performers:
Please check with your team leader and/or the posted schedule outside of the Radisson Hotel Ballroom for any changes or updates to your daily schedule.