

2010 National Veterans Creative Arts Festival

ArtsGram

October 18-24, 2010 in La Crosse, Wis., by the Tomah VA Medical Center

Hosted by the Department of veterans Affairs, the American Legion Auxiliary and Help Hospitalized Veterans

Special Edition, Sunday, October 24, 2010

Challenging Veterans in Visual and Performing Acts

Barbara MacLean and Rachelle Vishneowski

Samuel S. Stratton VA Medical Center

2010 Shirley Jefferies Memorial Award Recipients

There are a host of awards recognizing the remarkable achievements of those participating in the Festival. In addition to the medals won to attend the Festival, there are the Military Combat Experience Best of Show, Special Recognition Mental Health Challenges, Special Recognition Physical Disability, the Journal of Rehabilitation Research & Development front cover artwork and many others.

However, one award that you may not have heard much about this week is the Shirley Jefferies Memorial Award. This prestigious award is presented each year to an individual who exemplifies true dedication to the National Veterans Creative Arts Festival and the goals of the program. This year, two individuals are being recognized for their many contributions in support the Festival.

Both Barbara MacLean and Rachelle Vishneowski are long-time music therapists who serve Veterans at the Samuel S. Stratton VA Medical Center in Albany, N. Y. Their love of the arts led them to join the Creative Arts Festival as team leaders at numerous Festivals, volunteering to perform in roles such as chorus leaders, supporting the music director through various assignments and providing much needed backstage support.

“This year we decided to recognize two staff instead of one, for their contributions to Veterans and the National Veterans Creative Arts Festival competition in addition to the actual Festival due to the similar level of their involvement and support,” said Liz Mackey, Festival Director. “I first met Rachelle in 1992 at the Festival in Richmond, Va., and a few years later, Barbara joined us as a team leader. Both were impressive as caring therapists who were willing to go above and beyond to serve Veterans, not only at the Albany VA Medical Center, but also during the Festival week.”

One of the biggest ways MacLean and Vishneowski have contributed to the Festival is by prompting Veterans from the Albany area to get involved in both performing and visual arts, and by contacting Veterans pre-Festival to help in disseminating information regarding the show.

MacLean earned a B.S. in Music Education in 1978, with emphasis on Music Therapy, from the University of Kansas. She also became a board certified music therapist in 1985, and a certified creative arts therapist in 2006. MacLean has worked for VA medical centers in Knoxville, Leavenworth, Topeka and for the past 19 years, Albany.

“I think the Marine motto ‘semper fidelis’ is an apt description of Barb,” said Bill Haworth, the Festival’s Music Director. “Whether leading or following, she is fully present, fully engaged and fully committed. I’ve come to know and appreciate Barb’s talent and integrity over the years, and I trust her explicitly.”

Vishneowski currently serves on the national steering committee as the national dance chairperson. She graduated from the University of Wisconsin and has been a board certified music therapist since 1991. She also became a certified creative arts therapist in 2006, and has spent the past 20 years working for the VA Medical Center in Albany.

For many years, Vishneowski has led the “Vets of Albany” choir, taking the group on many road shows to local venues where they can exercise their talents and belt it all out. Anyone who knows Vishneowski will tell you what a wonderful voice she has herself. Vishneowski has also been a local chairperson for the “National Veterans Creative Arts Competition and Festival,” since 1990.

“I have known Rachelle Vishneowski since 1990,” said Chaplain Nicholas Tebordo, of the Stratton VA Medical Center. “She founded and developed the choir, and pours her heart and soul into the lives of these men and women —doing much of the work beyond her regular tour of duty. As the members plan, perform and process what they do together, they become a real second family. Rachelle is a wonderful leader—she holds us all together with joy and creativity.”

MacLean and Vishneowski have both been valuable assets to the National Veterans Creative Arts Festival and the Veterans who attend. Their true spirit and dedication, coupled with their love of the arts, make them this year’s doubly deserving recipients.

Congratulations, Barb and Rachelle!

The Shirley Jefferies Memorial Award

Shirley Jefferies was a Recreation Therapist and former Chief, Recreation Therapy Service at the Knoxville, Iowa VA Medical Center. She served as Advisor to the National Veterans Creative Arts Competition and Festival until she died of cancer in

August, 1994. Shirley was a vital influence to the beginnings of the program and the drive behind many of its changes and growth. She held a love for the arts and their therapeutic value in life. She has made a lasting impact on many veterans and on staff members who became involved with the event.

The Shirley Jefferies Memorial Award was first implemented in 1994. It is presented to an individual who demonstrates true dedication to the National Veterans Creative Arts Festival, its goals and philosophy. Through recognition of an individual who has displayed such dedication, we are able to pay tribute to Shirley, and carry on the therapeutic message she wishes to convey.

Past Shirley Jefferies Memorial Award recipients include:

1994	Don Ziska, former director, Knoxville, Iowa VAMC
1995	Jennifer Lewis, music therapist, Temple, Texas
1996	Leah Givler, former music therapist, Coatesville, Pa.
1997	Linda Colletti, former visual arts assistant, San Diego, Calif.
1998	Katharina Ryan, recreation therapist, Minneapolis, Minn.
1999	Bill Haworth, NVCAF music director, San Diego, Calif.
2000	Elizabeth Nealy, recreation therapist, Houston, Texas
2001	Jessie Herndon, music therapist, Chicago, Ill.
2002	Jean Calhoun, music therapist, Tomah, Wis.
2003	Suzanne Anderson, music therapist, Knoxville, Iowa
2004	Paula Moran, recreation therapist, Prescott, Ariz.
2005	Mia Leber, craft care specialist, Chicago, Ill.
2006	Maureen Harvey, art therapist, Oklahoma City, Okla.
2007	Gary Johnson, music therapist, Topeka, Kan.
2008	J. Sheppard Crumrine, music therapist, Milwaukee, Wis.
2009	Donna Lonergan, recreation therapist, Denver, Colo.

Next Stop: Northwest Arkansas

Poised to host the 2011 National Veterans Creative Arts Festival

Veterans attending the 2011 National Veterans Creative Arts Festival in Northwest Arkansas will be impressed by the natural beauty and charm of the area.

Northwest Arkansas is nestled in the heart of the Ozarks Mountains and renowned for natural beauty and outdoor recreation. From hunting and fishing to hiking and biking, from arts and architecture to historical monuments and military history, Northwest Arkansas has it all.

The area boasts numerous state parks and Beaver Lake, a popular water destination. Northwest Arkansas is the home of Wal-Mart; the first Wal-Mart store was opened in Rogers, Ark., in 1962. Fayetteville is also home to the University of Arkansas main campus and the Arkansas Razorbacks providing the community with rich academic and athletic support.

Northwest Arkansas boasts a rich cultural and artistic community – the largest performance hall in the state, the Walton Arts Center, is located in Fayetteville and the highly anticipated Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art is set to open its doors in Bentonville in 2010.

The region also has a strong military history. Prairie Grove Battlefield State Park, which is one of the most intact Civil War sites, is located in the area as well as the Pea Ridge National Military Park. Fayetteville is home to the VA Medical Center – Veterans Health Care System of the Ozarks (VHSO), the host of the 2011 Festival. “VHSO has already organized a planning committee” said Kathleen R. Fogarty, Medical Center Director. The 24 member steering committee and numerous sub-committee members are already meeting monthly to prepare for this extraordinary event which will be held October 17 – 24, 2011. “VHSO and Northwest Arkansas are proud and excited to be hosting the Festival next year,” Fogarty said. “We already have strong support from the community and local organizations.”

VHSO and the Northwest Arkansas community are ready to roll out the red carpet for Festival attendees to show them the best of what Northwest Arkansas has to offer.

Goodbye and Good Luck - from the 2010 Media Center Crew!

It is hard to believe, but the art exhibit and stage show are over and now we can relax and enjoy our last night in San Antonio. There is a special dinner and wonderful closing ceremony program prepared for this evening, so relax and enjoy it!

The media center staff thoroughly enjoyed our time with you. What an inspiration all of the participants have been! We did not get a chance to meet everyone or hear every story, but those we did hear and those we reported have truly changed our lives. Thank you for sharing them with us.

We also want to thank the staff from the Tomah VA Medical Center who supported the whole event this week, and throughout the past year. They provided much needed

assistance to accomplish our tasks for the week and we wouldn't have made it without them. Thank you!

Remember, when you get home and start thinking about the week and all the special people you met here in La Crosse, you can log on to the Festival Web site at: www.creativeartsfestival.va.gov and see all your friends again. All of this week's ArtsGram newsletters are available there!

Please be safe, everyone, as you travel home tomorrow. We encourage you all to continue pursuing your wonderful talents and look forward to hearing you have entered the Creative Arts Festival once again in 2010.

Hope to see you in Fayetteville, Ark., next October!

Sincerely,

The 2010 Public Affairs Team

Transportation Information

Buses will begin shuttle runs to the airport at 5 a.m. on Monday and will depart from the Radisson Hotel every 30 minutes. The shuttle will stop at the Holiday inn on the way to the airport. Plan to be at the airport one and a half hours prior to your flight time.

Anyone with special travel needs should contact their team leader who will coordinate travel through the command post. Please bring your luggage downstairs and volunteers will load them on the bus. If you need assistance with luggage, please contact your team leader who will contact the Command Post.

A Day at the Festival with Lonnie Hicks and Johnathan Starks

Note from the editor:

When I sat down with Lonnie and Jonathan this morning, it was obvious they were both excited. As we talked about the week and all the experiences they had had, the enthusiasm and appreciation flowed out. Johnathan talked about being up at 2:30 a.m. last night walking around, trying to work off all the extra energy. And Lonnie said he felt so excited - he could hardly wait for the show this afternoon.

"When I go back to Anchorage, I am going to encourage all of the Veterans in the Domiciliary to get involved in the local Festival," Johnation said.

"I agree," said Lonnie. "I am going to encourage the staff at the hospital to announce the local Festival. More Veterans need to know."

Both are looking forward to the PBS of the 2009 Festival and plan to do whatever they can to encourage their local stations to run the show this and next year. They plan to tell everyone they know. They kept telling me what a wonderful experience it has been for them and both are planning on entering the contest again next year.

Lonnie and Johnathan are so appreciative of the local committee how special they made them feel. They noted the detail of planning and said it was a spectacular week.

Lonnie and Johnathan asked me to pass on a special message: "Thank you to our team leaders, angels and bus drivers for the outstanding care you provided to us and our fellow Veterans!"

Check it out!

Do you want to share all that is going on with your friends and family back home? The ladies of the American Legion Auxiliary have posted photos from the week on their facebook page. Find it by doing a Google search and typing in "National Veterans Creative Arts Festival/facebook."

The ArtsGram, Festival videos, participant information and other Festival details are available on VA's Festival Web site at <http://www.creativeartsfestival.va.gov>.

You will also want to keep checking VA's flickr page. Over the next week or so we will be posting photos from the Festival. Go to <http://www.va.gov> and click on the flickr icon.