

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

Thursday, October 21, 2010

Talent is Ageless

by Jenny Ballou, VA Public Affairs Staff

An incredible sixty years separate the youngest and oldest veterans participating in this year's National Veterans Creative Arts Festival. Some Veterans are developing their new-found love of the arts; while others are reaching their peak and are endeavoring to take on new skills.

The youngest Veterans participating in the Festival at age 26, is Jack Tongen, a national medal recipient in Creative Writing and Music. This Army Veteran from Wheaton, Mo., has found that being a novice at the Creative Arts Festival definitely has its pluses – he can learn from all the experienced Festival participants. A winner for his creative writing entry in the Poetry-Patriotic category," Tongen is the recipient of the Shirley Jeffries Therapeutic Arts Scholarship. The award is named in honor of the late Shirley Jefferies, a recreation therapist at the VA Medical Center Waco, Texas. Jefferies held the first therapeutic arts show, the genesis of the Festival. "I don't know what to expect but I'm excited and looking forward to jamming with some of my fellow Vets," said Tongen. "I've never had training, I started in Iraq and never looked back." When told he was the youngest Veteran at the Festival, Tongen said, "Hey, that's awesome to be the youngest and with my short hair, no one would ever believe I was a hard core rock and roller," he added.

And while we don't like to talk about who is the oldest, George Farr considers it an honor that he wears with distinction as he celebrated his 86th birthday in February of this year. This is his third personal appearance at the Festival, an incredible feat and achievement. Farr had a family emergency last year and was unable to perform his winning piece but he's back this year, ready for an amazing performance! But for Farr, he says, "I am enormously amazed at the talent that these Veterans display and how they all come together in spirit and caring. The pinnacle of my entire experience at the Festival was when I presented, 'The Flag,' in Riverside, Calif., and the crowd at the Gala Show seemed to love it. Quite a few Veterans asked for a copy of it. That was just so thrilling to have that response from a piece that I wrote," said Farr. "My 'Octogenarian Rap' is my way of looking at my getting old."

Regardless of their ages, more than 3,000 Veterans from across the nation submitted visual and performing art entries to be considered among the best. Whether this is their first time or they've been at the Festival with their winning talent, each one inspires them to be their best and use what they experience for rehabilitation.

"It just goes to show you that our Nation's Veterans have talents in the visual and performing arts that is timeless," said National Director of the Festival, Liz Mackey.

Of Special Interest Today

* Artists, your first art workshops, basket making and wool felting, will be held in the Radisson Art Center Building from 9 – noon and 1 – 3 p.m.

* Staff from the National Eagle Center in Wabasha, Minn., will give you a close up, personal "beak-to-nose" visit with an American bald eagle and answer your questions. Stop for a visit in Riverside Park located between the Radisson Hotel and the La Crosse Queen riverboat. Artists are scheduled from 2 – 4 p.m.; performers are scheduled from 3 – 5 p.m.

* Enjoy a cruise on the La Crosse Queen riverboat. Take a leisurely stroll through Riverside Park, and board the La Crosse Queen for a beautiful two hour cruise on the Mississippi River. Performers are scheduled from 1 – 3 p.m.; Artists from 3:30 – 5:30 p.m.

* Mississippi Night at the Festival - Local Festival planners have a special night planned you won't want to miss:

- 6 p.m. - Mississippi River themed menu.
- 8 p.m. - River Rat Adventures with Kenny Salwey. Come hear Salwey talk about his 30 years of living off the Mississippi.
- 9 p.m. - Fireworks on the Mississippi!

What our Visual Artists have to say...

Vicky Bade, San Antonio, Texas

South Texas Veterans Health Care System, San Antonio

Branch of Service: Army

"Participating in the arts takes things off my mind. I can enjoy something I love to do."

Larry Beauford, Seminole, Oklahoma

VA Medical Center, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma

Branch of Service: Army

“Artistic things are the good things in my life.”

Sean Connolly, Olympia, Wash.

VA Puget Sound Health Care System, American Lake Division, Tacoma

Branch of Service: Navy

“Participating in the arts gives me the chance to have a positive outlet to express myself. It also relieves stress which makes me feel relaxed.”

Jeff Hopkins, Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Clement J. Zablocki VA Medical Center, Milwaukee

Branch of Service: Marine Corps

“The opportunity to express yourself is priceless. For me, fly tying helped me find the quest for perfection and helped me develop the patience I was lacking.”

Dennis Linn, Rapid City, South Dakota

VA Black Hills Health Care System, Fort Meade, South Dakota

Branch of Service: Air Force

“Beautiful artwork that evokes wonder, appreciation, and awe are of utmost value to anyone with an open mind and heart. Art cultivates self-expression, imagination, creativity, and soothes your soul.”

Wisconsin Series:

The Mighty Mississippi and the Steamboat

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

Without question, the Mississippi River is America’s greatest river. It was the Ojibwe tribe’s word misi-ziibi, meaning Great River, that gave birth to its modern day name. The river spans 2,348 miles starting at Lake Itasca in Minnesota, 1,475 feet above sea level. The river winds its way through the center of the United States, dividing east from west ultimately entering the Gulf of Mexico via a 10,000 square mile river delta. The Ohio River from the east and the Missouri River from the west are the main tributaries.

Minneapolis, St. Louis, Memphis and New Orleans are major American cities that make their homes along the banks of the Mississippi. In all, over 150 American cities rest alongside the mighty river. Twenty-four major bridges span the banks of the Mississippi including the blue Cass Street bridge you can see from your window connecting La Crosse, Wis., to Winona County, Minn. The region was bountiful and it wasn't long before early Americans sought to establish control of the area between the Mississippi and Missouri rivers.

The steamboat, first designed by Robert Fulton and Robert Livingston, changed the way Americans would navigate the great river slicing through the heart of the new territory known as the "Vente de la Louisiane" or Louisiana Purchase. Steamboats could travel faster, carry more cargo and meet schedules on time. The first steamboat sailed down the Mississippi to New Orleans in 1811 marking the beginning of the steamboat era. By the time the Civil War had begun in 1861, over 11,000 steamboat "paddle wheelers" plied the waters of American rivers. Today, a mere handful of this style of boat remain in service.

Enjoy the riverboat cruise today aboard the La Crosse Queen, a modern-day replica of the grand river boats that plied the Mississippi River in the late 19th century. She is one of the few authentic Mississippi River paddlewheel river boats still in operation in the country today.

Fun Fact Question: How long would it take a raindrop falling into Lake Itasca to arrive in the Gulf of Mexico?

A. About 90 Days.

The Artists Easel

Needle Felting and Basket Weaving Workshop Held Today

Artists, take time to go to the workshop scheduled for you today. You won't regret it.

First, artist Sandy Musolf will be sharing with you the beautiful art of needle felting. The art of needle felting is taking beautiful carded wool and creating three-dimensional sculptures. Wool fibers have tiny crimps all along their length. This is what allows them to wrap around each other and hold tight during spinning in order to make yarn. These crimps also allow them to become hopelessly tangled among each other in order to create felt. Needle felting uses needles that have tiny little barbs all around the sharp end, which grab onto individual strands and tangle them together as you work. These needles are very sharp, so a good work surface and a felting cushion are needed! You will be provided the tools and materials needed to make a beautiful sculpture when you attend this workshop.

Next, artisan Rose Berry will be instructing you in the ancient art of basket weaving. Basket weaving is the process of weaving unspun vegetable fibers into a basket. Basketry is made from a variety of fibrous or pliable materials—anything that will bend and form a shape. The aboriginal tribes are famous for their coloured basket-weaving techniques. To achieve a multi-coloured effect they first dye the twine and then weave the twines together in the most elaborate fashion possible. These baskets may then be traded for goods but may also be used for religious ceremonies.

The workshop is scheduled from 9 a.m. to noon and continues from 1 – 3 p.m. in the Radisson Art Center Building.

The Performers Podium

Don't let your performance get stale!

It is too easy to get complacent or stale when you have performed a song or dance so many times. Don't let it happen to you.

- Remember why you chose your song or dance in the first place. You have a message to give.
- You are here for a reason, you are one of the best! Your special talent and gift is needed.
- Many people are coming to see you perform – don't let them be disappointed.
- Stay motivated. Keep focused on the goal. The show is this Sunday.
- Get enough rest. There is so much going on this week, the hours are long and sometimes the waits are longer. The amount of concentration expected is immense. You know your body, sleep when you need to.
- Practice effective stress management techniques. If you need a little down time, take it when you get a break.

Volunteers are the “Heart” of the Festival

By Sandy Franks, Public Affairs Officer, Shreveport VA Medical Center

Long time volunteer, Annette Bray, is serving at her 6th Creative Arts Festival. She volunteered at the Creative Arts Festival in Minneapolis in 2002 and has donated her time as a volunteer for each festival since. Using her own funds, Annette has volunteered at the Creative Arts Festivals in seven different cities. Volunteering, especially at the Festival fills her heart and she describes the experience as like an old home week and opportunity to see old friends and meet new ones.

First-time volunteer, Tamara Lee, took vacation time to serve at the 2010 Creative Arts Festival. When asked what impressed her the most about the Creative Arts Festival,

Tamara said “the way the Veterans accepted me into the fold is touching.” Team members call her “their Angel” and appreciate her help and her positive attitude.

Husband and wife American Legion and American Legion Auxiliary members Wayne Rudolph and Gloria Miller-Rudolph are volunteering at their first Creative Arts Festival but are already making plans to travel to Arkansas for next year’s festival. Serving in the Hospitality Suite at the Festival, they also volunteer at the Tomah VAMC and were selected as Volunteers of the Month in March and April 2010. They both have enjoyed their experience at the Creative Arts Festival and think it is a great event for the Veterans.

Pat Flanders was a VA employee when she volunteered in the Hospitality Suite at the 1997 Creative Arts Festival in Tomah. In 2010, she is the Hospitality Suite Chairperson working with 15 volunteers, procuring all the food and making everyone feel welcome. Pat, the Vice President for the American Legion Auxiliary Tomah Unit 201, has enjoyed the experience of working with the Creative Arts Festival again.

Her shopping list so far has included 400 sandwiches, 50 pounds of apples, 30 pounds of bananas and 30 pounds of grapes.

Thanks to all volunteers for their commitment to the 2010 Creative Arts Festival.

A Day at the Festival with Lonnie Hicks and Johnathan Starks

We have asked two of our Veterans (one an artist and the other a performer) to give us a daily update of their impressions and insights each day of the Festival. Today we read their thoughts about coming to the Festival.

Lonnie Hicks, Artist, Honolulu Hawaii

Yesterday was humbling and honoring at the same time. Seeing all the artwork, it struck me that the judges were extremely good. I couldn’t help but wonder how could a “paint by number” be considered good enough to be in such an awesome art collection. I really enjoyed the trip to the Minnesota Marine Art Museum. I had never seen artwork by Renoir and Van Gogh in person before - who would think such a small, rural art museum would have such outstanding pieces. My wife and I really enjoyed the caricaturist Buzz. He asked us how we wanted to be depicted. I made a ukelele several years ago so he drew me with my ukelele and my wife as a hula girl. What fun! I am really looking forward to today’s trips, especially for the wood chipping. I have a wood carving planned for next year’s Festival and hope to pick up a few tips. I am also looking forward to talking to the Veteran woodcarvers, too.

Johnathan Starks, Performer, Anchorage, Alaska

I decided not to audition yesterday. When I got into the rehearsals I realized how much I already have to learn. What a long day it was, I really enjoyed it though. Even though I was in rehearsals until about 9 p.m. last night, my partner and I needed a little stress relief. What better way to wind down than to sing? We had so much fun with our fellow Veterans during a great karaoke session. Yesterday's dress rehearsal was very impressive, what a wonderful, talented group. I really enjoyed hearing all the Veterans perform. Another highlight of the day was the art show. It was awesome to see the art work. I was really impressed with Lonnie's painting - it was incredible. My wife took a photo of it to share with family when we go to Florida when the Festival is over. The art piece, "Green Faces, Purple Heart" by James Lykins also really impacted us. We have talked about it numerous times and shared Kimberly's photo.

Thanks to Our Presenters!

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), the American Legion Auxiliary (ALA), and Help Hospitalized Veterans (HHV) are the three co-presenters of the National Veterans Creative Arts Festival each year. All three share a strong commitment to America's Veterans, dedicated to promoting creative arts therapy for their health, rehabilitation and recovery.

VA has supported art and music therapy programs for more than 20 years, recognizing how this event demonstrates to the public the multiple talents of our nation's Veterans. Of course, VA could not support an event of this size without the committed support of both HHV and the ALA.

Help Hospitalized Veterans has supported both active duty military as well as Veterans with art therapy since 1970, having distributed more than 23 million craft kits to VA medical centers and military hospitals across the country. HHV also hosts an annual craft kit workshop during the week, scheduled for Friday from 6:30 – 9 p.m. in the Radisson Art Center Building.

This is the American Legion Auxiliary's tenth year supporting the Creative Arts Festival with countless dedicated volunteers who help with event logistics and day-to-day operations. Among other areas, ALA provides volunteers for the costume room and also furnishes the refreshments and volunteers in the hospitality room.

Thank you to all of our co-presenters for supporting our Veteran artists and performers, and for helping them learn, grow, heal and create.

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.

Today – 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, 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.

Day	Times
Today	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

Festival Menu

Thursday Meal Times:

Breakfast

Artists and Performers —

7 - 8:30 a.m.

Radisson Hotel Ballroom, first floor

Lunch

Artists — noon - 1 p.m.

Radisson Hotel Ballroom, first floor

Performers — 11:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.

Raddison Hotel Ballroom, first floor

Dinner

Artists and Performers — 6 p.m.

Breakfast Buffet

Egg frittata and bacon; country potatoes; assorted cereals/oatmeal; whole fresh fruit; fresh baked muffins; assorted low-fat; yogurts; assorted juices; coffee, tea, milk

Lunch Buffet

Organic spring greens salad; parmesan crusted chicken; alfredo and marinara sauces; ziti pasta noodles; fresh steamed vegetables; warm bread sticks; strawberry layer cake; coffee, hot tea, iced tea

Dinner Buffet

Mississippi River Ports of Call

Wisconsin cheese and crackers; cheese fondue; smoked trout crostini; top round sandwiches; peel and eat shrimp; crab dip; chicken creole and seafood gumbo; hot wings and smoked pork ribs; corn bread with honey butter; coleslaw

Today's Festival Schedule

Artists

Thursday, October 21

Time	Event
7 – 8:30 a.m.	Breakfast – Radisson Hotel Ballroom, 1st floor
8 a.m.	Team leader and team support meeting with Paula Moran - Minnesota Room, second floor, Radisson Hotel
8:30 a.m.	Team leader and team support meeting with artists
9 a.m. – 11 p.m.	Hospitality Room Open – Mississippi Suite #823
9 a.m. – Noon	Art Workshops: Basket Making and Wool Felting - Radisson Art Center Building
Noon - 1 p.m.	Lunch - Radisson Hotel Ballroom, first floor
1 - 3 p.m.	Basket Making and Wool Felting workshops continue - Radisson Art Center Building
2 - 4 p.m.	Eagle Visit
3:30 - 5:30 p.m.	Mississippi River Boat Cruise
6 p.m.	Mississippi River- themed Dinner and Entertainment - La Crosse Center Ballroom, second floor
8 p.m.	Kenny Salwey, River Rat Adventures
9 p.m.	Festival Fireworks on the Mississippi River
8 a.m.	Team leader and team support meeting with Paula Moran - Minnesota Room, second floor, Radisson Hotel

Performers

Thursday, October 21

Time	Event
7 – 8:30 a.m.	Breakfast – Radisson Hotel Ballroom, 1st floor Late Registration – Wisconsin I, Radisson Hotel, 1st floor
7:30 a.m.	Team leader and team support meeting with Amy Kimbler - Zielke Suite, second floor
8 a.m.	Team leader and team support meeting with performers
8:30 – 11:30 a.m.	Blocking Rehearsal – ALL VETERANS NEEDED – North Hall, La Crosse Center
8:30 – 11:30 a.m.	Chorus vests/costume fittings – North Hall, La Crosse Center
9 a.m. – 11 p.m.	Hospitality Room Open – Mississippi Suite #823
11:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.	Lunch – Radisson Hotel Ballroom, first floor
1 - 3 p.m.	Mississippi River Boat Cruise
2 – 4 p.m.	Eagle Visit/ Shopping
6 p.m.	Mississippi River-Themed Dinner and Entertainment - La Crosse Center Ballroom, second floor
8 p.m.	Kenny Salwey - River Rat Adventures
9 p.m.	Festival Fireworks on Mississippi River

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.