



NATIONAL VETERANS CREATIVE ARTS FESTIVAL

art • music • drama • dance • creative writing

Shirley Jeffries – Therapeutic Arts Scholarship Recipient Performing Arts

John Koelsch Salem, Va.

Joel Koelsch's journey into the world of proudly serving his country began 16 years ago; it is one of a personal and physical nature related to his military service. Now, he's healing through the therapy of writing.

It was 10 years ago that Koelsch turned symptoms of war stress into writing. Writing supplemented the process of therapy and he completed a creative nonfiction novel based on his combat experiences in Vietnam. Throughout the five years it took him to complete his writing, he found it useful to take a break from writing prose and cover the same territory with his poetry.

In 1994, Koelsch moved to La Crosse, Wis., and he started to receive health care at the VA Medical Center in Tomah. It was there that he first achieved significant progress in his recovery. The key components included his contact with fellow Veterans at the La Crosse Veterans Center, and the growing focus on the root causes of his trauma, enhanced by his poetic interpretations.

A return to the La Crosse area to participate in the 2010 National Veterans Creative Arts Festival is a positive outcome for Koelsch, recognizing the progress he has continued to make. This well deserved recognition also affirms the constructive milestones he has accomplished in his long and hard fought recovery.