

THE NATIONAL OPERA CENTER AMERICA

ARTS AND THE MILITARY

IMPROVING THE HEALTH OF ACTIVE MILITARY AND VETERANS THROUGH THE ARTS

ACTION NEEDED

We urge Congress to:

- Support H.R. 102, **Expanding Care for Veterans Act**, sponsored by Rep. Julia Brownley (D-CA) to improve access to evidence-based complementary alternative treatments for veterans, including creative arts therapies.
- Support continued funding through the Department of Veterans Affairs and Department of Defense for creative arts therapies services and artist-directed programs for veterans and active military.

TALKING POINTS

- "Arts and the Military" includes the professional creative arts therapies disciplines of art therapy, music therapy, dance/movement therapy, drama therapy, psychodrama, and biblio/poetry therapy, all of which are nationally board certified therapies with licensure in selected states, as well as artist-directed applications of visual, literary and performing arts, and design. These creative arts therapists and community artists work together to provide quality, cost-effective healthcare and wellness services for active military, veterans, and their families.

Complementary, Alternative, and Integrative Health Interventions Help Veterans

- **Blue Star Theatres** is a collaborative program of Theatre Communications Group (TCG) and Blue Star Families. **Blue Star Theatres** currently has **170 participating theatres spanning 42 U.S. states and territories** that connect theatre offerings to military personnel across the United States. **Blue Star Museums**, also a program of Blue Star Families, offers free admission to the nation's service members, including National Guard and Reserve, and their families, to **more than 2,000 museums across America** from Memorial Day through Labor Day each year.
- **The Veterans Affairs of New Haven, CT** utilizes drama therapy and therapeutic theatre to aid the participants in expressing their feelings of trauma in a safe and structured environment, while rehearsing and physically experiencing new coping skills and healthy goal achievement.
- **Austin State Hospital, Texas Department of State Health Services**, provides experiential therapies to veterans, among their adult behavioral health and medical units, to increase socialization and mental and emotional stabilization.
- **Creative Healing Connections** presents arts & reintegration retreats for active duty and veteran women, as well as arts & healing retreats for military spouses, military families, and retreats for military men. These artist-led retreats, held in the **Adirondack region of New York** since 2006, use the arts, complementary therapies, and nature to provide safe environments for individual and collective self-expression.
- **Ars Bellum Foundation**, formed in 2014 by a group of veterans, active duty service members, and military family members has a primary mission to provide evidence-based art therapy programs to veterans and military family members struggling with PTSD and related mental health conditions due to service-related trauma, loss, and grief. Sites are open in **St. Paul, Brooklyn Park, and Benson Minnesota. Rochester, MN, North Carolina, and Tampa Bay, FL** sites are under development to open in 2018.
- Music therapy programs in **VA hospitals in 27 states (AL, AZ, CA, CT, FL, GA, IA, IL, IN, KS, LA, MA, MD, MI, MN, NC, NJ, NY, OH, PA, SD, TN, TX, VA, WI, WV, WY)** enhance physical, cognitive,

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psychological, and socio-emotional functioning. Board certified music therapists facilitate community transition and provide opportunities to acquire, practice, and assimilate new skills into the "new normal" following disease or injury.

Creative Forces: NEA Military Healing Arts Network

- Made possible by a unique collaboration between the National Endowment for the Arts, the Departments of Defense and Veterans Affairs, and state arts agencies.
- Goals are to help military personnel and veterans return to their homes, their missions and their families whole, mentally fit and emotionally ready for whatever comes next.
- Provides art therapy, music therapy, dance/movement therapy and therapeutic writing for service members with traumatic brain injury and associated psychological health issues.
- Recognizing the success of this program, in fiscal years 2016 and 2017, Congress appropriated a nearly \$2 million budget increase each year for the NEA, specifically allocated to expand this military healing arts program.

2017 Creative Forces Clinical Research Summit

The National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) convened a summit in September 2017 with over sixty professionals to begin formulating a five-year plan for clinical research related to the impact of the creative arts therapies with military populations. As part of her support for the creative art therapies, Second Lady, Karen Pence hosted the kickoff breakfast for this Summit at the Vice President's Residence.

In October 2017, Mrs. Pence announced her initiative, *Art Therapy, Healing with the HeART* so people can better understand that art therapy is a mental health profession, to spread awareness that art therapy is a treatment option for those seeking services, and to encourage young people to consider art therapy as a career choice. Mrs. Pence has visited several Creative Forces sites and other facilities offering art therapy and creative arts therapies for veterans and their family members.

Locations:

Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson (JBER), Anchorage
AK
Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton,
Oceanside, CA
Fort Carson, CO
James A. Haley Veterans' Hospital, Tampa, FL
Fort Campbell, KY

National Intrepid Center of Excellence (NICoE) at
Walter Reed, Bethesda, MD
Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune, Jacksonville, NC
Fort Hood, TX
Fort Belvoir, VA
Joint Expeditionary Base, Little Creek, VA
Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Tacoma, WA

BACKGROUND

Despite strong historical beginnings in veterans' hospitals during World War II, and inclusion in VA Hospital programs across the U.S., there remains a need to expand opportunities for creative arts therapies and artist-directed programs so that more military members and veterans can access these services in their communities. Economic analyses, cost studies, and clinical research show a positive trend in the use of creative arts therapies and their impact on containing healthcare costs and facilitating functional outcomes achievement. Creative arts therapies and artist-directed programs have the potential to positively impact the healthcare spending concerns, quality of care issues, and healthcare needs of active military and veterans.

H.R. 102 Expanding Care for Veterans Act:

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- Key aspects of H.R. 102 were previously a part of H.R. 2256, the Veterans Information Modernization Act, which had strong bipartisan support and passed the House in July 2015.
- H.R. 102 directs Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to develop a plan to expand the scope of VA's research, education, delivery, and integration of complementary and alternative medicine services.
- H.R. 102 proposes a three-year program through the **VA's Office of Patient Centered Care and Cultural Transformation** to assess feasibility, and identify and resolve barriers to integrating the delivery of complementary and alternative medicine services with other VA health care services.