

## **ARTS AND THE MILITARY**

IMPROVING THE HEALTH AND WELLBEING OF MILITARY AND VETERANS POPULATIONS  
THROUGH THE ARTS

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### **ACTION NEEDED**

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**We urge Congress to:**

- **Support Commander John Scott Hannon Veterans Mental Health Care Improvement Act of 2019, S.785, which will update the VA and DOD Clinical Practice Guidelines for Assessment and Management of Patients at Risk for Suicide, including guidance for art therapy and music therapy, as well as other creative arts therapies, expressive arts therapy, and arts-based programming.**
- **Support increased funding through the Department of Veterans Affairs and Department of Defense for creative arts therapies; expressive arts therapy; and arts-based programming for military, Veterans, and their families through community and wellness programs and partnerships.**
- **Support legislation that improves access to evidence-based complementary and integrative treatments and telehealth for military, Veterans, and their families in community and clinical settings that includes creative arts therapies, expressive arts therapy, as well as arts-based programming as a means to achieve greater health and well-being.**

### **TALKING POINTS**

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#### **Creative Arts Therapies, Expressive Arts Therapy, and Arts-Based Programs Help Military and Veteran Populations**

- **The Malcom Randall VA Medical Center in Gainesville, Florida, supports Creative Arts Therapy services within the North Florida/South Georgia VA Medical System. Music therapy and art therapy are currently being provided to veterans living in rural areas of this region via telehealth through the VA Veteran Video Connect (VA VVC). This has been made possible through a grant through the VA Office of Rural Health, the Rural Veteran TeleRehabilitation Initiative (RVTRI), and a partnership with Creative Forces: NEA Military Healing Arts Network.**
- **Roman Baca, a classically trained ballet dancer and Marine Iraq War Veteran founded Exit 12 Dance Company in New York City after returning from Iraq to inspire conversations about worldly differences and the lasting effects of violence and conflict on communities, families, and individuals.**
- **The Ars Bellum Foundation in St. Paul, Minnesota, is a nonprofit organization that provides research-based art therapy programs for Veterans and their families experiencing PTSD and related mental health conditions as a result of trauma from their service.**

- The **Vet Art Project in Akron, Ohio**, creates opportunities for Veterans and family members to work with creative media to foster storytelling about war and service to attain a greater level of personal understanding, awareness, and peace.
- The **Museum of Glass in Tacoma, Washington**, runs a program called Hot Shop Heroes: Healing with Fire, which offers glassblowing and flame-working classes to service members with complex and devastating physical and mental injuries.
- **Art Access in Salt Lake City, Utah**, partners with the **George E. Wahlen Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center** to provide a series of art workshops for Veterans and has developed a partnership with the **University of Utah's Veterans Support Center** to offer creative writing workshops to student Veterans, as well as Veterans from the broader community.
- **Blue Star Theatres** is a collaborative program of Theatre Communications Group (TCG) and Blue Star Families. **Blue Star Theatres** currently has **170 participating theaters spanning 42 U.S. states and territories** that connect theater 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.
- **Daytona State College in Daytona Beach, Florida** provides free art therapy services to their Veteran students to help them cope with PTSD and other psychological challenges as part of their "Art in Action" program.
- Founded and run by a drama therapist, **COAST (Rhode Island and East Coast)**, or Creating Outreach About Addiction Support Together, works to eradicate the opioid epidemic through arts-based educational, therapeutic, and community driven approaches.

#### **Creative Forces®: NEA Military Healing Arts Network**

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- Made possible by a unique collaboration between the National Endowment for the Arts, the Departments of Defense and Veterans Affairs, and state and local arts agencies, with administrative support provided by Americans for the Arts.
- Seeks to improve the health, wellness, and quality of life of trauma-exposed military service members and Veterans, as well as their families and caregivers, by increasing knowledge of and access to clinical creative arts therapies and community arts engagement.
- Places creative arts therapies at the core of patient-centered care at military medical facilities, as well as a telehealth program for patients in rural and remote areas; providing art, music, and dance/movement therapies, as well as creative writing instruction, for military patients and Veterans. Creative Forces is a growing network



of sites across the country with planned additions of locations in Indiana, Ohio, and Mississippi.

**Locations:**

Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Anchorage  
AK  
Fort Carson, CO  
James A. Haley Veterans' Hospital, Tampa, FL  
North Florida/South Georgia Veterans Health  
System, Gainesville, FL  
National Intrepid Center of Excellence  
(NICoE) at

Walter Reed, Bethesda, MD  
Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune,  
Jacksonville, NC  
Fort Hood, TX  
Fort Belvoir, VA  
Naval Medical Center, Portsmouth, VA  
Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Tacoma, WA

**BACKGROUND**

“Arts and the Military” includes the professional creative arts therapy 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. In addition, expressive arts therapy utilizes a multimodal approach that combines the visual arts, movement, drama, music, writing, and other creative processes to foster deep personal growth and community development. Together, creative arts therapists, expressive arts therapists, and community artists work to provide quality, cost-effective healthcare and wellness services for military, Veterans, and their families.

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, expressive arts therapy, and artist-directed programs so that more service 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.

In FY 2020, Congress took a positive step forward by including language in the DoD appropriations bill to increase support for creative arts therapies for service members with TBI and psychological health conditions. Additionally, Congress also included language for increased support for creative arts therapies and first-time funding of \$5 million to provide arts-based treatments, programs, and partnerships serving Veterans through the VA’s Whole Health Initiative.