

## ARTS AND THE MILITARY

### IMPROVING THE HEALTH OF ACTIVE MILITARY AND VETERANS THROUGH THE ARTS

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#### ACTION NEEDED

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##### We urge Congress to:

- **Support legislation that improves access to evidence-based complementary and integrative treatments and telehealth for veterans, including creative arts therapies.**
- **Support increased funding through the Department of Veterans Affairs and Department of Defense for creative arts therapies services and artist-directed programs for veterans, active military, and their families through community and wellness programs.**

#### TALKING POINTS

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##### **Complementary, Alternative, and Integrative Health Interventions Help Active Military and Veterans**

- **The Independence Fund's Art of Healing in South Carolina** utilizes art therapy to support veterans experiencing PTSD. Art therapy is a critical component of the Family Program, which offers individualized comprehensive aftercare for each family.
- Dance/movement therapy services at the **National Intrepid Center of Excellence (NICoE) at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center (NICoE) in Bethesda, MD**, provides an integrative treatment program for military service members with traumatic brain injuries (TBI). Certified Dance/movement therapists facilitate both individual and group therapy treatment in an outpatient TBI program in order to support greater quality of life and recovery from symptoms. Within the last year, efforts have been made to expand Dance/movement therapy services via a **telehealth pilot program** which was completed at NICoE with support from Creative Forces and the NEA.
- **Resounding Joy in San Diego, CA**, works directly with returning military service members who are diagnosed with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), TBIs, Alcohol and Drug Addictions, and other psychological and physical ailments related to combat stress and trauma, providing music therapy services and promoting supportive musical environments amongst active and retired military members.
- **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.
- **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.
- The art therapy program at **VA Medical Center in Memphis, TN**, offers art therapy to veterans in the residential program as well as individual and group therapy for patients in outpatient care. Clinicians use the creative process to reconcile emotional conflicts, foster self-awareness, and increase self-esteem.
- **Operation Song**—a non-profit arts agency based in **Nashville, TN**—and headed by songwriters Bob Regan and Don Goodman, empowers veterans, active duty military, and their families to tell their stories through the process of songwriting. Operation Song's programs create an opportunity to transform service related issues, injuries and illnesses into a structured, musical outlet as an enhancement of traditional therapies and/or treatments. Since 2012, their participants have written over 600 songs with veterans of WWII to those currently serving.

- 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, 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 NEA, 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 creative writing instruction for service members with TBI and associated psychological health issues.
- Offers a telehealth program for patients in rural and remote areas

**Locations:**

Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Anchorage AK  
 Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton,  
 Oceanside, CA  
 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 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.

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.