



## From Mia to You: 2005 Shirley Jeffries Award Recipient Mia Leber, HHV Craft Care Specialist Jesse Brown VA Medical Center, Chicago



*Mia Leber, craft care specialist, at the Jesse Brown VA Medical Center in Chicago*

craft kit therapy, but the knowledge of the arts that allows her to challenge patients while expanding their creativity.”

Introduced to the Festival shortly after joining HHV, Leber’s first role was to enter veterans from the Chicago facility into the annual competition. When she took on the position as a visual arts assistant, she became involved in the first phase of the national judging for the 12 craft kit categories, and she also supports other art activities at the annual event. According to Katy Ryan, National Art Chairperson, “Mia is a person who always has a smile on her face. She is

Mia Leber has a familiar and friendly face at the National Veterans Creative Arts Festival. Since 2001, she has served as a visual arts assistant for the annual event. She has also been a part of the Festival’s national steering committee, working on various artistic aspects of the program. During the week of the Festival, Leber also provides support to the visual art teams and plans all aspects of the craft kit workshops.

Leber joined the family of craft care specialists at Help Hospitalized Veterans (HHV) in 1999 at the Jesse Brown VA Medical Center in Chicago. According to Mike Lynch, HHV Director, “Mia Leber brings with her not only the creative talents to teach

involved not only with the craft kit activities, but all forms of visual art. She has lots of energy, has a very positive outlook, never says no to anything that will help the program or the participants, and does an incredible job. The veterans from her medical center – and at the Festival – all think the world of her.”

Liz Mackey, Festival Director, readily agrees. “Mia has a great ability to relate to veterans in a professional, therapeutic way. She has a friendly, approachable style that veterans, volunteers and staff find welcoming. Her specific talents as an artist herself lend themselves perfectly to her work on our event.”

As a craft care specialist at the busy Chicago VA facility, Leber works with veterans every day, helping them identify arts and crafts activities to assist them in their rehabilitation and healing process. According to her husband Ray, “she really enjoys working with veterans, especially helping them find just the right activity to meet



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## “Mia” continued from page 1

their health care needs. Back home, she works with veterans with many types of illnesses and disabilities, and runs a number of the arts and crafts clinics at the Jesse Brown medical center.”

Leber received her degree in fine arts from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, and received certification as a professional craft and hobby teacher from Hobby Industries Association. Originally from Ohio, Leber has lived in the Chicago area for most of her life, along with Ray, an adult son and extended family members.

For the past twenty years, Leber has maintained her interest and talents in the arts, participating in street art fairs and running a clothing design business, creatively named, “From Mia to You.” In addition to her work with veterans, she also held past positions as a teacher of preschool children, where she focused on arts and crafts, and also worked for an advertising agency for a period of time.

Perhaps the highest testament to Leber’s commitment to America’s veterans comes from one Vietnam veteran treated at the Jessie Brown facility. Last year, the veteran wrote, “*There are many reasons why I believe Ms. (Mia) Leber is an exceptional human being. However out of respect for her modesty I will only point out a few of her wonderful attributes. Indeed, since I have been living, I have only met a few people who possessed the understanding and compassion that she has. She always has a kind word or an open ear for the veteran patients. On one occasion, she literally saved my life.*” A

*prophet once wrote that sometimes a look of pity or compassion is better than ten doctors. I bear witness that this statement has merit and vitality.”*

Leber’s nomination for the 2005 Shirley Jeffries Award was recommended and unanimously supported by the Festival’s national steering committee. “Because of her commitment to veterans involved with creative



Mia Leber assists Renee Ball from Prescott, Ariz. with a project at the HHV craft kit workshop.

arts therapy, her willingness go above and beyond by serving as a visual arts coordinator on the national committee, and her positive work ethic in seeing projects successfully through to completion, we are all thrilled at her selection,” Liz Mackey said.

Mike Lynch feels the same. “Mia Leber’s caring and lovable personality and demeanor are contagious, and she is always attentive and focused on offering her assistance to patients and staff alike. The craft program at the Jesse Brown VA facility receives immeasurable compliments from clinicians, administrators and patients. We at HHV are very proud that she is a vital part of our team.”



**NVCAF WEB SITE**  
[www.creativeartsfestival.org](http://www.creativeartsfestival.org)

Would you like your friends and family back home to be able to see what you are doing this week? Log onto the Festival Web site to check out the daily editions of the *ArtsGram* (on the main home page) as well as individual news releases and photos, located on the “Participant Information” tab.



## The Shirley Jefferies Memorial Award

Shirley Jefferies was a recreation therapist and former chief of recreation therapy service at the Knoxville, Iowa VA Medical Center. She served as Advisor to the National Veterans Creative Arts Competition and Festival until she died of cancer in 1994. Jefferies was a vital influence to the beginning of the program and the drive behind many of its changes and growth. With a heartfelt love for the arts and its therapeutic value in life, Jefferies made a lasting impact on many veterans, as well as staff members, who became involved with the event.

The Shirley Jefferies Memorial Award began in 1994. Each year, it is presented to an individual who demonstrates true dedication to the National Veterans Creative Arts Festival, its goals and philosophy. By recognizing an individual who has displayed such dedication, we are able to pay tribute to Shirley Jefferies each year, while carrying on the therapeutic message she wished to convey.

Past Shirley Jefferies Memorial Award recipients include:

- 1994 Don Ziska, former director, VA Medical Center Knoxville, Iowa
- 1995 Jennifer Lewis, music therapist, Temple, Texas
- 1996 Leah Givler, former music therapist, Coatesville, Penn.
- 1997 Linda Colletti, NVCAF Art Exhibit Coordinator, San Diego, Calif.
- 1998 Katharina (Katy) Ryan, recreation therapist, Minneapolis, Minn.
- 1999 Bill Haworth, NVCAF Music Director, San Diego, Calif.
- 2000 Elizabeth Nealy, recreation therapist, Houston, Texas
- 2001 Jessie Herndon, music therapist, Chicago, Ill.
- 2002 Jean Calhoun, music therapist, Tomah, Wis.
- 2003 Suzanne Anderson, music therapist, Knoxville, Iowa
- 2004 Paula Moran, recreation therapist, Prescott, Ariz.

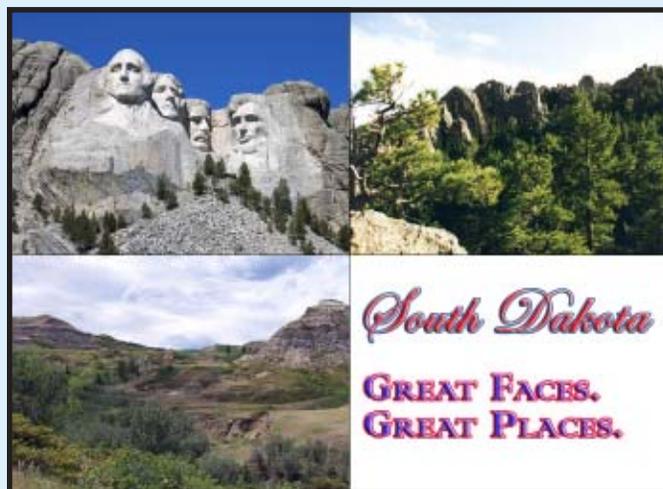


## South Dakota's VA Black Hills Hosts 2006 National Veterans Creative Arts Festival

The veterans, volunteers and employees of the VA Black Hills Health Care System encourage you to enter next year's competition phase so you can participate in the 2006 National Veterans Creative Arts Festival, scheduled for October 16-22 in Rapid City, South Dakota.

With its natural beauty and mystic nuances, it is no wonder the Lakota Indians found the Black Hills to be such a spiritual place, and why today it is regarded as an oasis of artistic expression. Experience the patriotism that is Mt. Rushmore National Memorial; the visionary Crazy Horse Memorial; the extraterrestrial sensations of the Badlands and Devils Tower; and the tranquility of the Black Hills National Forest with its abundant wildlife. We think you'll agree that the Black Hills region is rich in history and artistry, packed with plenty of things to see and do, and ready to provide you with a warm welcome and small town hospitality.

Committee members and volunteers from the Black Hills have spent this past week listening, learning and gathering ideas in an effort to make your Festival experience in



Rapid City a unique and memorable one. VA Black Hills Director Peter Henry said, "We are truly honored to host the 2006 Creative Arts Festival and are excited to further introduce our region to the incredible and inspiring talents of America's veterans."

**Schedule for Monday, October 24, 2005**

6 - 9 a.m. Breakfast

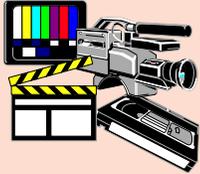
**Departures all day**

(See Transportation Schedule below.)



**For Monday  
High 58°  
Low 31°**

**Goodbye and Good Luck from the 2005 Media Center Crew!**



By the time you read this, the art exhibit and stage show will be over and you will be ready to finally relax and enjoy your last night in Denver. There is a special dinner and wonderful closing ceremony program prepared for you tonight. Relax and enjoy it!

Those of us who worked in the media center this week thoroughly enjoyed our time with you. What an inspiration all of the participants have been to us! We did not get a chance to meet all of you or hear every story, but those we did hear and those we reported have truly changed our lives. Thank you for sharing them with us.

We also want to thank the staff from the VA Eastern Colorado Health Care System who supported the whole event this week, and throughout the past year. They provided the much needed assistance to accomplish our tasks for the week.

Remember, when you get home and start thinking about the week and all the special people you met here in Denver, you can log on to the Festival Web site at: [www.creativeartsfestival.org](http://www.creativeartsfestival.org) and see all your friends

again. Those of you who requested a news release will be able to download your release and see the picture posted on the site for use by media in your hometown. (Of course, all of this week's *ArtsGram* newsletters are available there, too!)

Please be safe as you travel home tomorrow. We want to encourage you to continue the pursuit of your talents. We hope to hear that you have entered the Festival again in 2006, and that we will see you next October in Rapid City, South Dakota!

Sincerely,

The 2005 Creative Arts Festival Public Affairs Team:  
*Kim Byers, Laura Bishop, Susan Broschat, Elaine Buehler, Kerri Childress, Rosemarie Coffin, Gwenolyn Coley, Gene Davies, Deb Eiring, Eric Eisen, Susan Fleece, Lupe Hernandez, Jeff Honeycutt, Steve Judish, David Irvine, Jeff Luginbuel, Mark Masser, Butch Miller, Jeanne Miserendino, Joe Nguyen, Richard Olague, Sharon Palmer, Diane Rood, Scott Seward, Lana Shuman, Judy Stutts, Joy Weyn-King and Jeff West.*



For those with flights departing before 7 a.m. please use the hotel shuttle (check with the hotel front desk).

<u>Flight time</u>	<u>Depart from hotel</u>
8 - 9:40 a.m.	6 a.m.
10:05 - 10:45 a.m.	7 a.m.
11:06 - 11:27 a.m.	8 a.m.
11:30 - 11:55 a.m.	9 a.m.
12:15 - 12:50 p.m.	10 a.m.
1:19 - 1:55 p.m.	11 a.m.
2:25 - 3:20 p.m.	Noon

For all other flight times, please check with the front desk.



**Monday, October 24, 2005**

**Breakfast - Traditional Continental**

- Southwest Scramble Burrito
- Juices, Fruit and Berries
- Bakeries - Danish, Croissants, Muffins, Pastries
- Oatmeal and Dry Cereals
- Milk, Soy Milk, Coffee, Hot Tea
- Cream, Sugar, Sugar Substitute