



**Department of
Veterans Affairs**

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News Release

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VA Festival Lets Veterans Showcase Creativity *National Veterans Creative Arts Festival Starts Oct. 22 in St. Louis*

WASHINGTON – Some of the country's most talented veteran artists and performers will put their creative achievements on display at the National Veterans Creative Arts Festival in St. Louis. From October 22-28, more than 120 veterans, all selected as national winners in music, dance, drama or art contests, will display their talents, techniques and creative abilities.

"The Festival highlights the creative accomplishments of veterans," said Acting Secretary of Veterans Affairs Gordon H. Mansfield. "By their talents and determination, these veterans prove there is no bar to creativity.

Open to all veterans receiving care at a medical facility of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), the National Veterans Creative Arts Festival is presented by VA, the American Legion Auxiliary (ALA) and Help Hospitalized Veterans (HHV). The culmination of a year-long fine arts talent competition involving nearly 3,000 participants nationwide, the festival is hosted this year by the St. Louis VA Medical Center.

More than 40 artists and 80 performers will gather in St. Louis for a week of rehearsals and workshops, concluding on Sunday, October 28 with a visual art exhibit and gala variety stage show at the Touhill Performing Arts Center on the University of Missouri - St. Louis campus.

Two veterans from Operation Iraqi Freedom will be in attendance, as well as two World War II veterans and 28 who served in Vietnam.

"Participating in the National Veterans Creative Arts Festival makes me happy," said Chris Mandia, a 35-year-old Operation Iraqi Freedom veteran from San Pedro, Calif. "Art has made my life more complete and, in turn, has acted as a form of therapy."

Mandia was among 2,839 veterans who took part in locally-based creative festivals this year at nearly 100 VA facilities.

2/2/2/2 Creative Arts Festival

Every year, veterans treated at VA medical centers across the United States compete in local creative arts contests in 50 art categories that range from oil painting to leatherwork to paint-by-number kits. In addition, there are 120 categories pertaining to all aspects of music, dance, drama and creative writing.

The artists will exhibit their work from 12:30 p.m. to 1:45 p.m. on October 28 at the Touhill Performing Arts Center. At 2:00 p.m., performers in music, drama and dance will showcase their talents in a stage show, backed by a professional orchestra. Renowned actress of Hollywood's golden era, Jane Powell, is the mistress of ceremonies for the show. Her husband Dick Moore, also a well known actor, and Bo Derek, National Honorary Chairperson for VA's Rehabilitation Special Events, are also expected to attend.

Executive Director of Help Hospitalized Veterans Mike Lynch and American Legion Auxiliary President Jan Pulvermacher-Ryan will also be in attendance.

For further information about the festival, contact Kim Byers, public affairs coordinator, at (734) 845-3377, or log on to the festival's web site:

www.creativeartsfestival.va.gov.

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