

SPECIAL RECOGNITION CATEGORY DRAMA DIVISION

Have a Happy

ORLINDA MARQUEZ

VA EASTERN COLORADO HEALTH CARE SYSTEM, DENVER

The use of a puppet for therapeutic purpose is something that Orlinda Marquez does not consider unusual. This Army veteran experiences social anxiety related to Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). A hand puppet known as Henry accompanies Marquez at social gatherings and unfamiliar or crowded places.

Marquez describes how she uses Henry as an alternative therapy, saying, “As I learned more about therapy animals, I discovered that much of what these animals offer to their owners, I get from Henry. In order to cope in crowds I often have to retreat into my own little bubble and ignore my surroundings. When Henry is with me, I’m better able to survive. He is a curiosity and people are drawn to him. He opens up the conversation with a greeting and will converse with people. Eventually, I’ll get into the conversation myself and before I know it, I am coping in the crowd and I am no longer among strangers.”

Linda Hauck, a social worker who has seen firsthand how Henry has reduced Marquez’s anxiety in social situations says, “Henry helps Orlinda deal with her anxiety. He provides some distraction for her as she places the attention on Henry. Her performances always include humor and speak to her creativeness as an artist, while benefitting therapeutically at the same time.”

A lifelong Elvis Presley fan, Marquez’s performance of *Have a Happy* was inspired by a song from an Elvis Presley film.

Who’s Army?

DONALD FRENCH

VA CENTRAL IOWA HEALTH CARE SYSTEM, KNOXVILLE

Army veteran Donald French has always loved to write stories and interesting anecdotes. He has taken writing classes and has had some of his stories published in his hometown newspaper. An original composition entitled, *Who’s Army?* describes a humorous incident that occurred while he was stationed in Germany in 1991. Upon reading his name tag, a civilian mistook him for a French soldier. French’s account of the experience received first place in the special recognition category of the 2008 drama division competition.

Writing original compositions has also brought about other benefits. French has difficulty speaking and often stutters when conversing with others, stumbling with words and sentences and feeling anxious. When he reads his compositions aloud though, he stutters very little if at all. He is able to add expression to the stories and gains an unmistakable sense of self-confidence and control.

French’s writing and effortless reading of his stories clearly exemplify the therapeutic influence of the arts.