



Monday, October 22, 2007

Welcome to St. Louis



Glen E. Struchtemeyer,
Director of the St. Louis
VA Medical Center

The St. Louis VA Medical Center is proud to be the host of this year's National Veterans Creative Arts Festival. The volunteers and staff members are excited to turn the "Gateway to the West" into the "Gateway to Creativity!"

Missouri is the home of such literary figures as Mark Twain, Tennessee Williams, Maya Angelou and T.S. Eliot. Musicians and performers including Chuck Berry, Miles Davis, Scott Joplin, Tina Turner and Shelley Winters, also hail from St. Louis. This year, we have planned events and activities that showcase some of St. Louis's history and heritage. Tours of the Gateway Arch, Botanical Gardens, City Museum, Art Museum, Missouri History Museum and Forest Park, site of the 1904 Worlds Fair, will help educate, inspire and motivate. Workshops and presentations will have a St. Louis flare. No matter what you are doing, we hope that this week will be a positive one filled with great memories.

On behalf of everyone involved with the 2007 National Veterans Creative Arts Festival, I thank you for your service to our nation and for sharing your many talents with all of us. We in St. Louis are honored to be a part of this outstanding event.

Glen E. Struchtemeyer
Director, St. Louis VA Medical Center



Do You Know These Interesting Facts About Missouri?

Each day this week, we will be featuring interesting facts about Missouri, the "Show Me State." Here's a few we thought you might find interesting and that you may not know.

- The United States gained Missouri from France as part of the Louisiana Purchase in 1803, and the territory was admitted as a state following the Missouri Compromise of 1820.



- Hernando de Soto visited the Missouri area in 1541. France's claim to the entire region was based on Sieur de la Salle's travels in 1682. French fur traders established Ste. Genevieve in 1735, and St. Louis was first settled in 1764.

- During the Civil War, Missouri remained in the Union however; Missourians were sharply divided in their opin-

- ions about slavery and in their allegiances, supplying both Union and Confederate forces with troops.

- St. Joseph, Mo., – the gateway to the West – was the eastern starting point of the Pony Express. The much-traveled Santa Fe and Oregon trails began in Independence, Mo.



- Missouri's economy is highly diversified. Service industries provide more income and jobs than any other

See "Facts" continued on page 4

Welcome to the 2007 National Veterans Creative Arts Festival!

The veterans gathered this week in St. Louis are all national competition medal-winners from 51 VA facilities nationwide. They are part of a total of 2,839 veterans from nearly 100 VA facilities who originally entered categories within the divisions of art, creative writing, dance, drama and music during the local level competition phase this past winter. Following the local judging, their entries advanced to the national level, where they achieved medal status in their specific category. These veterans have definitely experienced a journey to the Festival, which continues as we come together now in St. Louis.

The week ahead will be filled with rehearsals, workshops and alternate activities. It's a wonderful time to get to know people from around the country who all share a love for the arts. It's also a chance to demonstrate to the community of St. Louis the depth of artistic talent and skill that our nation's veterans possess, and how artistic expression promotes healing and enhances quality of life.



Please join the national steering committee members and me in expressing our deepest appreciation to the staff and volunteers of the St. Louis VA Medical Center and the surround-

ing community. Without their enthusiasm and absolute willingness to extend their talents, energies and resources above and beyond the norm, we would not have this chance to experience the history and excitement of this area and all it has to offer. We are grateful to Glen Struchtemeyer, medical center director, Becky Ballard, host site coordinator, and all local staff members and volunteers for their warm welcome and preparation for our arrival.



Liz Mackey

Congratulations to the veterans! We are here because of you, and we thank you for allowing us to share this part of your journey. You represent **all** of the veterans who participated in the 2007 competition. We want to do whatever we can to serve you and make this experience both inspiring and rewarding, as part of our way of saying thank you for your service to us. All the best to each of you in the week ahead.

Liz Mackey
National Director
National Veterans Creative Arts Festival

Kick off the 2007 Festival Tonight!



Be sure to come to the Opening Ceremonies of the 2007 National Veterans Creative Arts Festival this evening, beginning promptly at 7 p.m. in Grand Ballrooms C and D at the hotel. The evening begins with music from the St. Louis Gateway Singers, a welcome from our hosts and introductions, followed by a delicious buffet dinner. Host site coordinator Becky Ballard from the St. Louis VA Medical Center will serve as Mistress of Ceremonies for the evening. Also presenting remarks are medical center director Glen Struchtemeyer and other VA officials.

The Beaumont High School Junior ROTC Color Guard will present the Colors, with Army veteran Mike McCann, a two-time gold medal winner this year in the drama competition from Redondo Beach, Calif., leading the Pledge.

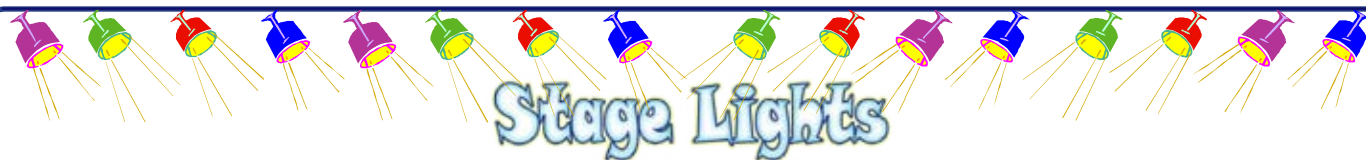
Also on the agenda are introductions of this year's team leaders and national steering committee members. Our

local organizers plan to start off the 2007 Festival with a lot of local flair, so expect some special surprise festivities and entertainment this evening as well. As famous American writer and well known Missourian Mark Twain once said, "...a good and wholesome thing is a little harmless fun in this world; it tones a body up and keeps him human and prevents him from souring."

So, enjoy tonight's festivities and have yourself "a little harmless fun!" Following the formal ceremony, all participants are asked to remain in the Grand Ballroom for the first meeting with your team leaders and fellow team members, and to receive important information about the upcoming week.

See you tonight!





Welcome, performers!

This week, we expect to see around 80 of you and we are thrilled you are here in St. Louis!

Cultural expression can define a nation's image, presenting an enduring look at the spirit and creativity of a people. Who better to help define that image than you! This week is sure to be both fun and rewarding as you prepare for Sunday's stage presentation at the Touhill Performing Arts Center.

In addition to coachings, costume fittings and rehearsals, you will also tour the Gateway Arch and Museum of Westward Expansion, participate in the HHV craft workshop and enjoy a celebration dinner on Saturday evening. A great week lies ahead!



As you prepare for the stage show, here are a few tips to remember:

- Always be on time for your rehearsals;
- Work hard to improve by listening to critiques and suggestions;
- Practice on your own;
- Encourage other performers; and
- Keep smiling – no matter what!

We hope this week will not only help you become an even better performer, but allow you to meet many other wonderful and talented people as well.

Please get to know as many of them as possible, have a fantastic week and enjoy the excitement of being part of a wonderful show!



Welcome to Festival from the Local Coordinator



Rebecca Ballard

Welcome to St. Louis and the *Gateway to Creativity!* As the 2007 National Veterans Creative Arts Festival Host Site Coordinator, it is my pleasure to welcome all participants and their friends and families to the beautiful Midwest. The 2007 Festival is hosted by the St. Louis VA Medical Center, with campuses at John Cochran and Jefferson Barracks. This week promises to be not only fun-filled, but educational and rewarding as well.

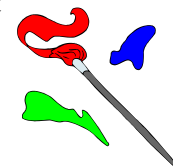
The courageous spirit of the pioneers that made their way toward westward expansion left an ever-lasting mark on St. Louis's history. The famous arch symbolizes this sense of adventure and fortitude, as it was dedicated to those who set forth on the long journey west. This courage can also be seen in the architect who dreamt of building such an impressive structure, Eero Saarinen, and in the men and women who actually constructed it. That courageous spirit is also present in all of you participating in this Festival. It was Saarinen's vision to construct a monument that re-

flected Thomas Jefferson's belief of spreading democracy from "sea to shining sea." As veterans, you have served this country with great pride, courage and honor, and we thank you for your service.

The fundamental purpose of this annual gathering is to showcase how creative art therapy enables rehabilitation for veterans. The Festival helps build a great sense of pride, bestowing honor and recognition in that process. These expressions of creativity truly encompass the powerful ability of our nation's finest to overcoming challenges, both physical and emotional, and to healing the body, mind and spirit.

Please participate in the many activities we have planned throughout the week. I encourage you to make the most of this experience, created with you in mind. Again, welcome to Missouri, enjoy your time with us and if you have any questions, please feel free to stop me or any local staff at any time. We are here to help you make the most of your visit! It is our pleasure to welcome the National Veterans Creative Arts Festival back to St. Louis in 2007.

Rebecca Ballard
2007 Host Site Coordinator



Hometown News at the Creative Arts Festival



The Hometown News program at VA's national events is a public affairs initiative that provides a news release to the local newspapers of our participants. It lets them know about your selection to attend this year, and the category of your talent. (A news release is a written document that lets the news media know

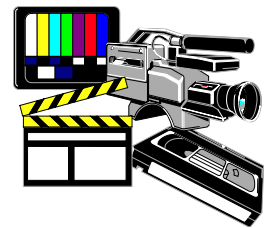
about a good story idea.) At the Festival, all news releases are placed on our Festival Web site for any veterans who requested one. We also notify local media across the country by phone and e-mail to tell them that a veteran from their area is here.

If your phone number is listed on your news release, you may get a phone call from your local newspaper when you get home requesting an interview about the Festival. Some of you may have asked that your phone number not be listed on your news release on the Festival Web site, and we will honor all of those requests. If a local reporter should contact us and want to interview you when you get home,

we will give them your phone number so they may call you directly, but we will not put it on our Web site.

The Hometown News program is a wonderful way to let your communities know about their local veterans' star status! It is also a very good way to tell other talented veterans about VA's creative arts program and other services that may be available to them at the nearest VA medical center. We hope to have all of this year's news releases posted on the Web site by mid-week (see www.creativeartsfestival.va.gov under "Participant Information"). We will also be taking many photos while you are rehearsing or displaying your artwork, and hope to have the best photos on the Web site by Friday or Saturday. We will provide one 4"x6" print of that photo for you, as well as a copy of your news release.

We hope that you have brought along your own cameras as well, so you can ask your friends or Festival volunteers to take additional photos of you performing, rehearsing, displaying your artwork, attending workshops or touring local areas of interest.



Thank you for letting us tell the story of your talents, achievements and participation in the 2007 National Veterans Creative Arts Festival!

"Facts" continued from page 1

segment, and include a growing tourism and travel sector. Wholesale and retail trade, manufacturing and agriculture also play significant roles in the state's economy.

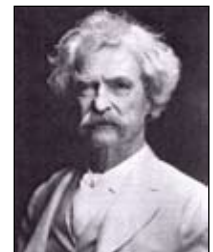


- The state's top agricultural products include grain, sorghum, hay, corn, soybeans and rice. Missouri also ranks high among the states in cattle, hogs and turkeys. A vibrant wine industry also contributes to the economy.

- Missouri is a leading producer of transportation equipment (including automobile manufacturing and auto parts), beer and beverages, and defense and aerospace technology. Food processing is the state's fastest-growing industry.

- Missouri mines produce 90 percent of the nation's principal (non-recycled) lead supply. Other natural resources include iron ore, zinc, barite, limestone and timber.

- Tourism draws hundreds of thousands of visitors to a number of Missouri points of interest: the country music shows of Branson; Bass Pro Shops' national headquarters (Springfield); the Gateway Arch at the Jefferson National Expansion (St. Louis); Mark Twain's boyhood home (Hannibal); the Harry S. Truman home and library (Independence); the scenic beauty of the Ozark National Scenic Riverways; and the Pony Express and Jesse James museums (St. Joseph). The state's different lake regions also attract fishing enthusiasts and sun seekers from throughout the Midwest.



Back in the Day – Remembering the Last Creative Arts Festival in St. Louis

It's been 18 years since the National Veterans Creative Arts Festival was last held in St. Louis – and my how things have changed!

The Festival originated as two separate competitions. The visual arts competition, VET ARTS, was created in 1981. The performing arts competition, The National Music Competition for Veterans, started in 1982.

In 1989, the two events merged, right here in St. Louis, creating the first National

Veterans Creative Arts Festival. Designed to spotlight the four creative arts therapies of art, music, dance and drama, this landmark Festival was performed, to an audience of 4,000 in the historic Fox Theater in St. Louis. (A fifth division in creative writing was added in 2005.) Jack Buck, famous Hall of Fame Broadcaster for the St. Louis Cardinals, was the Master of Ceremonies for the 1989 show. “That year, one veteran could not complete his performance, so Buck took over and finished the reading without skipping a beat,” said Herman Luge, chief of recreation at the St. Louis VA Medical Center who played a key role in the event.



Program booklet cover from the 1989 St. Louis National Veterans Creative Arts Festival

The 1989 Festival in St. Louis was a time of many firsts. “It was the first time the event was held outside of Washington, D.C., for three consecutive years, and the first time the Festival occurred as a single, combined event,” said Luge. It was also the first year that drama was added as a competition category. “We had a group do a M.A.S.H. skit that year,” said Jenny Lewis, who was also present. It was also the first time that dance and drama were added as categories. Alicia Flaherty, a well known dancer and dance therapist, attended for the first time. Because it was the first year that there wasn't a national co-sponsor, the event was a greater feat for the local organizers.

There are many other memories of 1989. Lewis remembers, “We stayed at the Drury Inn and the show was at the historic Fox Theater. It was wonderful there but also difficult because there were so many floors backstage for

our veterans to have to run up and down, to and from. But the history there was great. Some famous performers had signed on the walls and they let our veterans sign the walls too.”

“We spent so much time traveling to meals,” she added.

“We had breakfast in the tiny lobby at the Drury Inn.

Shirley Jeffries [Festival founder] and the recreation therapy staff supple-

mented the continental

breakfast at the hotel with scrambled eggs and bacon they brought in each morning.” Liz Mackey, Festival Director added, “Some of the volunteers still talk about providing meals for the veterans.”

As the program increased in complexity, a lot of time was lost moving participants and therapists from their hotel to meals, to rehearsals. Linda Kmitch suggested that most of the events and meals be held at the host hotel. This resulted in significant savings in time, energy and cost. At the time, Kmitch was chief of recreation therapy at the St. Cloud VA Medical Center. Although she is now retired, she continues to serve in a team leader role for the visual artists.

“Due to the increase in sponsorship and the generosity of our co-presenters, now there is twice the number of medal-winning veterans invited to attend the Festival,” said Mackey. “In 2007, 2,839 veterans from 98 VA medical facilities entered the art, music, drama, dance and creative writing competitions. Of those, nearly 150 medal-winning veterans earned an invitation to participate in the 2007 event.”

Again this year, thanks to the generosity of our three co-presenters, the Department of Veterans Affairs, Help Hospitalized Veterans and the American Legion Auxiliary, another unprecedented Festival is taking place to honor and showcase the best of the best of veterans' talents. The staff and volunteers of the hosting VA Medical Center take great pride in welcoming the Festival, the participants and their guests back home to St. Louis!

The Fox Theatre marquee announces the 1989 Festival.



(Left to right) Penny Lewis and Deane Eleeson from Temple, Texas; Shirley Jeffries and “Buddy” Ramesbothon from Ft. Lyon, Colo.; and Dorothy Batson and Donald Katz from Brockton, Mass., pose backstage waiting their turn to perform.



Welcome, artists!

More than 40 veterans are expected to be at the Festival this week who won first place in an artistic category. We are happy to see you in St. Louis!



We have many activities scheduled for you including workshops in creative writing, leatherwork, printmaking, and crafts kits from Help Hospitalized Veterans. Check the daily schedule for updates.

Your week's activities will also include the Festival's Opening Cer-

emonies this evening, the Closing Ceremonies Sunday evening, and in between touring the Botanical Gardens, City Museum, Gateway Arch and Museum of Western Expansion, the St. Louis Art Museum, the St. Louis Zoo, the Missouri History Museum and even a trip to the mall for some serious shopping!

Welcome, artists! We know you'll enjoy your week in St. Louis!



During the 2007 National Veterans Creative Arts Festival, the Department of Veterans Affairs and the Library of Congress invite all veterans to again take part in the Veterans History Project (VHP).

This historic project honors our nation's veterans by creating a lasting legacy of their military experience. Regardless of branch or period of service, age, military career or experience, all veterans are invited to share it with our VHP program staff this week. At last year's Creative Arts Festival, 26 interviews took place during the week.

As part of this project, a 45-minute interview with each veteran will be videotaped and given to the Library of Congress, to become part of our Nation's official historical records. Each participant will also receive a VHP tote bag and a DVD copy of their interview.

Interviews begin tomorrow (Tuesday), October 23, and will continue through Saturday morning, October 27. Please sign up at the VHP registration area during registration today, or stop by the VHP interview room (in the Gateway Room on the first floor of the hotel). The VHP interviews will be conducted this week by Butch Miller and videotaped by Tony Barnett from the Kansas City VA Medical Center.

The schedule for VHP interviews each day (Tuesday through Friday) is from 8 a.m. – noon; and from 1 – 5 p.m. On Saturday, final interviews will take place from 10 a.m. to noon.

Only you can tell your story, and it's a story worth preserving and sharing with future generations. All veterans are encouraged to be a part of this important project. For more information, visit the Veterans History Project Web site: <http://www.loc.gov/folklife/vets/>

New Registration Hours this Year

Registration begins at noon today and runs until 6 p.m. Unlike previous years, we will **not** be holding a late registration after tonight's Opening Ceremonies. Late registration will be held tomorrow morning (Tuesday) from 7:30 - 8:30 a.m. in the Lambert Room (C&D, Headquarters Room) and the Orly Room (A&B, Media Center) for those of you who did not have the opportunity to register prior to the Opening Ceremonies. Stop by bright and early tomorrow to register if you haven't done so already. We look forward to sharing in your success at this year's Festival!



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Hospitality

The hospitality room volunteers are ready to welcome you with warm smiles and a variety of snacks and refreshments. All hospitality room locations are on the 12th floor of the hotel.

Location	Day	Hours
Penthouse, Ballrooms A&B	Monday	Noon - 10 p.m.
Penthouse, Ballrooms A&B	Tuesday	9 a.m. - 11 p.m.
Penthouse, Ballrooms A&B	Wednesday	9 a.m. - 6 p.m.
Renaissance Ballroom	Thursday	9 a.m. - 11 p.m.
Renaissance Ballroom	Friday	9 a.m. - Midnight
Renaissance Ballroom	Saturday	9 a.m. - 1 p.m. 4 - 6:30 p.m.
Boardroom	Sunday	10 a.m. - Noon

Medical Suite

The Medical Suite is located in Lindbergh A & B on the first floor of the Renaissance St. Louis Hotel.

Hours of Operation: 8 a.m. to 10 p.m.

Check tomorrow's *ArtsGram* for the Medical Suite phone number inside the Renaissance Hotel.

Outside of the Renaissance Hotel, call (314) 429-1100 and ask for the Lindbergh Room.

Participants should inform their team leader(s) of any medical concerns, and the team leaders will then assist with contacting the Medical Room. Medical personnel will be wearing red T-shirts and will accompany veterans and support personnel on all trips away from the hotel.

INVCAT Web site www.creativeartsfestival.va.gov

Would you like your friends and family back home to see what you are doing this week? Tell them to log onto the Festival Web site (www.creativeartsfestival.va.gov) 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. Information will be updated through Sunday morning.



for Monday,
October 22, 2007

Tonight's Opening Banquet Menu

The opening banquet this evening will be held in Grand Ballrooms C & D on the first floor at 7 p.m. and will feature some tasty foods from this part of the county.

Taste of St. Louis Menu

St. Louis Italian Salad
Toasted Ravioli, BBQ Ribs, BBQ Chicken
Corn, Green Beans, Mostaccioli (meatless)
Goopy Butter Cake and Brownies
Iced Tea

The only meal served today is the opening banquet.

Snacks are available in the Hospitality Room (Penthouse Ballroom, 12th floor) today from noon to 11 p.m.

Starting tomorrow (Tuesday), meals will be served in Grand Ballrooms C&D unless otherwise designated.

Breakfast: 7 - 8:30 a.m.
Lunch: Noon - 1:30 p.m.
Dinner: 5:30 - 6:45 p.m.



INTERNET CAFE

HP (Hewlett Packard) is running an Internet café for your use during the week of the Festival.

Hours of operation:

Tuesday, October 23 through Saturday, October 27

7 - 8:30 a.m.

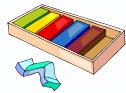
11:30 a.m. - 2 p.m.

7 - 9 p.m. (except for Wednesday and Saturday)

It is located in the Truman Room on the main floor of the hotel.



Temperatures in St. Louis for October average a high of 69 degrees and low average of 59 degrees, with an average rainfall of 2.81 inches for the month.



Artists



Performers



Monday, October 22, 2007

ALL DAY	Arrival of participants and staff
Noon – 6 p.m.	Registration at the Renaissance Hotel — Pre-Function Area, 1st Floor
Noon – 10 p.m.	Hospitality Room Open — Penthouse Ballroom, 12th Floor (Snacks served)
5:30 p.m.	Team Leaders' meeting — Gatwick A&B, 1st Floor
6:30 p.m.	Musical Entertainment provided by St. Louis Gateway Singers — Grand Ballrooms C&D, 1st Floor
7 p.m.	Opening Banquet and Ceremonies at hotel — Grand Ballrooms C&D, 1st Floor
8 p.m.	Opening Meeting: Introductions, announcements, team meetings — Grand Ballrooms C&D, 1st Floor

Tuesday, October 23, 2007

7 — 8:30 a.m.	Breakfast at Hotel — Grand Ballrooms C&D, 1st Floor
7:30 — 8:30 a.m.	Late Registration — Orly A&B and Lambert C&D
8:30 a.m.	Teams I and II report to the Renaissance Ballroom, 12th Floor for photos
9 a.m. — 11 p.m.	Hospitality Room Open — Penthouse Ballroom, 12th Floor
9 a.m.	Teams III and IV report to the Renaissance Ballroom, 12th Floor for photos
10 a.m.	Artists Interaction Session begins at Renaissance Hotel — Renaissance Ballroom, 12th Floor
Noon	Lunch at hotel — Grand Ballrooms C&D
1:30 p.m.	Board buses for tour — Botanical Gardens (Sketching & photo opportunities)
1:45 p.m.	Depart for tour
2 — 4:30 p.m.	Tour the Botanical Gardens
5 p.m.	Board buses and return to hotel
5:30 — 6:45 p.m.	Dinner – Grand Ballrooms C&D
7:30 — 8:30 p.m.	Presentation of the Military Combat Experience entries (electronic images) from the 2007 national art competition — Renaissance Ballroom, 12th Floor
9 p.m.	Performers view visual artwork — Renaissance Ballroom, 12th Floor
9 — 11 p.m.	Karaoke and Talent/Social Time at Hotel — Penthouse Ballroom, 12th Floor

7 — 8:30 a.m.	Breakfast at Hotel — Grand Ballrooms C&D, 1st Floor
7:30 — 8:30 a.m.	Late Registration — Orly A&B and Lambert C&D
8 a.m.	Team Leaders meet with Amy Kimbler — Gatwick A&B, 1st Floor
8:30 a.m.	Team Leaders meet with performers
9 a.m. — Noon	Introductions and announcements for ALL stage performers and staff. Individual acts introduced and perform in costume in show order — Grand Ballrooms A&B (Photos of individual act performers taken)
9 a.m. — 11 p.m.	Hospitality Room Open — Penthouse Ballroom, 12th Floor
Noon	Lunch at hotel — Grand Ballrooms C&D
1 — 3 p.m.	Chorus music rehearsal with assistant directors (ALL participants must participate in these rehearsals when not needed in the Main Rehearsal Room) — Gatwick A&B
1 — 4 p.m.	Rehearsal of individual acts with directors as scheduled — Grand Ballrooms A&B
1 — 4 p.m.	Chorus member vests, other costume fittings — Heathrow B, 1st Floor
4 — 5:30 p.m.	Rehearsal and sign-up for audition solos and narration as scheduled — Gatwick A&B, Heathrow A, Lambert A&B, 1st Floor
5:30 — 6:45 p.m.	Dinner — Grand Ballrooms C&D
7 — 9 p.m.	Chorus number rehearsal with music director (All show participants) — Grand Ballrooms A&B
7 — 9 p.m.	Chorus member vests, other costume fittings — Heathrow B
7:30 p.m.	Auditions for solos and narrations — one person or small group at a time will be called out of chorus number rehearsal — Gatwick A&B, 1st Floor
9 p.m.	Performers view visual artwork — Renaissance Ballroom, 12th Floor
9 — 11 p.m.	Karaoke and Talent/Social Time at Hotel — Penthouse Ballroom, 12th Floor

Please check with your team leader or the posted schedule outside of Grand Ballrooms A & B for any changes or updates to your daily schedule.