



Special Edition

Helping Veterans Through Music Therapy – Gary Johnson, Music Therapist VA Eastern Kansas Health Care System

2007 Shirley Jefferies Memorial Award Recipient



Gary Johnson, Music Therapist from VA Eastern Kansas Health Care System

What career does a person choose when they love music and also helping others? While there could be several answers, the best is music therapy. That is the path that Gary Johnson has taken, which ultimately led to his selection as the 2007 National Veterans Creative Arts Festival's recipient for this year's Shirley Jefferies Memorial Award.

"When it comes to those in need of a music therapist, Gary Johnson possesses an extraordinary

gift, that gift of caring", says long-time associate David Otto. He goes on to say, "This can be witnessed on any day within his facility as he sits at the bedside of our veterans providing music therapy treatment with them, and many times with their families. He has an incredible ability to identify with each patient because he understands the scars endured by those who have served this nation."

Johnson earned his bachelor's degree in music/psychology in 1977 from the State University of New York at Oswego. In 1980, he completed his equivalency in music therapy at the State University of New York at New Paltz and then moved west, accepting a job as a music therapist at the Lincoln Regional Center in Lincoln, Nebraska. In 1985, Johnson joined the Department of Veterans Affairs at the Colmery-O'Neil

VA Medical Center in Topeka, where he continues to work as a music therapist. In addition to working with patients each day, Johnson continued his own education, earning a master's degree in Music Education/Music Therapy from the University of Kansas in 2000. He also attended the Neurology Training Institute in Austin, Texas in 2004, and has received extensive training in neurological music therapy techniques.

In addition to being active as a music therapist at the VA medical facility in Topeka, Johnson is a wonderful musician who plays trombone professionally and sings. His wife and daughter share his passion for music, and his whole family is extremely involved in the arts and music within their community. Johnson, along with some of his colleagues, have had several articles published in the *Journal of Music Therapy* and has presented his own beliefs about the importance of music therapy at numerous conferences throughout the United States. Johnson's sense of humor and passion about the importance of music therapy in the healing and aging process matches the philosophies of the late Shirley Jefferies, for whom the annual memorial award is named.

Johnson has been involved locally with the creative arts program since joining the VA team 22 years ago, using music therapy to help individual veterans achieve their treatment goals. The program at his facility takes place over several days and includes an artist reception, exhibit and live stage performance, culminating in a formal awards ceremony.

Johnson first became involved in the national program by helping coach vocals for the stage show. He has been part of the production steering committee as co-assistant stage manager for the National Veterans Creative Arts Festival since 2000. This year, he also assisted with chorus number

See "Award," cont'd on page 2

“Award,” cont’d from page 1



Gary Johnson conducts a rehearsal with Festival performers.

rehearsals and the audio/technical needs for the show. Festival Director Liz Mackey had this to say about this dedicated national committee member, “Gary Johnson is a positive person with an upbeat attitude that draws people in and makes them feel included and appreciated.” She added, “His work as a music therapist with veterans through the years has always been exemplary, and he has impacted so many lives in such a wonderful way.”

Congratulations, Gary – and thank you for your dedication to the arts and to our nation’s veterans!

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 in 1994. Jefferies was a vital influence to the beginning of this program, and the drive behind many of its changes and growth. With a heartfelt love for the arts and their 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, VAMC Knoxville, Iowa
- 1995 Jennifer Lewis, Music Therapist, Temple, Texas
- 1996 Leah Givler, Music Therapist, Coatesville, Pa.
- 1997 Linda Colletti, NVCAF Art Exhibit Coordinator, San Diego, Calif.
- 1998 Katharina 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.
- 2005 Mia Leber, HHV Craft Care Specialist, Chicago, Ill.
- 2006 Maureen Harvey, Recreation Therapist, Oklahoma City, Okla.
- 2007 Gary Johnson, Music Therapist, Topeka, Kan.





Goodbye and Good Luck from the 2007 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 St. Louis. There is a special dinner and wonderful closing ceremony program prepared for you this evening, so 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 St. Louis VA Medical Center who supported the whole event this week, and throughout the past year. They provided invaluable assistance to help us accomplish our tasks for the week.

Remember that when you get home and start thinking about the week and all the special people you met here in

St. Louis, you can log on to the Festival Web site at: www.creativeartsfestival.va.gov 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!) Within a few weeks, there will also be a photo gallery on the site with some of our best photos from the past week.

Please be safe as you travel home tomorrow. We encourage you to continue pursuing your wonderful talents and look forward to hearing you have entered the Festival again in 2008. Hope to see you in Riverside, Calif. next October!

Sincerely,
The 2007 Public Affairs Team.



VA Loma Linda Healthcare System Hosts 2008 National Veterans Creative Arts Festival



The convention center proudly awaits your arrival.

The VA Loma Linda Healthcare System can't wait to see you in Riverside, California next October for the 2008 National Veterans Creative Arts Festival! We encourage all of this year's participants to begin making preparations to enter the 2008 creative arts competition. Next year's Festival will be October 20-27, 2008 and we hope you will be spending the week with us in sunny California.

At the 2008 Festival, the artistic achievements of veterans from across the country will again be on display. The local planning committee has been on-site all this week and is dedicated to presenting a program of world class caliber. Host site director Dean Stordahl said, "On behalf of the VA Loma Linda Healthcare System, we are indeed privileged in being able to host the 2008 National Veterans Creative Arts Festival in Riverside. I look forward to meeting you all next year and showcasing each of your talents."

While you are in California next fall, consider an extended stay to enjoy a wide variety of museums, memorials, historic buildings and tourist attractions in the area. Aircraft and history buffs will enjoy the famous March Field Air Museum, home to vintage military aircraft. For those of you who like to shop, there is plenty of shopping at the Galleria at Tyler and throughout the streets of downtown Riverside. You can also make plans to have fun at many of the amusement parks in southern California, like Disneyland, Knotts Berry Farm and Universal Studios. Plus, don't miss seeing the Riverside National Cemetery, home of the P.O.W./M.I.A Memorial, the Veterans Memorial, and the Medal of Honor Memorial. A trip to California wouldn't be complete without a trip to the beach, but don't forget our mountains as well. These trips are less than an hour away.

Hope to see you next year!

Creative Writing Workshop

About 60 veterans, staff and volunteers attended the first-ever creative writing workshop at the National Veterans Creative Arts Festival earlier this week. Two graduate students from the University of St. Louis gave tips on writing memoirs and poetry, with an emphasis on Haiku.

Students tried their hand at writing Haiku, a "closed form" of poetry consisting of 17 syllables in the format of three lines containing five, seven and five syllables respectively. Some brave students shared their poems and several were selected for the *ArtsGram*.

*The St. Louis Rain
To San Diego by train
Put the fires out.*

Bryan Richards, San Diego, Calif.

*Rain falls on the bus,
As traffic snakes toward town,
Art Museum bound.*

Frank Russell, Dewey, Ariz.

*It falls from above
The ground is moist from its touch
A flower will grow.*

James Sterrett-Bryant,
Palmdale, Calif.



For Your Info

Monday, October 29, 2007



To assist with your return flight, snack bags will be available in the lobby beginning at 6:30 a.m.



Please check the time of your flight home, and be ready to catch the shuttle from the hotel to the St. Louis Airport at the time indicated. Please bring your luggage to the hotel lobby 30 minutes before the hotel departure time to get it loaded onto the bus. Safe travels home, everyone!

Flight Time

Hotel Departure Time

7 – 8:29 a.m.	5:30 a.m.
8:30 – 9:59 a.m.	7 a.m.
10 – 10:59 a.m.	8 a.m.
11 – 11:59 a.m.	9 a.m.
Noon – 12:50 p.m.	10 a.m.
1:44 – 2:54 p.m.	11:30 a.m.
3:35 – 4:30 p.m.	1:30 p.m.
5:24 p.m.	3:15 p.m.

For any other arrangements, please contact Festival transportation at (314) 450-6444.



Sunny and Clear
High 66°
Low 43°

NVCAF Web site
www.creativeartsfestival.va.gov

After you return home, be sure to visit the Festival

Web site and share the address with your friends and family (www.creativeartsfestival.va.gov). Many activities from the week are already there, and within the next few weeks a comprehensive photo gallery and slide show will be added. Look for the wonderful photos our photographers have been taking all week of the rehearsals, workshops, off-site trips, special events and activities, and, of course, today's art exhibit and stage show. It will give you a great way to remember and share this wonderful past week in St. Louis.



Breakfast will be served on Monday morning in Grand Ballrooms C&D.

Breakfast: 6 - 9 a.m.

Continental Breakfast

Assorted Pastries, Bagels, Fruit, Juice, Coffee and Hot Tea