

# ArtsGram

Monumental Expressions



A Daily Publication of the National Veterans Creative Arts Festival

Monday, October 16, 2006

Welcome to...

## South Dakota Great Faces. Great Places.

It is an honor for the VA Black Hills Health Care System to host this year's Festival. Our medical center staff and volunteers from around the Black Hills area are ready to provide you with a "monumental" experience!

Our team has planned events, activities and workshops that will allow you the opportunity to experience the history, heritage and beauty of the Black Hills. Tours to Mount Rushmore National Memorial, Crazy Horse Memorial and The Journey Museum will be both educational and inspirational. Workshops and presentations by local artists will be uniquely South Dakota. A visit to Ellsworth Air Force Base will illustrate our proud military presence. Whether you are learning, rehearsing, touring, shopping, celebrating, dining, sharing or enjoying the company of new friends, we hope this week

will be a memorable one for you.

On behalf of everyone associated with the 2006 National Veterans Creative Arts Festival, thank you for allowing us to celebrate your artistry and incredible talents. We extend our warmest thanks and gratitude to you for the freedoms we enjoy today.



Peter P. Henry  
Director  
VA Black Hills Health Care System

## What do you know about South Dakota? (The Mount Rushmore State)

◆ South Dakota was the 39<sup>th</sup> or 40<sup>th</sup> State admitted to the Union, since it took place the same day as North Dakota on November 2, 1889. It was part of Dakota Territory before statehood.

◆ South Dakota is the home of the Dakota, Lakota and Nakota tribes, which make up the Sioux Nation.

◆ The name "Black Hills" comes from the Lakota words *Paha Sapa*, which mean "hills that are black." Seen from a distance, these pine-covered hills, rising several thousand feet above the surrounding prairie, appear black.

◆ The U.S.S. South Dakota was the most decorated battleship during World War II.

◆ Sturgis, S.D., is home of the annual Black Hills Classic Motorcycle Rally.

◆ The South Dakota state flag features the State seal surrounded by a golden blazing sun in a field of sky blue. Letters reading "South Dakota, The Mount Rushmore State" are arranged in a circle around the sun.



(See more South Dakota facts on page 4)

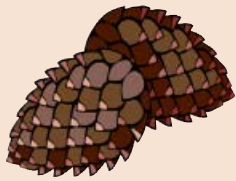


Presented by the Department of Veterans Affairs, Help Hospitalized Veterans and American Legion Auxiliary

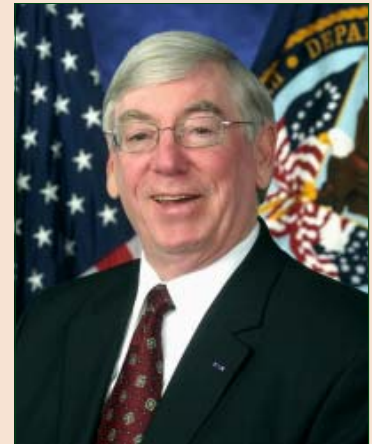
## The Honorable Gordon Mansfield Attends The Festival

For the next two days, we will have a very special guest from Washington, D.C., the Honorable Gordon H. Mansfield, Deputy Secretary of Veterans Affairs.

Deputy Secretary Mansfield is an Army veteran who served two tours in Vietnam as company commander with the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division. He was wounded during the Tet Offensive of 1968, where he sustained a spinal cord injury. For his actions while his unit was under fire, he was decorated with the Distinguished Service Cross. He was medically retired by the U.S. Army at the rank of Captain. Mansfield's other combat decorations include the Bronze Star, two Purple Hearts, the Combat Infantryman's Badge



and the Presidential Unit Citation. A returning visitor to the Creative Arts Festival, the Deputy Secretary looks forward to meeting with his fellow veterans while he is here. He will also speak at tonight's Opening Ceremonies in the Rushmore Room, Convention Center I at 7 p.m. (For more information about Opening Ceremonies, see "Ring in the Festival" story on page 3.)



## Welcome Veterans . . . to the 2006 National Veterans Creative Arts Festival!



The veterans gathered this week in South Dakota's Black Hills are all national competition medal-winners from 43 VA facilities nationwide. They are part of a total of 2,849 veterans from 104 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 categories. These veterans have definitely experienced a journey to the Festival, which continues as we come together in Rapid City.

The week ahead will be filled with rehearsals and workshops, and many friendships will be established and renewed. This is a chance to demonstrate to the Black Hills community 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 VA Black Hills Health Care System staff and volunteers, and the community of Rapid City. Without their enthusiasm and absolute willingness to extend their talents, energies and resources well beyond the norm, we would not have this chance to experience the beauty of this area and all it has to offer. We are grateful to Peter Henry, medical center director; Al Johnson, host site coordinator; and all local staff members and volunteers for their warm welcome and preparation for our arrival.

A special congratulations to the veterans! Thank you for being here and representing **all** of the veterans who participated in the 2006 competition. We are excited to share this part of your journey with you, and will 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

## Tonight's Inspirational Speaker – Ralph Vencill



Please welcome Ralph Vencill to the National Veterans Creative Arts Festival. He will be a featured speaker at the Opening Ceremonies tonight and he is very excited about his first Festival experience.

"I've seen videos of past years' performances and

exhibits and am just amazed with the talent these veterans possess," said Vencill. "I'm really looking forward to speaking to such a wonderful group and seeing firsthand the creativity they have to offer."

Vencill, 39, was born and raised in the small farming community of West Alexandria, Ohio. He attended Eugene Bible School and graduated with a Bachelor's degree in 1990. He went on to earn his Masters in Divinity and is currently working on his Doctorate. Vencill has worked as a pastor for more than 20 years in Oregon, Kentucky and South Dakota, and currently serves as the Senior Pastor of the Sturgis Open Bible Church. He is very involved with his surrounding community as the site coordinator for the after school program at the Stagebarn School in Piedmont, S.D.

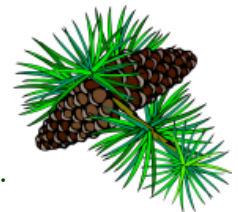
Vencill was invited to the 2006 Creative Arts Festival by Kim Matz, a local organizing committee team member. Matz met Vencill through area youth sporting events that Vencill helps referee. She also heard Vencill speak at various church services and realized that there was something very special about the way he communicates with people. "He has such a positive attitude about life, and knowing that the Opening Ceremonies remarks need to be inspirational, I felt that he would be perfect," she said.

Vencill has never spoken in front of a group of veterans before, but feels his personal experiences will resonate with the audience. "I was born blind in one eye and learned to overcome many obstacles at an early age," he said. "I was told that I couldn't play sports because I lacked depth perception." Sports were something that Vencill was determined to enjoy, and through his incredible perseverance he's been playing them his entire life. "I won't allow my disability to be disabling," he said. "I won't let it overcome my life."

For Vencill, sports were his outlet to overcoming disability and challenge. For our veterans this week, it is the arts.

For all, it's accepting life's challenges and making good use of our own special talents.

Ralph Vencill, we welcome you to the 2006 Creative Arts Festival.



## Ring in the 2006 Festival Tonight!

Be sure to arrive early for the Opening Ceremonies of the 2006 National Veterans Creative Arts Festival this evening. Entertainment for the evening begins at 6:30 p.m. with the "Sounds of Grace," a vocal group made up of members of the Lutheran Church of Sturgis.

The Ceremony begins promptly at 7 p.m. in the Rushmore Room, Convention Center I, with a short welcome followed by dinner. Host site coordinator Al Johnson from the VA Black Hills Health Care System will serve as Master of Ceremonies for the evening, with

Deputy Secretary of Veterans Affairs, the Honorable Gordon H. Mansfield, presenting keynote remarks. Also tonight, our four Festival



participants from the Black Hills (Alan Eckman, Thomas Fonck, Ted Garnette and Frank Scout) will lead us in the pledge of allegiance.



The Colors will be presented by the Ellsworth Air Force Base Honor Guard, with special inspirational remarks from local Pastor Ralph Vencill. Our hosts and other key officials are also on the agenda to welcome everyone to the event. Our national Festival team plan to ring in the start of our 2006 event with a good deal of flair, so expect some special surprise festivities and entertainment this evening as well.

Following the formal ceremony, all participants are asked to remain in the Rushmore Room to meet with their team leaders and receive important information about the upcoming week. See you tonight!



# Studio Notes

## Welcome, Artists!

Nearly 40 participants are at the Festival this week who won first place in an artistic category. We are glad you are here!

We have many activities scheduled for you including workshops in woodcarving, leatherworking, spherical thinking (six point perspective) and crafts.

Your week's activities will also include opening ceremonies this evening and touring the Journey Museum,

Ellsworth Air Force Base, Crazy Horse Memorial and Mount Rushmore, the Black Hills Gold Factory and much more!

*Welcome, artists! We hope you enjoy your week.*



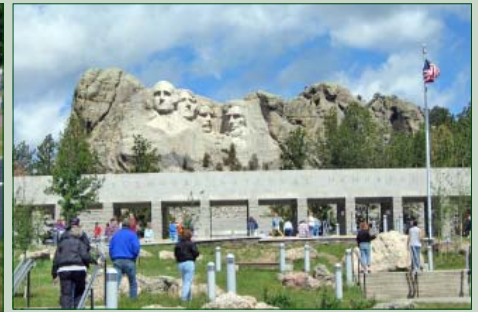
(More South Dakota facts cont'd from page 1)



*Badlands National Park*



*Black Hills National Cemetery*



*Mount Rushmore National Memorial*

◆ Badlands National Park consists of nearly 244,000 acres of sharply eroded buttes, pinnacles and spires blended with the largest, protected mixed grass prairie in the United States. The park contains the world's richest Oligocene epoch fossil beds, dating 23 to 35 million years.

◆ Black Hills National Cemetery "The Arlington of the West," is a final resting place for our nation's veterans.

◆ The site of a rich gold strike in 1875, Deadwood retains its mining town atmosphere. While Deadwood is one of the most highly publicized mining towns of the trans-Mississippi West, much of its fame rests on the famous (or infamous) characters who passed through it.

◆ The Capitol of South Dakota is Pierre. Its largest cities are Sioux Falls, Rapid City and Aberdeen.

◆ South Dakota consists of 77,121 square miles. Nearly 75,900 are land, and 1,224 are water.

◆ The State motto is: "Under God the people rule."

◆ The State flower is the Pasque Flower, which grows wild throughout the state. Its blooming is one of the first signs of spring in South Dakota. A member of the buttercup family, the pasque is a small, lavender flower. The White Spruce is the State tree.

◆ Famous South Dakotans:

**Sparky Anderson** — baseball manager, *Bridgewater*

**Tom Brokaw** — TV newscaster, *Webster*

**Crazy Horse** — Oglala chief

**Hubert H. Humphrey** — senator and vice president, *Wallace*

**Cheryl Ladd** — actress, *Huron*

**George McGovern** — politician, *Avon*

**Red Cloud** — Oglala Sioux chief

**Sitting Bull** — Hunkpappa Sioux chief

◆ South Dakota is the land of the famous Sioux or Dacotah Indians. Dakota Territory and later South Dakotans were named for that tribe.





# Stage Notes

## Welcome, Performers!

This week, we expect nearly 70 of you and we are thrilled you are here!

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 beautiful Rushmore Plaza Civic Center Theatre.

In addition to coachings, costume fittings and rehearsals, you will also tour Mount Rushmore and the Crazy Horse Memorial, visit the Black Hills Gold Factory, and enjoy a celebration dinner on Saturday evening. A great week is planned 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.

Please get to know as many of your fellow veterans as possible (as well as the staff, crew and volunteers, of course). Have a fantastic week and enjoy the excitement of being part of such a wonderful show!



## Welcome to Rapid City, South Dakota!



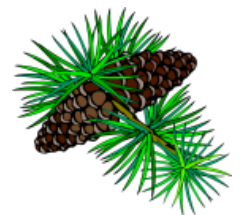
Welcome to the beautiful Black Hills of South Dakota!

As the 2006 National Veterans Creative Arts Festival Host Site Coordinator, it is my pleasure to welcome all participants and their friends and families to Rapid City. The Festival is hosted by VA Black Hills

Health Care System with campuses in Rapid City, Fort Meade and Hot Springs. This week promises to be not only fun-filled, but educational and *monumental* as well!

The Black Hills are a spiritual and sacred land drawing visitors in by its beauty, history and monuments. Mount Rushmore and Crazy Horse Memorial are perhaps the nation's finest in honoring its forefathers as well as its indigenous people. As veterans, you have served this

country with great pride and honor, and we thank you for your service. The monuments and memorials that you will visit this week only serve to remind us all of the many sacrifices made by America's veterans.



The fundamental purpose of this annual gathering of veterans is to showcase how creative art therapy enables rehabilitation. The Festival helps build a great sense of pride, bestowing honor and recognition in that process. These "*Monumental Expressions*" truly encompass the powerful ability of our Nation's finest to overcome challenges, both physical and emotional, and to heal the body, mind and spirit.

Please participate in the many activities that are planned throughout the week. I encourage you to make the most of this experience, created with you in mind. Again, welcome to South Dakota.

Al Johnson  
Host Site Coordinator  
VA Black Hills Health Care System



## Home Town News at the Creative Arts Festival

The Hometown News program at all of VA's national events is a public affairs effort that provides a news release to the local newspapers of our participants, letting them know about your attendance this year. (A news release is a written document that is sent to the news media to let them know about a good story idea.) At the Festival, all news releases are placed on our Festival Web site for all veterans who requested one. We also notify local media across the country by phone and e-mail to let them know 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 certainly honor any of these requests. Please know, however, that if your local media should contact us and want to interview you when you get home, we will provide them with your phone number so they may call you directly.

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 out there about the creative arts program and other services that may be available to them at their local VA medical centers. We hope to have all of this year's news releases posted on the Web site by mid-week (see [www.creativeartsfestival.org](http://www.creativeartsfestival.org) 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 own personal news release.

We hope that you have also brought along your own cameras 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 your story about your talents, your achievements and your participation in the 2006 National Veterans Creative Arts Festival!



During the 2006 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, 69 interviews took place, which is the largest number of interviews ever recorded at a VA national event.

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 17, and will continue through Saturday, October 21. Please sign up at the VHP registration area during registration today, or stop by the VHP interview room (Needles Room, Convention Center I). The VHP interviews will be conducted this week by Butch Miller and videotaped by Bill Browning from the VA medical center in Detroit, Mich.

The schedule for VHP interviews this week is: Tuesday, October 17 through Saturday, October 21: 8 a.m. - noon; and 1 - 5 p.m.

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/vets>.



# F - Y - I



This evening following the Opening Ceremonies, you will have your first meeting with your team leader. After

tonight, you will meet with your team leader every morning (Wednesday through Friday) at 8:30 a.m. at the designated location determined at tonight's meeting. On Saturday, October 21, the team meetings will begin at 9 a.m. On Sunday, October 22, the meetings will begin at 11 a.m.



Your medical support team welcomes you to Rapid City. You

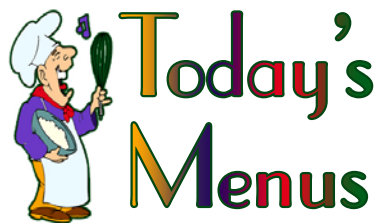
can expect mild days and cool nights, so wear layered clothing. Due to the dry climate here, you need to drink plenty of fluids and take sunburn precautions - clothing, hat and sunscreen - when you go outside. It will help your body adjust if you drink plenty of fluids and get lots of rest. The medical support team is located in Room 1702 and is available at all times during the Festival week. Medical support team members will also accompany all tours away from the hotel. (We'll be easy to find wearing the red hats!) The hotel covers a large area so if the distances are too great for you, contact your team leader. If you have a medical concern or health issue, please contact your team leader as well. We hope to make your stay here in the Black Hills a wonderful experience.



The hospitality room is staffed by gracious, good humored

and hospitable volunteers. We offer snacks, soft drinks, juices, and coffee for ALL festival participants - family, friends, staff and volunteers.

Signs will lead the way to Room 1114 and we'll be open from noon until 10 p.m. today. In case you missed lunch, there will be sandwiches as well as fruit and veggie trays. Stop by and enjoy your first taste of South Dakota hospitality!



All meals, unless otherwise indicated, will be provided in the Rushmore Room, Convention Center I.

Meal hours are as follows:

Breakfast: 7 - 8:30 a.m.

Lunch: Noon - 1 p.m.

Dinner: 5:30 - 6:45 p.m.

## Monday, October 16, 2006

### Opening Ceremonies

- Yankee Pot Roast, Fried Chicken, Cheese Manicotti
- Au Gratin Potatoes, Hot Vegetables
- Tossed Green Salad with Assorted Dressings
- Mediterranean Pasta Salad, Shrimp Rotini Salad
- Bistro Rolls and Butter
- Bread Pudding with Vanilla Sauce
- Sugar Free Vanilla Mousse
- Assorted Gourmet Dessert Bars and Brownies
- Fresh Fruit

## 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? Tell them to 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. Information will be updated through Sunday morning.



As the locals say, "The weather can change rapidly in Rapid City. If you don't like the weather - wait a minute - it will change." So be prepared and take your jacket with you just in case it does!

October averages for Rapid City:

Highs - 61°

Lows - 34°



### Monday, October 16, 2006

- ALL DAY Arrival of participants and staff
- Noon – 9 p.m. Registration — Pre-function Area, Convention Center (CC) II
- Noon – 1 p.m. Hospitality Room Open — Suite 1114 (Sandwiches and snacks served)
- 5:30 p.m. Team Leaders' meeting — Washington Room, CCI
- 6:30 p.m. Opening Ceremonies entertainment begins — Rushmore Room, CCI
- 8 p.m. Opening Meeting: Introductions, announcements, team meetings — Rushmore Room, CCI

### Tuesday, October 17, 2006 - Artists

- 7 – 8:30 a.m. Breakfast at Hotel — Rushmore Room, CCI
- 8 – 8:30 a.m. Late Registration — Sylvan II, CCII
- 9 – 11 p.m. Hospitality Room Open — Suite 1114
- 8:30 a.m. Teams I and II report to the Pactola Room, CCII for photos
- 9 a.m. Teams III and IV report to the Pactola Room, CCII for photos
- 10 a.m. Artist Interaction Session begins at Ramkota Hotel — Pactola, CCII
- Noon Lunch at hotel — Sheridan Room, CCII
- 1:15 – 2:30 p.m. Artist Interaction Session continues — Pactola, CCII
- 3 p.m. Board buses for Tour — Journey Museum
- 3:30 - 5 p.m. Tour Journey Museum
- 5 p.m. Board buses and return to hotel
- 5:30 – 6:45 p.m. Dinner — Rushmore Room, CCI
- 7 – 9:30 p.m. Ice cream social and caricature drawings — Legion 2, CCII
- 9:30 – 11 p.m. Karaoke and Talent/Social time at hotel — Legion 2, CCII

### Tuesday, October 17, 2006 - Performers

- 7 – 8:30 a.m. Breakfast at Hotel — Rushmore Room, CCI
- 8 – 8:30 a.m. Late Registration — Sylvan II, CCII
- 8:30 a.m. – Noon Introductions and announcements for ALL stage performers and staff. Individual acts introduced and perform in costume in show order — Washington Room, CCI
- 9 a.m. – 11 p.m. Hospitality Room Open — Suite 1114
- Noon Lunch at hotel — Rushmore Room, CCI
- 1 - 5:30 p.m. Chorus number and individual act rehearsal — Washington Room, Badlands Room, CCI
- 1 – 5:30 p.m. Chorus member vests, other costume fittings — Lincoln Room, CCI
- 4 – 5:30 p.m. Rehearsal and sign-up for audition solos and narration as scheduled — Badlands, Lincoln, Jefferson and Roosevelt, CCI
- 5:30 – 6:45 p.m. Dinner — Rushmore Room, CCI
- 7 – 9:30 p.m. Chorus number and individual act rehearsal — Washington Room, Badlands Room, CCI
- 7 – 9 p.m. Chorus member vests, other costume fittings — Lincoln Room, CCI
- 8:30 – 9:30 p.m. Rehearsal and sign-up for audition solos and narrations as scheduled — Badlands, Lincoln, Jefferson & Roosevelt, CCI
- 7 – 9:30 p.m. Ice cream social and caricature drawings — Legion 2, CCII
- 9:30 – 11 p.m. Karaoke/Social Time — Legion 2, CCII



#### Schedule legend:

CCI — Convention Center I  
 CCII — Convention Center II

Please check with your team leader or the posted schedule outside of the Washington Room for any changes or updates to your daily schedule.