



art • music • drama • dance • creative writing

History of the

National Veterans Creative Arts Festival

The National Veterans Creative Arts Festival originated as two separate competitions. Muriel Barbour, then chief of recreation therapy at the McGuire VA Medical Center in Richmond, Va., created the visual arts competition, VET ARTS, in 1981, as an observance of the International Year of Disabled Persons. Shirley Jefferies, a recreation therapist at the Waco, Texas, VA Medical Center, initiated the performing arts competition, The National Music Competition for Veterans, in 1981. The premier live winners' stage show was held in 1981 at the VA Medical Center in Tuskegee, Ala. The second show was staged at the Coatesville, Pa., VA Medical Center in 1982.

In 1984, the live stage show was presented in Washington, D.C., and the music competition was renamed "The Music Festival." The following year, the stage show took place in historic Constitution Hall.

The Music Festival and VET ARTS merged and drama and dance divisions were added, to create the National Veterans Creative Arts Festival in 1989. 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 Fox Theater in St. Louis, Mo. In 2005, a fifth creative arts division, creative writing, was added to the Festival roster.

The National Veterans Creative Arts Festival continues to evolve each year as it showcases the artistic achievements of veterans from across the country in each of the five artistic divisions. Each Festival features an art exhibit showing the first place artwork from 52 categories. A live stage show, complete with orchestral accompaniment generously provided by the Music Performance Fund, is performed by veterans who have achieved medal-winning status in a variety of categories from the performing arts divisions of music, drama and dance, as well as creative writing. Workshops are offered during the Festival week for participants and staff, educating them in a variety of artistic modalities by utilizing the talents of local community artists. There is no competition at the Festival itself, as it is a showcase for previously judged medal winners.

In 2008, more than 3000 veterans from 113 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 2008 Festival. In 2009, the event takes place October 5-11 in San Antonio, Texas, hosted by the South Texas Veterans Health Care System in San Antonio. The art exhibit and stage show performance will be held at the San Antonio Municipal Auditorium on Sunday, October 11, 2009.

The Department of Veterans Affairs, the American Legion Auxiliary and Help Hospitalized Veterans present the National Veterans Creative Arts Festival, and it is also supported by many other organizations both locally and nationally. The staff and volunteers of the South Texas Veterans Health Care System take great pride in welcoming the 2009 Festival participants and their guests.



NATIONAL VETERANS CREATIVE ARTS FESTIVAL

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Previous National Veterans Creative Arts Festival Sites

2008 Riverside, California
2007 St. Louis, Missouri
2006 Rapid City, South Dakota
2005 Denver, Colorado
2004 Salt Lake City, Utah
2003 Oklahoma City, Oklahoma
2002 Minneapolis, Minnesota
2001 Prescott, Arizona
2000 Washington, D.C.
1999 Grand Junction, Colorado
1998 Houston, Texas
1997 Tomah, Wisconsin
1996 Louisville, Kentucky
1995 Coatesville, Pennsylvania
1994 Knoxville, Iowa
1993 St. Cloud, Minnesota
1992 Richmond, Virginia
1991 Knoxville, Iowa
1990 San Diego, California
1989 St. Louis, Missouri