

The
ARTSGRAM

NATIONAL VETERANS CREATIVE A



Dr. Terry Keane (left) and Iraq Veteran **Jason Moon** connect art and therapy.

Photo by Bruce Thiel

OCTOBER 12, 2012

The ART & SCIENCE of treating PTSD

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was in over 400 firefights
deployment—and they
deeply traumatized by their
upsetting thing was the
friends. They felt
for their deaths, convinced
something they could have
went them, and a sense
they should have been hi.



Dr. Terence Keane, an international expert on posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), presented on the therapeutic value of the arts and literature at a lecture during the National Veterans Creative Arts Festival.

“Art of all types has a major role in communities and families processing war,” said Dr. Keane.

Dr. Keane, a scientist, psychologist and researcher was joined by Elizabeth Mackey, Director of the National Veterans Creative Arts Festival and Veteran musician Jason Moon.

“What can complement the work, that people like me, that psychologists do, in the one hour a week we might spend with a patient? What can art offer? Does it promote individuals’ sense of themselves, their sense of integrity, their sense of grappling, their humanity? Without question [it] does,” said Keane.

The panel served as an example of VA’s commitment to both traditional evidenced-based practices and art therapy in the recovery of Veterans who have experienced trauma.

“What I’d like to suggest is the whole notion of complementarity with the treatments we are developing scientifically, whether they are medications or psychotherapies, or other forms of inter-

vention and treatment, with the use of the creative arts,” said Keane.

For the past 32 years the VA, the National Institutes of Health, Department of Defense, and Substance Abuse Mental Health Services Administration have continuously supported Dr. Keane’s vital research on psychological trauma.

Dr. Keane and his colleagues at the National Center for PTSD studied web-based interventions for PTSD in order to increase access to treatment for Veterans who live in rural areas. The team used Facebook to advertise and received an extraordinary amount of research subjects, with a diverse representation of the population.

The team developed a website, www.vetchange.org, which was an online research study and self-help program for OEF and OIF Veterans who were concerned with their drinking.

“As a result of the intervention, the drinks per week went sharply down,” said Keane. “Not only did their drinking change, but the suffering they were experiencing from their posttraumatic stress disorder, the nightmares, the flashbacks, the emotional numbing, the avoidance strategies, all also seemed to fade away.”

Dr. Keane also discussed the evidence-based practices that are being deployed throughout VA and how the agency is improving access to care.

“There is a focus on those treatments that have a good evidence-base associated with them. But there is absolutely

room for things that are novel and are coming along,” said Keane. “We feel that we need to have as many treatments that are acceptable to patients, and are acceptable to therapists, as we can.”

While many individuals experience stress reactions after a traumatic event, for some the symptoms continue for an extended period and disrupt day-to-day life. Symptoms can include fear, anxiety, sadness, depression, guilt, shame, anger irritability and behavior changes.

“Chronic PTSD is usually seen as six months or more in duration,” said Dr. Keane. “Of course in VA, people often deal with these feelings for decades.”

Dr. Keane’s future work revolves around the question of how his research will work for groups of Veterans living in rural areas, minority Veterans and who will need some additional therapies. He believes that some of the additional therapies will include the creative arts.

“VA is leading the entire world in how to promote the utilization of evidence-based psychotherapies in the healing from alcohol, drugs and psychological trauma. Leading the world,” said Keane.

*By: Gail Ziegler
Public Affairs Officer
El Paso VA Healthcare System*



Artists and Performers

Please check with your team leader and/or the posted schedule in the Ballroom Foyer for any changes or updates to your daily schedule.

Performers

- 6:30 - 8:30 a.m. **BREAKFAST:** Salon 4
- 7:30 a.m. **TEAM LEADER AND TEAM SUPPORT MEETING** with Amy Kimbler: Blue Hills
- 7:45 a.m. **TEAM LEADER AND TEAM SUPPORT MEETING** with performers
- 8 a.m. **LOAD BUSES AND DEPART FOR THE CUTLER MAJESTIC THEATRE**
- 9 - 12:30 p.m. **TECH REHEARSAL AT CUTLER MAJESTIC THEATRE**
All solo and group act performers.
- 9:30 a.m. **SPONSORS AND FAMILY/FRIENDS LOAD AND DEPART FROM HOTEL TO STATE HOUSE TO VIEW ART EXHIBIT** (will depart from State House at 12:15 p.m. to return to hotel)
- 12:30 p.m. **LOAD AND DEPART (FROM THEATRE) TO HOTEL**
- 11:30 - 1:45 p.m. **LUNCH:** Salons 1 - 4
- 2:15 - 4 p.m. **LOAD BUSES AND DEPART FOR TOUR OF JOHN ADAM'S/JOHN QUINCY ADAM'S HOME AND LIBRARY: ADAMS NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK**
- 4:30 - 5:30 p.m. **DINNER AT HOTEL:** Salons 1 - 4
- 5 p.m. **DEPART FOR CUTLER MAJESTIC THEATRE**
- 6:15 - 6:50 p.m. **PREPARE FOR DRESS REHEARSAL AT CUTLER MAJESTIC THEATRE** – Solo & Group acts in costumes. NO make-up and NO white shirt/black pants needed. Sound check for orchestra.
- 7 - 10 p.m. **DRESS REHEARSAL** with orchestra for all performers
- 10:15 p.m. **DEPART FOR HOTEL**

Artists

- 6:30 - 8:30 a.m. **BREAKFAST:** Salon 4
- 7:30 a.m. **TEAM LEADER AND TEAM SUPPORT MEETING** with Paula Moran: Dorothy Quincy Ballroom A
- 8:00 a.m. **TEAM LEADER AND TEAM SUPPORT MEETING** with artists
- 8:30 a.m. **VISUAL ARTISTS, FAMILY/FRIENDS, TEAM LEADERS AND SUPPORT STAFF LOAD AND DEPART FOR THE STATE HOUSE**
- 9:30 a.m. **SPONSORS AND FAMILY/FRIENDS LOAD AND DEPART FROM HOTEL TO STATE HOUSE TO VIEW ART EXHIBIT** (will depart from State House at 12:15 p.m. to return to hotel)
- 10 a.m. - 12:15 p.m. **ARTISTS AT ART EXHIBIT**
Mix and mingle with art exhibit visitors
- 12:15 p.m. **BEGIN LOADING BUSES FOR THE MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS** (box lunches provided on the bus)
- 1:15 - 3:15 p.m. **TOUR MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS**
- 3:15 p.m. **LOAD BUSES AND DEPART FOR HOTEL**
- 5:30 - 6:30 p.m. **DINNER AT HOTEL:** Salons 1 - 4
- 7:30 - 9 p.m. **PRESENTATION OF THE MILITARY COMBAT EXPERIENCE ENTRIES** (electronic images) from the 2012 national art competition: Dorothy Quincy Ballrooms ABC





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THE ROAD HOME:

One Veteran's Journey of Healing Through Music

When singer - songwriter Jason Moon, singer-songwriter, deployed to Iraq in 2003 with the Wisconsin National Guard's Combat Engineer Battalion, he had no idea the road back would be so difficult. Like most Veterans that have seen the tragedies of war, he came to realize the world as he remembered it and his civilian life as he knew it – no longer existed.

Moon was an accomplished musician before his deployment. It was a pleasure he had enjoyed for years. However, the path to recovery after his military service and his return to music therapy did not come easily.

After his return, he faced other battles, that of PTSD and thoughts of suicide. His condition deteriorated for some time and culminated with a suicide attempt in 2008. He did get the medical care he needed through the VA and was beginning to head in the right direction. However, left without the ability to write and perform music, Moon was not able to break the barrier.

It was not until he was asked to write a song for a documentary about returning combat Veterans that a five-year writer's block was lifted and his greatest joy returned. Moon had finally unlocked the door to recovery and his words began to flow, almost gush. Music was his therapy and gave his PTSD a voice.

The turning point in his healing came when he went to a retreat with other Veterans, mostly from the Vietnam era. As the only Iraq War Veteran there, he was able to listen to their experiences

and advice: Do not wait and do not try to out-think your PTSD. "I have yet to meet someone who struggles from PTSD for 30 years that still has his family and life intact," said Moon. This retreat helped him to accept his challenge and then things started to change.



"It is hard to admit for most Veterans that they have PTSD. We are trained to deal with things on our

own," said Moon.

"If a Veteran on the ground finds a modality that actively heals, this is what they do, they tell others about it."

Once Moon was healthy, he ran back into the fray to save others. Much like the training he received while deployed, he wants to provide help to his comrades. He wants to give Veterans the tools to communicate.

Moon tries to help Veterans overcome obstacles and barriers just as he did. "We were trained to have intestinal fortitude, to soldier on; you did not want to be the weakest link," said Moon.

PTSD treatment professionals are beginning to understand the military mindset and experience. "Just like we would not go on sick call until the pain was untenable, it is the same for treatment. We wait until it all falls apart," he continued.

Moon believes that Veterans should be offered many treatment options for their battle against PTSD. He wants clinical interventions that are evidence-based, but sees a need to include creative arts.

"Keeping these separate, rather than merging approaches will not dilute their strengths. The two need to interface and together can create a cohesive team. If you can get researchers and artists to work together, you will win the Nobel Peace Prize," he said.

At yesterday's presentation on the art and science of PTSD, Dr. Terence Keane and Moon were on the same page. Moon has the utmost respect for VA health care

and VA professionals like Dr. Keane. But when Moon hears when a particular treatment for PTSD may have a 20 percent success rate for instance, he asks, "What do we do with the other 80 percent?"

Therapy is hard and painful, but writing a song and performing can be the breakthrough therapy someone needs.

"I was able to merge the horrible experiences with the happy ones through music in order to help other Veterans," he said.

Other Veterans can identify with his songs and the Creative Arts Festival is the perfect venue to showcase the work Moon does through Warriors Songs, a non-profit he began in 2011. His album, *Trying to Find Your Way Home*, resonates with Veterans and family members and is dedicated to all those who understand the struggle. No doubt, this includes the incredible artists, performers and supporters here in Boston this week.

Shep Crumrine, music therapist at the Milwaukee VA Medical Center, knows that Moon is capable of using his music to make breakthroughs with Veterans that listen.

"After Jason's shows, people don't just leave. They stick around." Crumrine also believes that music and creative therapies don't just help with the initial momentum needed for effective treatment, it keeps Veterans engaged for sustainable recovery.

"It is not just that art allows a Veteran to express the tragedies [of war], it is the belief that someone will see or hear it and relate to it. This validates it and lets me know I am not alone," said Moon.

When someone hears his music and thinks "that is exactly how I feel; then I stop isolating, and I realized that I am not the weakest link in the chain."

Just as Moon has travelled through the darkness, he hopes to bring light to others. His organization strives to harness the therapeutic value of music to "transform the destructive experiences of war and its effects on those who serve into something meaningful and universal, allowing Veterans to reclaim their joy and hope."

The power of peer support is incredible. When Moon takes the stage, it lets fellow Veterans know there is help out there. "We should be honest about the harsh realities, which is what Veterans need to hear from other Veterans in order to move forward," he said.

The great news is that creative arts do heal, as evidenced by Veteran after Veteran testimonial about their use of music as therapy. If Moon can help get fellow Veterans get "even one inch closer to home," he considered it mission accomplished.

*By: Pete Tillman
Public Affairs Officer
Durham VA Medical Center*





There is no greater
AGONY than
bearing an untold
STORY inside you.

- Maya Angelou

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