

The  
**ARTSGRAM**

NATIONAL VETERANS CREATIVE ARTS FESTIVAL

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SATURDAY OCTOBER 13, 2012

Mary Lou Lopez (left) and  
Veteran Angelo Williams

Photo by Andrew White



# Donna's Gift to All



Air Force Veteran Angelo Williams is a Festival first-timer, but he's no novice to the arts. It's something he's known and enjoyed his entire life. Given the name Michelangelo by his artist father, the expectations were always high.

Williams recalls fun moments having drawing contests with his sister. The two would place a broom and dustpan in one corner and sit across the room with paper and pencil in hand. On your mark...get set...go! Gail, his sister, always gave up. Williams kept drawing. He made it his life.

Williams loves to draw, but his medal winning entry was not a drawing.

At first glance, it's a vase. Take a closer look; it's a vase with a shiny petina and an intriguing design. Hear the story and more is revealed. "Donna's Gift" is actually a pitcher; it's a manifestation of the artist's thoughts and ideas – particularly the idea of sharing self with nature. The unrefined clay represents the natural earth. In its finished form the pitcher represents self, purposeful movements and creativity.

Is it ceramic? Is it metal? It's both. Williams used a special technique to bring life to the once plain, colorless object. "Donna's Gift," is cloaked in a metal an-

tique brass glaze. Williams' special finishing technique makes the pitcher appear to have bark and roots.

Before making its way to the Festival, "Donna's Gift" was in the hands of Donna Gerron, a recreation therapist from VA North Texas Health Care System. A letter of sincere gratitude accompanied it.

*I would like to take this opportunity to thank Donna Gerron, Jennie Tate and all VA recreation therapists for their compassion, consideration, respect and dedication to the restoration of the health and peace of mind of disabled U.S. Veterans. Without them, these awards would not be possible.*

*They motivate and inspire us to these achievements by closing doors to yesterday's sorrows and by opening doors to self-esteem and joy for today and tomorrow.*

*They are soldiers of humanity. They heal our souls with love and understanding while helping us see ourselves above and beyond our disability.*

Gerron encouraged Williams to revisit ceramics. After a 40-year hiatus, he was astounded to find out his initial piece won first place.

Fifty percent of his commissioned earnings go to the homeless ministry at his church. From a 10 by 10 studio, he works 12 to 18 hours a week on artwork for churches, athletes, dentists, politicians and many others. The rest of his time is spent as a volunteer with Habitat for Humanity and as a certified peer counselor in the community helping others identify social resources.

Williams strives to fulfill the legacy of his family and inspire fellow Veterans. His advice to other artists:

**"There's no need to search for art; it's everywhere. Wherever you are in life, let art find you. Though we sometimes compete with other artists, never compare. We each express ourselves differently. Let your art, be your art."**

*By Erikka D. Neroes  
Writer / Editor  
VA North Texas Health Care 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 1 - 4
- 8 a.m. **TEAM LEADER AND TEAM SUPPORT MEETING**  
with Amy Kimbler: Blue Hills
- 8:30 a.m. **TEAM LEADER AND TEAM SUPPORT MEETING**  
with performers
- 9 - 10 a.m. **CHORUS REHEARSAL - ALL PARTICIPANTS NEEDED**  
Salons 5-8
- 9 - 11 a.m. **MEET MICHAEL PETERSON STAGE SHOW EMCEE**  
Foyer
- 9:30 a.m. **REHEARSAL OF SOLO AND GROUP ACTS WITH DIRECTORS AS SCHEDULED:** Salons 5-8
- 10:00 a.m. **NEW ENGLAND CORVETTE CLUB:**  
Quincy Marriott Parking Lot
- 11 a.m. - 12 p.m. **LUNCH:** Salons 1 - 4
- 11:30 a.m. **LOAD BUSES AND DEPART FOR CUTLER MAJESTIC THEATRE**  
(Family/friends/sponsors depart on the 12:30 p.m. bus)
- 12:30 - 1:15 p.m. **PERFORMERS INTO COSTUME AND MAKEUP**
- 12:45 p.m. **BUS DEPARTS FOR CUTLER MAJESTIC THEATRE**  
(family/friends and volunteers who would like to watch the dress rehearsal)
- 1:30 - 5 p.m. **FINAL DRESS REHEARSAL WITH ORCHESTRA**  
Cutler Majestic Theatre
- 5:30 p.m. **PERFORMERS DEPART FOR HOTEL**
- 7 - 10 p.m. **SATURDAY NIGHT CELEBRATION**  
Dinner and Entertainment  
President's Ballroom, Salons 1-5

## Artists

- 6:30 - 8:30 a.m. **BREAKFAST:** Salon 4
- 8 a.m. **TEAM LEADER AND TEAM SUPPORT MEETING**  
with Paula Moran: Dorothy Quincy Ballroom A
- 8:30 a.m. **TEAM LEADER AND TEAM SUPPORT MEETING**  
with artists
- 9 a.m. **LOAD AND DEPART FOR FENWAY PARK**
- 10 - 11 a.m. **FENWAY PARK TOUR**
- 11 a.m. **BOARD BUSES AND RETURN TO HOTEL**
- 10:00 a.m. - 12 p.m. **NEW ENGLAND CORVETTE CLUB:**  
Quincy Marriott Parking Lot
- 12:30 - 1:30 p.m. **LUNCH:** Salons 1 - 4
- 1:30 - 2:15 p.m. **TEAMS 1,2,3: ART WORKSHOP #4 ACRYLIC PAINTING**  
Teams 4,5,6: Finish art projects  
Dorothy Quincy Ballrooms ABC
- 2:30 - 3:15 p.m. **TEAMS 4,5,6: ART WORKSHOP #4 ACRYLIC PAINTING**  
Teams 1,2,3: Finish art projects  
Dorothy Quincy Ballrooms ABC
- 4 - 5 p.m. **Q & A WITH NATIONAL ART COMMITTEE**  
Blue Hills
- 7 - 10 p.m. **SATURDAY NIGHT CELEBRATION DINNER AND ENTERTAINMENT**  
President's Ballroom, Salons 1-5









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# MORE THAN A DUO



If you have been to the National Veterans Creative Arts Festival (NVCAF) in recent years, then you probably know the incredible talents of Michael Slatton and Thad Holloway, both Veterans and performers from Chicago, Ill. If this is your first time, then get ready for an amazing performance from the gold medalists.

Holloway, a Marine from 1966 to 1970, has been coming to the Festival for the last seventeen years.

"My first one was amazing and every one after that was also amazing," he said.

His love for performing began at age 6 when he joined a church choir. By 7, he was directing the choir and was well on his way to being the performer he is today.

Music and performing are in his blood. Holloway's sister, whom he performed with for seven years, was a professional singer. In fact, this is his first trip back to Boston since 1991, when his sister recorded the "Good Vibrations" music video with Marky Mark and the Funky Bunch.

Holloway is already planning for next year.

**"It keeps your mind on what you have to do to get back to the Festival and it takes away the negativity."**

Slatton was in the Army from 1969 to 2005. This is his eleventh year at the NVCAF and he says "every time is just like the first time."

He feels great helping newcomers get into a therapeutic mind set. "There was a time when this was our first Festival and I want to make the experience enjoyable for their first time."

A consummate professional, he prepares for the Festival all year long and for good reason.

**"I have a song in my heart and have been to the point when I lost my song...music therapy and the Festival have helped me find my song,"** he said.

Slatton has already picked out songs for next year. "There is so much feeling you put in to get here, but it keeps me focused and affects me all year long."

Together, Holloway and Slatton credit the saving of their lives to Music Therapist Jessie Herdon, now retired from the Hines VA. Herdon worked tirelessly to get Veterans into music therapy. She finally convinced Holloway and Slatton to engage in music therapy and when she did, it changed their lives forever.

"She saved my life. I was in bad, bad shape, but once she got me in her clutches, we did music therapy together. When she rolled onto the floor, I would run back into the room and she would chase me. I finally gave in and sang with her," Slatton said. That's when his life began to change for the better.

**"I think every hospital needs to have a music therapy program,"**

Slatton said.

Holloway agreed, "When you are up all night, recall unpleasant memories, and can't sleep, you may still have those problems. But music will keep you

# THEY ARE THE LEGENDARY DRIFTERS

grounded and keep you off of your mind.”

The symptoms that accompany combat-related PTSD, experienced by Holloway from his time in Vietnam, do not magically disappear with music therapy. However, it keeps negativity off his mind and helps him cope when environmental factors trigger him. When driving on a highway, working on the railway, or riding a train, the eerily familiar sounds can bring him back to the firefight. Music therapy mitigates his negative thoughts.

Another common thread with the duo is their affinity for craft. Both were resistant at first, but after short hospital stays, were hooked.

**“Without crafts and without music therapy, it made things more depressing. I had no outlet,”**

Holloway said.

Slatton is quick to agree. “I never thought I would mess with that stuff, those crafts, but once started, it takes your mind off things, and focuses it on something positive. Plus the finished product makes you feel proud.”

Holloway and Slatton joined The Legendary Drifters about three years ago. The famous doo-wop group performs many classics such as “Under the Boardwalk,” “On Broadway” and “There Goes My Baby”.

But they were Veterans before they were The Legendary Drifters. They put their work with The Legendary Drifters on hold to be at the NVCAF, cancelling their shows.

You can tell that Holloway and Slatton are good friends and successful performers that deeply respect each other. Slatton joined The Legendary Drifters first and soon thereafter knew he needed to get Holloway involved.

“We needed his voice for the sound that we wanted. I didn’t want anyone else. That man is phenomenal,” Slatton said about Holloway.

That respect and admiration extends to all Veterans at the NVCAF for their therapy of choice. That is the common bond that holds all Festival-going Veterans together. Being a Veteran begins the conversation, but using creative arts as therapy keeps it going.

*By Pete Tillman*

*Public Affairs Officer*

*Durham VA Medical Center*





Some of the most  
**CREATIVE** people  
are ones who don't  
fit into **BOXES.**

- Tori Amos

**SOCIAL  
MEDIA**



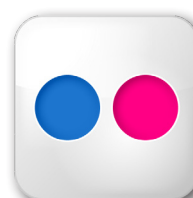
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