

Creative Forces®: NEA Military Healing Arts Network is an initiative of the **National Endowment for the Arts** in partnership with the **U.S. Departments of Defense** and **Veterans Affairs** that seeks to improve the health, well-being, and quality of life for military and veteran populations exposed to trauma, as well as their families and caregivers.

The program places creative arts therapies at the core of patient-centered care at clinical sites throughout the country, including telehealth services, and increases access to community arts activities to promote health, well-being and quality of life for military service members, veterans, and their families and caregivers. Creative Forces is managed in partnership with **Civic Arts**, the **Henry M. Jackson Foundation for the Advancement of Military Medicine**, and **Mid-America Arts Alliance**.

THE NEED

More than 450,000 men and women of our armed forces have been diagnosed with TBI between 2000 and 2022, and more than 287,000 veterans serving in the Operations Iraqi Freedom (OIF) and Enduring Freedom (OEF) or Gulf War (Desert Storm) have PTSD in a given year. Both diagnoses may contribute to depression and to the estimated 17 suicides committed by veterans each day.

THE NETWORK

We are building a national network of care and support for trauma-exposed active duty service members, veterans, and their families and caregivers, in medical treatment or transitioning back home to their bases and communities.

CLINICAL

The National Endowment for the Arts funds creative arts therapists, equipment, and supplies at clinical sites across the nation, including telehealth delivery of care for patients in rural and remote areas. In clinical settings, creative arts therapists provide art, music, and dance/movement therapies, as well as creative writing instruction, for military patients and veterans.

“I am so thankful that my psychologist and art therapist helped me use art (thread, stitches, and fabric) to process trauma and make an art quilt. I finally found a way to embrace my combat-related post-traumatic stress disorder, communicate my feelings, and ‘stack my team’ with special supporters.”

MAJ Glema Gordon, US Army (retired),
Malcom Randall VA Medical Center,
Gainesville, FL

“I was able to heal by utilizing music, was able to heal by utilizing the arts. I was able to see it, feel it, and I knew it made me better.”

MSGT Michael Schneider,
US Marine Corps (retired)

COMMUNITY

Creative Forces provides community-based arts opportunities for military and veteran populations and their families around clinical site locations, as well as via virtual arts engagement. Community Engagement grants support community-based arts programming that will expand the work of Creative Forces into more communities nationwide to address the distinct experiences, challenges, and strengths of military-connected populations through the arts.

CAPACITY

Creative Forces invests in capacity-building efforts, including the development of toolkits, training materials, and other resources to support best practices in serving the target populations. In addition, Creative Forces is investing in research on the impacts and benefits—physical, social, emotional—of these innovative treatment methods. Visit Creative Forces' National Resource Center (www.CreativeForcesNRC.arts.gov) to learn more and to read research associated with Creative Forces.

ADDITIONAL NEA ENGAGEMENT WITH MILITARY COMMUNITY

As part of the NEA's mission to increase access to the arts for all Americans, Creative Forces enables more service members, veterans, and military families to benefit from creative arts therapies and community arts activities.

The agency has been collaborating with the Department of Defense for more than a decade, offering creative writing workshops, performing arts programs, and the Blue Star Museums military appreciation program.

In addition to the Creative Forces Community Engagement grants, other National Endowment for the Arts grant programs also support projects that reach military service members, veterans, and their families and caregivers.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT GRANT EXAMPLES:

- An intergenerational photography program called *Cameras in Communities: Our Family, Our Story* by **Outside the Lens**. This free program will explore digital storytelling and documentary photography for military-connected families in **San Diego, California**, culminating in a public exhibition of participants' media art. The program was designed with input from the military community and in partnership with organizations such as USO San Diego, which brings decades of research and experience working with veterans and military families. The program offers a safe and transformative space for participants to connect, share stories, and make art, providing opportunities for healing and growth.
- **Heroes Home Gate** by **Footprints, Inc.**, a multidisciplinary arts program to make visual and performing arts more accessible for residents at their transitional housing facility for veterans in **Kansas City, Missouri**. The program aims to offer a variety of outlets for artistic expression, engagement, and skill-building, and to support recovery and social reintegration. Ultimately, the program will allow veterans to engage in creative expression to help support their successful reintegration into civilian life.