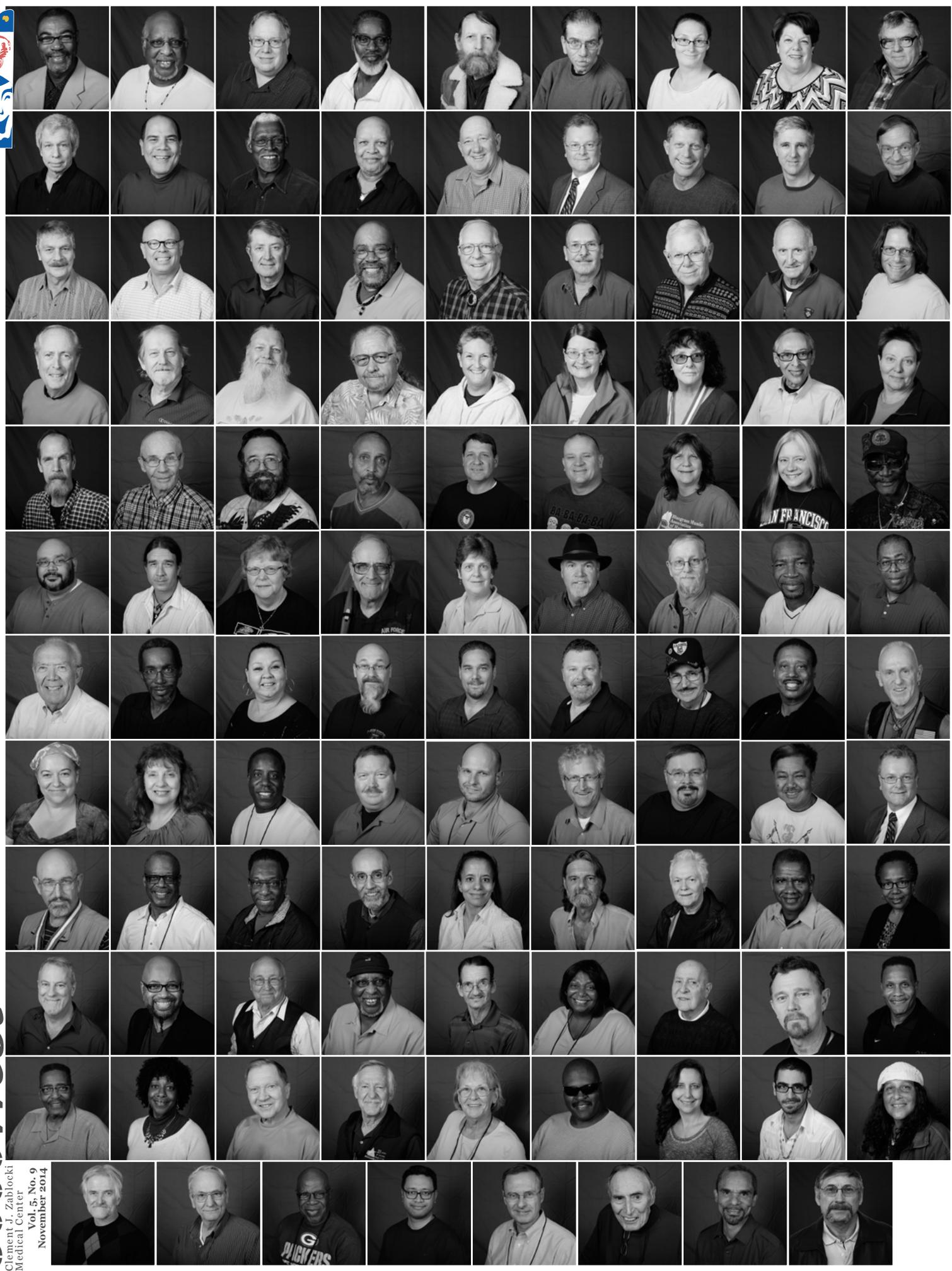


5000 West 2014 National Veterans Creative Arts Festival



Clement J. Zablocki
Medical Center
Vol. 5, No. 9
November 2014

Letter from Medical Center Director



Wow!
That's the only way you can sum up the National Veterans Creative Arts Festival that took place here Oct. 27 to Nov. 2!
For one week, our VA hosted 107 Veterans from across the U.S. for this one-of-a-kind event. It all culminated Nov. 2 with an art exhibit and stage show from the national Veteran winners, all who have found hope and healing in the arts.
To the outside observer, it might have looked relatively seamless and easy — from picking up Veterans at the airport to the final curtain call at the Milwaukee Theatre.
But I know it was anything but easy. An event like this simply does not happen without the dedicated work of hundreds of people behind the scenes and thousands of unheralded hours.

Thank you to all of the staff who had a hand in truly making this event one of the best ever! Thanks to your hard work, we filled the theater with about 2,200 people — the largest National Veterans Creative Arts crowd in 20-plus years!

First and foremost, thank you to music therapist Shep Crumrine and art therapist Marisa Straub for serving as local coordinators who made all this magic happen. A big thank you also goes to the nurses who worked the medical room; the logistics and transportation employees who made sure everything and everyone got to where they needed to go; and, of course, the countless volunteers in the hospitality room, checking people in, and filling in where needed.

None of this could have happened without the support of American Legion Auxiliary — nationally and locally. They are truly unsung heroes.

The National Veterans Creative Arts Festival is a shining example of how VA health care follows a Veteran throughout their continuum of care. We don't say, "Goodbye," when someone is discharged, we say, "How else can we help you?"

This event cast a light on how talented our Veterans are. The festival also illustrates how effective our treatment programs and therapists can be in helping Veterans put their lives back together.

Sincerely,

Robert H. Beller, FACHE
Director, VA Milwaukee

5000 West is a recurring publication produced by the Public Affairs Office and Medical Media of the Zablocki VA Medical Center, and is intended for employees, volunteers, patients and friends. Views expressed do not necessarily reflect the official policy of the medical center. While 5000 West encourages submissions for future editions, we cannot guarantee publication, and reserve the right to edit all copy so it conforms to editorial policy and guidelines. To submit information, e-mail: Public Affairs at VHAMIWPublicAffairs@va.gov or call the Public Affairs Office at 414-384-2000, ext. 45363.



On the Cover

Our 107 National Veterans Creative Arts participants from across the United States are featured on the front cover. It's impossible to sum up the week-long event in a couple stories or photos, but we did our best. For additional coverage, see pages 4, 6, 7, 8 and 9 — Front cover photos by Amanda Urrea



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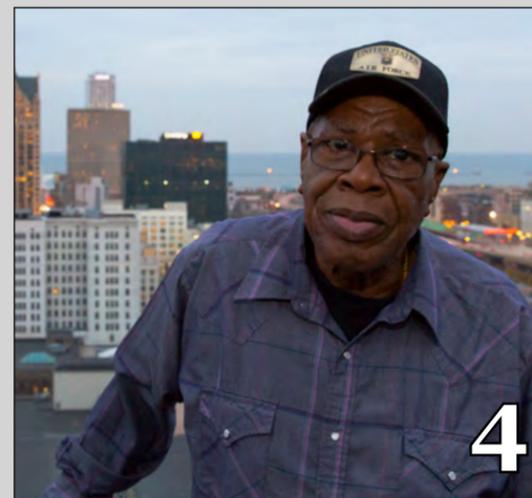
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Creative arts heals invisible wounds

Veterans' festival highlights artistry and therapy

By Gary J. Kunich

Marisa Straub's mind churned with all the tasks big and small still left undone as the final minutes ticked away and she walked toward the Milwaukee Theatre's main doors.

This was what she worked for day and night.

After a year of planning and work, this was the culmination of the National Veterans Creative Arts Festival.

A total of 107 Veterans from across the United States converged Oct. 27 to Nov. 2 in Milwaukee for the National Veterans Creative Arts Festival for a week of artist workshops, and a two-hour stage show made up of singers, musicians, dancers and dramatic readings. At least another 150 volunteers from throughout the medical center and community worked feverishly behind the scenes to make it all come together.

The once-a-year event is a culmination of months of work on the part of Veterans and the event organizers.

After all the planning, all the work and all the rehearsals, would anyone show?

Straub, an art therapist and co-coordinator of the event, knew how important it was. She didn't know if others would share those feelings and show up in support.

"When I took that first step into the theater, that's when it almost got me. I was a little verklempt," she said. "It was amazing."

From the theater lobby she stared down at a sea of people already packed into the Grand Rotunda of the Milwaukee Theatre for the Veteran art exhibit.

People were still coming in from outside.

Her co-coordinator for the event, music therapist Shep Crumrine, nodded in agreement.

"It was that realization," he said. "This is what we had hoped would happen, and it happened. That's when I knew this was going to be wonderful."

Officials said more than 2,200 people showed for the final art exhibit and stage show — the largest crowd for the festival in 20-plus years.

Veterans start the process in February



Photo by Benjamin Slane

Melvin Ridgenal, Milwaukee's sole participant, stands atop the Hilton Hotel in downtown Milwaukee for a [Milwaukee Magazine](#) feature article. Ridgenal was part of the choral arrangement.

by competing in local art exhibits and stage shows at their local medical centers. There are 53 different visual art categories. Stage show performers competed in music, dance, drama and creative writing. The top winners at each VA get judged at the national level, and those first-place winners are invited to the festival.

Veteran Melvin Ridgenal represented the Milwaukee VA in the chorus, and the rest came from other VAs throughout the country.

The goal is more than art and a stage show.

"This is a clinical program and you really have to experience it to fully appreciate it," Crumrine said. "And sometimes you don't hear about the full impact right away, but years later. You hear stories from the Veterans or their therapists back home who tell you how much it makes a difference for them."

Some participate just for the love of artwork. Many others use the arts to continue healing from different traumas or substance abuse.

For Vietnam Veteran Rodney Anderson, each step in the process of creating a log cabin out of matchsticks has brought him healing.

"I didn't know I had (post-traumatic stress), but I found it difficult to work or do anything. I just started this as a way to channel my thoughts.

Denham Clements, who also spent time in Vietnam, exhibited his work,

"Vietnam Elegy," which resembled a Rorschach test of colors, items and images of the Vietnam War.

"I am just in awe of all this work," one onlooker said. "One piece is better than the other."

Each year, the stage show likes to pay homage to the hosting city. Last year in Reno, it started with a theme of stage shows and casinos. For Milwaukee, it was all about "Happy Days," "Laverne and Shirley" and 1950s music for the opening. From catchy tunes and dance, it segued to poignant, original songs about serving in combat and coming home from war.

Every Veteran comes with a story of healing and hope, and many say it saved their lives.

Crumrine recalled one female Veteran from a few years ago who kept to herself. She wore her camouflage fatigues, didn't socialize and could barely get through rehearsal.

"She would just get so emotional and caught up in the moment," he said.

The next year, she was wearing a red sweater, was all smiles and engaging with others.

"It's because she was able to put herself in a traumatic situation as a way to deal with it."

Next year's festival takes place in Raleigh, North Carolina. The local festival, the first stage in the process, will take place in February. For more information, call Shep Crumrine or Marisa Straub at 414-389-4099.

Green House changing long-term care at Milwaukee VA



Photo by Amanda Urrea

The new Green House located on the Milwaukee VA grounds, The Green House offers individualized care, something VA began when the shift to patient-centered care started earlier this year.

By Antony Kamps

A new way to provide long-term care for Veterans began last month when the Green House opened on the Milwaukee VA grounds.

The Green House focuses on a revolutionary small-house model of long-term care with a particular emphasis on elder vitality, respect, autonomy and dignity said Susan Gresser, Green House guide at the Milwaukee VA. The Green House offers individualized care, something VA began when the shift to patient-centered care started earlier this year.

Gresser oversees the employees and operations of the facility. She said she is excited about the start of a new way of giving care to Veterans.

"It's certainly the right thing to do, to give Veterans the option of getting care. The care and caregivers will be more focused on the Veteran."

Gresser's position is the equivalent of a program manager. There are two more Green Houses in the works, and Gresser said she hopes a fourth will be approved soon.

Each house can accommodate up to 10 Veterans with their own private room and full bathrooms. There is also a communal space at the heart of the building where Veterans can gather and socialize. Activities for the Veterans include bingo, cards, hosting coffee sessions, and the occasional outing.

The houses will also provide patios, porches and green areas for Veterans to enjoy the outside.

"It's a smaller and more intimate environment that promotes home, comfort, security and it gives the feel of family more than just patient and caregiver," said Gresser.

The staff consists of 11 certified nursing assistants and five registered nurses. The CNA role at the Green House is referred to as a universal worker because they are responsible for managing

food preparation, laundry, personal care and patient growth and opportunity — a much bigger role than what is expected in a hospital setting.

"I was curious about how they were going to incorporate medical care into this atmosphere," said Lisa Brown, registered nurse. "And they have trained us on all aspects to make things good for the Veterans."

Veronica McCoy, universal worker, said she's looking forward to the new mission.

"I'm excited to see the guys and so happy we're doing this for them. This is going to be so good for them."

In the weeks leading up to the opening, staff trained day after day to learn their roles and how to treat this environment different than from being in a hospital.

"Our training is in-depth and intense. We're stressing every day that this is a home, and to treat it as such," said Gresser. "In a very short period

of time, the staff we have brought in have formed a bond as a group.

"Neat thing is the staff is enthusiastic; I'd even go as far to say passionate."

For now, she said the focus is on making this Green House feel like home.

"It's about things we take for granted. Smells of good food and laughter in the air when you come home," Gresser said. "We can now provide that to the Veteran."



Photo by Amanda Urrea

Robert Beller, Milwaukee VA medical center director, addresses the crowd at the Green House open house.

Intensive process ends with gold

By Gary J. Kunich

They called him a public affairs officer, among many other military titles, but that's not the way Dennis Linn saw it.

"I'm an artist," he said. "I've always considered myself an artist first."

Linn represented Rapid City, South Dakota, at this year's National Veterans Creative Arts Festival with two pieces — his mixed media piece, "Glory," is a combination painting and sculpture, if you will, of Westminster Abbey. It features paint, sand, modeling clay and crushed glass to recreate the famous gothic church of London that dates back to 1245. His other piece, "The Patriot — Will and Moral Courage," took a gold medal in the Oil Painting category.

His "Glory" creation took too many hours to count, but that's not the point of the work.

"Lots of people ask, 'How long?' I'm guessing six months. You'd lose your mind trying to figure it out. I know it took six months on and off. There is so much fine detail, it takes many, many hours. Sometimes I'll work on a piece for a year or more.

"It is absolutely therapy and therapy is good," he added. "It takes your mind off the everyday stresses that could be affecting you. If you're creating, your mind is on something else, and that keeps you healthy."

For "Glory," Linn used a photograph he took of the church while he was still in the military more than 15 years

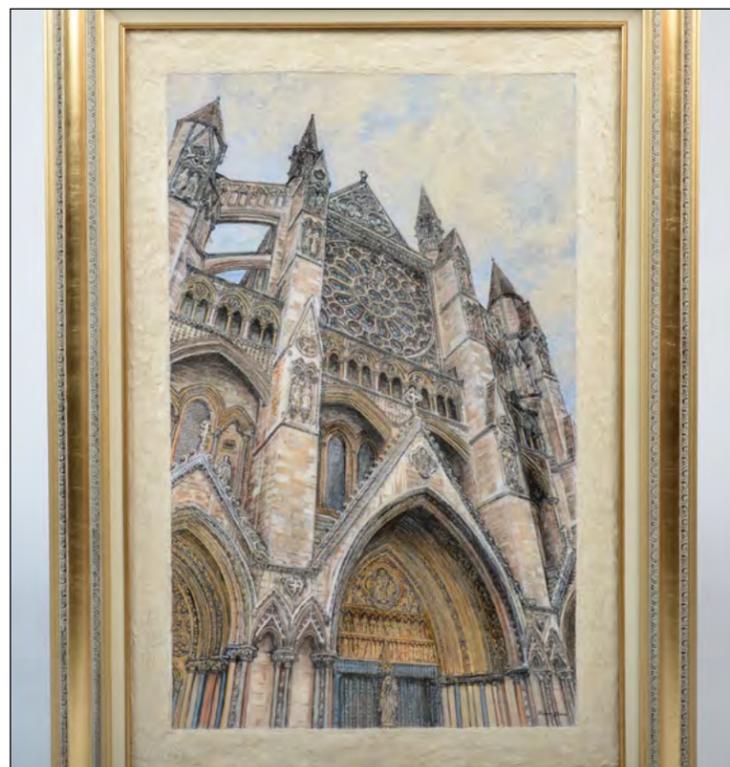


Photo by Amanda Urrea

Dennis Linn's art titled "Glory," won gold medal in the mixed media category. It features paint, sand, modeling clay and crushed glass to recreate Westminster Abbey.

earlier.

"I wanted the perspective of looking up at it into space," he said. "I wanted to go back to that feeling of the old, gothic architects, where you look at the piece and it's uplifting."

It's a time-intensive process.

"I pretty much sketch it out, paint, then use sand and modeling paste. Then I paint it again. I used modeling paste on the window, but it didn't turn out clear, so I had to sand it down. It's really hard to sand that off, but I never think a piece is ruined. You can always fix it or use a mistake to your advantage."

That, he said, is a good philosophy for life: Never give up, even when there's a mistake.

"That's the way everyone who competes in this art festival should feel. If you have something to express or show the world, don't give up. If you don't make it, don't give up. It's the process, not the goal to go to the festival. The goal is the journey," Linn said.

Linn has come a long way since he won his first contest — a 3rd grade safety poster contest. He enlisted in the Air Force for four years in 1972, but kept doing art on the side. He used G.I. Bill money to go back to school for a master's degree in fine arts. He came back in as an officer, at one time becoming the art director for Air Force recruiting service, then branching into public affairs, inspector general and other areas, before retiring in 2004 as a lieutenant colonel.

"It was a good military career," he said. "Sometimes it felt like I was a civilian on active duty."

Several of his pieces hang in the Pentagon to this day.

"Dana Priest (a reporter for the Washington Post) told me once, 'Anyone can become a colonel, but not everyone can be an artist,' he said. "I like being an artist. That's what I am."



Courtesy photo

Dennis Linn has painted since the 3rd grade. He now uses the art process as therapy to take his mind off the "everyday stresses."

With "Angst," there is hope



Photo by Doug Lindenstein

Doug Lindenstein's gold medal-winning color photography piece in this year's National Veterans Creative Arts Festival piece, "Angst."

By Gary J. Kunich

It's a primal scream.

It's a shout.

It's an explosion of emotion.

It's "Angst."

That's the title of Doug Lindenstein's gold medal-winning color photography piece in this year's National Veterans Creative Arts Festival.

"The idea was to show a lot of tension, but the person is breaking out of that tension," said Lindenstein. "It's easy to come up with ideas about anxiety. It's what I go through and what others go through, but 'Angst' has a little hope. The message is that however built up things may feel, it's possible to let that tension go, and that feels like a lot of relief. Once you do, there is always hope in the air. That's why it's titled, 'Angst' instead of 'Anxiety.' Anxiety is strictly anxiety. But angst always has hope attached to it."

Lindenstein, who served in the military in the 1970s, went through a period of his own anxiety.

"I was on a pretty good trajectory my whole life," he said. "Got out of high school, joined the Army, and every job I had I moved up. All at once, it went away. I was in my mid-50s, lost my job, lost our house. I probably wouldn't be around right now if not for the VA. Probably would have driven off a cliff."

He reached his breaking point and VA gave him help.

"They gave my wife and I shelter, got us an apartment, got jobs for us," he said.

Photography and painting have always been his thing. He wasn't aware of the creative arts festival until coming to the Southern Arizona VA Health Care System.

"We used a slow shutter and I zoomed in" for the effect on his winning piece, he said and added colors through PhotoShop.

For him, it's all a part of the healing process.

"If something is really troubling me, that goes into my art," he said.

Lindenstein said he helped find his hope again through his VA care.

"They helped me a lot in seeing I can only be responsible for myself, and I can't hold everyone responsible for how I'd like them to act. They help me by talking through things. I would totally recommend the Mental Health folks. I totally love those people. They saved my life."

Just call him Harp Man



Photo by Benjamin Slane

Robert Cooper used playing the harp as a positive impact on his life and his battles with alcoholism. Cooper has been sober since April 2013.

By Gary J. Kunich

Just call Robert Cooper, "The Harp Man."

"That's what they call me around the Martinsburg, West Virginia. I must have given hundreds of performances now," he said.

Cooper doesn't fit the image of the stereotypical harpist. But, he said, there's a whole genre of folk harp music many might not even know.

"My kind of playing is closer to guitar, since that's what I first played," said Cooper.

He joined the Navy in 1980 and spent most of that time as a corpsman at Camp Pendleton, California. He was at a restaurant brunch when he first heard someone using the harp to play folk music.

After his Navy career, Cooper played for different bands "up and down the east coast, some with varying success." He even played harp for a couple years at Busch Gardens in Williamsburg, Virginia.

That led to him starting "Harps for Heroes," playing for those Veterans in the Community Living Center, and in treatment for substance abuse and post-traumatic stress.

"It started out with me just giving lessons as part of Compensated Work Therapy," he said. "It's a positive activity for me that keeps me focused, and I hope that helps others."

"It's foot-tappable, but don't know if you can dance to it," he said with a laugh.

It's had a positive impact on his life, too. Cooper came to VA for alcoholism, and has been sober since April 2013.

"I had to make a decision," he said. "It was the difference between living and dying."

For the creative arts festival he chose an original number on the harp called, "For What It's Worth."

"It's hard to say exactly what it's about. It's up to the person listening," he said. "For me, it's a question: 'What is it worth?' Everything. When I perform, I hope people realize there is always hope."

Now he wants to pay it forward.

"I'm back in school to get a certificate in music therapy and substance abuse," he said. "I want to be able to put it all together to help people who need it."



Photos by Benjamin Slane

2014 National Veterans Creative Arts Festival

More than 2,200 people came out for the art exhibit and stage show as part of the 2014 National Veterans Creative Arts Festival. The stage show featured an array of musical styles, dance, instrumentals, original music and dramatic readings. The chorus (above) serenades the audience with a final, patriotic ballad. Country singer Michael Peterson (left) entertains the crowd in between performances. Peterson has served as master of ceremonies for the festival for several years. Photos (opposite page, clockwise from top left): Nick Strom, the second oldest Veteran in this year's festival, performs an original tap dance, "G.I. Jive." Bruce Glover was the crowd with "Twistin' the Night Away." Ron Tomocik performs "Man of La Mancha" on his accordion. Bryan Babot performed his original song, "Paid on Time," a haunting tune about post-traumatic stress."



Find us!



Realistic simulation training at Milwaukee VA

By Antony Kamps

Jason Day lies on his bed inside the new Green House building waiting for staff to perform live emergency care on him. He looks at peace.

Day is a dummy. Seriously. But don't call him that.

Day is a \$125,000 life-like adult patient simulator and the Simulation Program uses him to conduct live simulation training with the staff at the Milwaukee VA to improve Veteran safety, prepare teams, reinforce skills and enhance problem solving.

The interdisciplinary program develops and employs simulation as an innovative teaching strategy for health care providers at the hospital; To support patient and practitioner safety and quality of care delivered to the Veteran and their family. It also develops and nurtures simulation faculty within the organization, fosters a safe, non-threatening teaching and learning environment, and facilitates competency for both learner and faculty, said Tina Smith, simulation education coordinator.

Staff enters his room.

"Oh my god, his eyes are blinking!" shouts one employee.

Smith can control all of his vital signs, eyes and sounds from a laptop. The laptop allows Smith to see what actions the staff performs on him and in what order.

"He can breathe, blink, and pretty much do whatever a 'real' patient can do," said Smith. "He can also bleed, sweat and cry."

Smith and Dr. Jutta Novalija, physician lead for the Simulation Program, go around to different departments to conduct the simulation training. Today the newly finished Green House staff is set to go through the gauntlet of various situations with Smith, and her trusty companion, Day. Linda Cayan, registered nurse, and Smith created backgrounds of each situation and the expected learner actions.

"Studies show hands-on training in your everyday environment is the most effective way to train an individual," Smith said.

DeLisa Dixon and Veronica McCoy, both universal workers, are first up. They interact with Day as if he is a real patient. Smith is in another room talking to them through a microphone inside of Day. Everything is fine until he stops breathing.



Photo by Antony Kamps

Lisa Brown (left), registered nurse, and Khou Yang, universal worker, perform emergency procedures on an adult simulator.

"Go get the nurse, he stopped breathing," McCoy said to Dixon.

Lisa Brown, registered nurse, enters the room and assesses the situation. It doesn't matter Day is a mannequin; to them he is a real patient.

"Even though it was a robot, it felt real in there," said McCoy afterwards. "He had a pulse and you could see he was breathing."

Brown calmly issues out commands to Dixon and McCoy. She asks for 911 to be called, oxygen and a defibrillator to be brought into the room. They are fast, but calm in their actions.

They hook the defibrillator up to Day. CPR is continually performed as they try to get him breathing and his heart beating again. "Stand clear" is voiced by the electronic defibrillator machine. All three women stand back and wait. A shock is administered and the machine voices another command, "Begin CPR." "You don't have time to think about if it's real or not, you just have to do whatever it takes to bring him back," said Dixon.

Brown's hair swings wildly as she performs compressions on Day's chest, only stopping to check to see if Day is breathing or has a pulse. Smith walks into the room and ends the simulation.

"This isn't about pass or fail, or whether they're able to bring the patient back," said Smith. "It's about learning from doing, looking at the steps taken and evaluating what went well and what could have been done differently."

Smith has an after action review with the three staff members about what just took place. They talk about the positives

and negatives.

"The biggest component in emergencies is communication," Smith said. "Talking amongst each other is essential and you all did that. If you don't know, it's OK to speak up. That's why we do this so we all can learn."

The entire staff told Smith at the end of the day how grateful they were for this training.

"This is just an experience builder," said Dixon. "Coming from the hospital things are done so differently. This training is beneficial and awesome."

Smith said live training is better than watching a video or sitting through a lecture.

"This gives staff the opportunity to learn in the environment where they are actually going to work," Smith said. "Whether it's in the Green House or in the hospital we can adjust the training to fit the department's needs."

At the end of the day Smith and, Green House guide, Susan Gresser said they are happy with the training of the Green House staff.

"I think we achieved what we wanted to today. The staff was able to practice intervening for a Veteran's change in condition, problem solve, work as a team, and use the patient care equipment. They now have a better understanding of their roles and their surroundings," said Smith.

"And that makes this a success."

Interested in using simulation technology as a teaching method? Contact Smith at tina.smith4@va.gov, or Dr. Jutta Novalija at jutta.novalija@va.gov.

Kayleen's Kitchen



By Kayleen Wichlinski
Registered Dietitian

It's 6 p.m. on a Tuesday night, you have just come home from work. Maybe ran a few errands, took the dog for a walk, and now you are famished. You barely had time to make it to the grocery store last weekend to pick up snacks for Sunday's Packer Party. Your kids, or your better half, are begging you for something tasty, but you know whatever you make must be quick, simple, and hopefully healthy.

Often one of the biggest struggles we encounter as employees is what to make for dinner after work. It must be quick, healthy, and all of the ingredients — fingers crossed — must be in our kitchen. Pizza is a quick solution, but it is not always healthy. The crust alone in pizza can have up to 200 calories for one small slice and often offer little nutritional value. If you can keep English Muffins, preferably whole grain, in your freezer to use in these 'Tuesday night pinches', you will be set for last minute dinner conundrums with mini English muffin pizzas.

Try using the leftovers from your 'Packer Party' vegetable tray or vegetables from your local fall farmer's market. This recipe is so simple to prepare, and it is sure to please your family. As a dietitian, I recommend loading up on the vegetables, although low-sodium, reduced-fat breakfast sausage could also be a pizza topping. Have each person in your family make a mini pizza to their liking, and you will have one very happy household.

Although you can use regular English muffins, the whole grain varieties provide added fiber to your diet which keep you full. The fiber found in whole grain breads is usually insoluble fiber. It is also found in nuts, beans and some vegetables. Insoluble fiber helps maintain bowel health, decreasing your chance of constipation. Soluble fiber is found in oats, most fruits, carrots, etc. It is a gel-like material that can help lower cholesterol and blood sugar levels.

Whole grain can also reduce the risk of developing type 2 diabetes because it can slow the absorption of sugar in the blood. Fiber can help you achieve or maintain a healthy weight because it makes you feel fuller for a longer period of time. So, when it comes to grains, try to make yours "whole!"

Watch Kayleen's Kitchen videos at [facebook.com/MilwaukeeVA](https://www.facebook.com/MilwaukeeVA)

Recipe of the Month



English Muffin Pizzas

Serves: 2

Ingredients

2 English muffins
1/2 cup pasta sauce
Diced vegetables
1/2 cup Shredded cheese
Italian or pizza seasoning, to taste

Directions

1. Place English muffins on a baking sheet

2. Spread 1/8 cup pasta sauce on each muffin

3. Place desired vegetables or breakfast sausage on top of sauce

4. Sprinkle each muffin with 1/8 cup shredded cheese and Italian or pizza seasoning (optional)



In Service

Congratulations to the following Zablocki employees who reached career milestones in October:

40 Years

Marylouise Felhofer
Michael Lewis

35 Years

Gail Beck
Anthony Jones
Lynda Lepak

30 Years

Andrew Hendrickson
Gunnar Larson
Lawrence Morris Jr.
Mary Newell
Dean Schwaller

25 Years

Kathleen Burrmann
Ellen Crass
Nancy Fernhout
Jeffrey Schickowski
Cynthia Schneider

20 Years

Mary Broughton
Nancy Brownmiller
Charles Holloway
Lisa Sitariski

15 Years

Roxanne Cliff
Dawn Griesbach
Leslie Harwell
Jacklyn Justus
Scott Orth
Jerry Pate
Diane Sowell
Elsa Tucker

10 Years

Andre Beamon
Michael Chester
Jennifer Hansen
Minerva Kryniak
David Marks
Jennifer Raash
Deanna Simcakoski-Carleton
Hope Thrun
Schontell Weston



Photo by Amanda Urrea

October 2014

Maixiong Thao
Lead Medical Support Assistant

What does this award mean to you?:

"It is very motivational to know that my dedication and hard work toward providing the best quality care and service to our Veterans did not go unrecognized."



VA VOICES

In November we celebrate Thanksgiving. What are you most thankful for this year?



Roger Ruiz, Medical Media: "My son, that's who I am most thankful for. He keeps me focused."



Lakesha Cathey, nursing assistant: "I am so thankful to have a job here at the Milwaukee VA. I've been smiling all day, and probably will for the next two weeks." *Cathey started at the Milwaukee VA on 11/17.*



Kelsey Iverhouse (left), physical therapist student: "I am very thankful for my family and for almost being done with school."

Maura Kelly, physical therapist student: "The first snowfall, I love the snow. And wool socks, definitely wool socks."



Mary Bowman, medical surgical: "After nearly 24 years, I am thankful for all the Veterans I have met, their stories and friends. Especially Vets on 9 and radiation therapy."