



DEPARTMENT OF CALIFORNIA
VETERANS AFFAIRS AND REHABILITATION
JANUARY 2025 BULLETIN



Happy New Year!

The National Veterans Creative Arts Festival (NVCAF) began in 1981 as two separate competitions through the Department of Veterans Affairs – the Music Festival and VET ARTs. The two programs merged in 1989 and became the National Veterans Creative Arts Festival. In 2000 the American Legion Auxiliary joined with the Department of Veterans Affairs to co-present the National Veterans Creative Arts Festival. Today, across the country VA medical facilities utilize the creative arts as one form of rehabilitative treatment to help veterans recover from and cope with physical and emotional disabilities.

The Festival is the culmination of VA facility competitions in art, creative writing, dance, drama and music for veterans enrolled in the Department of Veterans Affairs national healthcare system. Annual local competitions at VA facilities are generally held between May and August and national winners are announced in January of the following year – so the 2024 winners will be announced in January 2025.

The top winning entries at each local creative arts competition advance to a national judging process and first, second, and third place entries are selected at the national level. The first place Veterans' entries are then invited to attend the National Veterans Creative Arts Festival hosted by a different VA facility each year. All veterans invited to participate at the national level are selected winners of the national competition in which thousands of veterans enter from VA medical facilities across the nation. The 44th National Veterans Creative Arts Festival will be held in Indianapolis, Indiana, May 11-18, 2025.

Many VA facilities are unable to participate in the Veterans Creative Arts Festival (VCAF) because of budget and staffing shortages. This is where the American Legion Auxiliary can help! Through the American Legion Auxiliary Foundation qualifying Units can partner with a VA facility to obtain funding for a local creative arts festival! The Foundation has established criteria for granting VCAF awards to local creative arts festivals. These grants may only be awarded to an ALA tax exempt entity that is in good standing with both the IRS non-profit tax guidelines and ALA compliance standards. Up to \$2,500 in grant money can be awarded by the Foundation for a project period not to exceed twelve months.

The ALA Foundation's VCAF grants **cannot** fund:

- Reimbursements for completed projects.
- Refreshments and/or food items.

- Any VCAF event not affiliated with or partnering with a VA facility participating in the NVCAF
- Any NVCAF expenses.
- Maintenance or construction costs to Festival venue.

For further information on VCAF grants, please visit the Foundation at www.ALAFoundation.org/grants/VCAFgrants. There you will be able to download a sample application and instructions for submission.

Obtaining a VCAF grant for your local VA medical facility would be a most rewarding way to assist veterans in their recovery from physical and emotional trauma.

If you are interested in volunteering for a local VCAF please check with your local VA facility Director to see if the program is offered at their facility. Your call could be the start of a very rewarding partnership!

In closing, a big thank you to the district VAR chairmen who submitted mid-year reports. Your time and effort are very much appreciated.

Looking forward to seeing everyone at DEC in Palmdale!

Susan Baker, VA&R Chair
var@calegionaux.org [Tel:831-324-0191](tel:831-324-0191)

