



**DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS**  
**VA Central California Healthcare System**  
**2615 East Clinton Avenue**  
**Fresno CA 93703-2286**

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CONTACT: Sean Hinds  
Chief, Public Affairs Service  
Phone: 559-351-3246  
E-mail: [sean.hinds@va.gov](mailto:sean.hinds@va.gov)

## **Local Veterans Practice Art as Therapy and Win National Medals**

FRESNO, Calif. – Eighteen local Veterans who practice art as a therapy received medals for their masterpieces in the National Veterans Creative Arts Competition and will be locally recognized on Sept. 9 at 1:30 p.m., during an Award Ceremony at the Community Living Center of the Fresno VA Medical Center, located at 2615 E. Clinton Ave.

The event will celebrate the progress and recovery made through art practicing, as well as the creative achievements of Veterans after disease, disability or life crisis.

Forty Veterans are currently participating in the Creative Arts Program at the Fresno VA Medical Center, including creative writing, dance, drama, music and visual arts. In 2014, as a group or as an individual, they created 60 art compositions and submitted 26 to the national competition. Eight masterpieces from 18 Veterans won medals.

The medal-winner pieces are currently in Milwaukee, Wis., where they will be showcased during the National Veterans Creative Arts Festival, Oct. 27 – Nov. 2.

The pieces are expected to be returned to the Fresno VA Medical Center by mid-November.

One of the gold-winner pieces is the instrumental group performance of the “Star Spangled Banner” by the Swinging Valley Veterans. The group will play during the Award Ceremony.

“The healing effect of Creative Arts is magnificent,” said Toni Lopez, Recreation Therapist at the Fresno VA Medical Center. “When Veterans practice art, they immerse themselves into a peaceful stage of mind where fears, worries and sorrows are naturally treated.”

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