



Chesapeake Shakespeare Company Expands Art Opportunities for Military Community at Walter Reed **Artists-in-Residence Will Teach Acting to Veterans and Their Families:** ***Project is Part of National Endowment for the Arts' Creative Forces***

BALTIMORE (February 21, 2019) – To help U.S. veterans, their families, and their caregivers confront the challenges of injury and the emotions of the war experience, Chesapeake Shakespeare Company will teach acting workshops at the Walter Reed National Military Medical Center in Bethesda, Md.

With a \$50,000 **Creative Forces® “Community Connections” project contract announced today by the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA)**, the Baltimore-based theater for the classics will serve military service members, veterans, their families, and students, staff, and faculty of the medical center.

[Creative Forces®: NEA Military Healing Arts Network](#) is an initiative of the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) in partnership with the U.S. Departments of Defense and Veterans Affairs and state and local arts agencies. Creative Forces began in military and veteran medical facilities, including Walter Reed National Military Medical Center, through the integration of creative arts therapies into treatment plans for military service members with traumatic brain injuries and psychological health conditions. Administrative support for the initiative is provided by Americans for the Arts.

“Serving our military who have served us honorably is a privilege for the National Endowment for the Arts,” said Acting Chairman Mary Anne Carter. “Maryland’s Community Connections project will further our understanding of how the arts improve health and well-being and enrich the lives of our military personnel and veterans around the nation.”

The mission of Chesapeake Shakespeare Company’s project is to improve health and well-being using many of the communication, empathy, and teamwork skills practiced by professional actors. Coached by the theater company’s teaching artists, participants at Walter Reed will work toward performing a full-scale production of a Shakespeare play. Phase One of the program will include theatre exercises such as ensemble-building, performance techniques, language interpretation, and workshops focused on storytelling, improvisation, theatre crafts, playwriting, theatrical design, and theatre history. Phase Two will be a production of “A Midsummer Night’s Dream,” presented at Walter Reed, Chesapeake Shakespeare Company’s theater in Baltimore, and another location to be announced.

Chesapeake Shakespeare Company’s teaching artists at Walter Reed will include Dr. Jaclyn McLoughlin, of Arlington, Va., founder of an award-winning Combat Veterans Shakespeare Company, an applied theater company specializing in work with Shakespeare and injured service personnel. Her specialty is military mental health and social psychology.

“We believe that art and Shakespeare’s plays have the ability to change us for the better,” said Ian Gallanar, Founder and Artistic Director of Chesapeake Shakespeare Company. “We look to create programs that use art (and Shakespeare) in unexpected and effective ways. This program does just that.”

The project at Walter Reed is a major expansion of Chesapeake Shakespeare Company’s acting ensemble workshop for local veterans, [“Olive Branch and Laurel Crown,”](#) overseen by Ron Heneghan, the theater company’s Director of Education. Meeting weekly, participating veterans explore themes such as bravery, fear, and homecoming in Shakespeare’s plays and other texts with scenes of war. The

veterans' ensemble participants then develop and share performance pieces based on their experiences of military life.

The theater company's Baltimore partners include Vet Arts Connect, an initiative of the Institute for Integrative Health, which will collect data to evaluate the program.

"We believe that active engagement in the arts can have a positive impact on the overall health and well-being of our veterans," said JW Rone, Director of Vet Arts Connect. Rone approached the theater company in 2017 with a request for new programs serving veterans. "Chesapeake Shakespeare Company was the first community arts partner Vet Arts Connect selected to include programming designed specifically to support the behavioral health of our local veterans."

Chesapeake Shakespeare Company's project at Walter Reed is one of 11 Community Connections projects supported across the country, representing the next phase of Creative Forces.

About Creative Forces

Creative Forces® serves the special needs of military patients and veterans with traumatic brain injury and psychological health conditions, as well as their families and caregivers. Administrative support for the initiative is provided by Americans for the Arts. In addition, Creative Forces is investing in [research](#) on the impacts and benefits—physical, emotional, economic—of these innovative treatment methods. Visit the NEA's [website](#) for published research as well as the more information on the [clinical research strategic framework and five-year agenda](#). Creative Forces® is a registered trademark of the National Endowment for the Arts.

About Chesapeake Shakespeare Company

[Chesapeake Shakespeare Company](#) was founded in 2002 with a mission to create innovative performance and education programs that bring to life the works of William Shakespeare and other classic playwrights. It is a member of the international Shakespeare Theatre Association and an affiliate partner of the Folger Shakespeare Library. Chesapeake Shakespeare Company is committed to making performing arts more accessible to the community by intensifying the connection between audiences, artists, and some of the greatest works of theater ever written.

About Vet Arts Connect/The Institute for Integrative Health

[Vet Arts Connect](#) is a program that supports the health and well-being of Maryland military veterans by connecting them with arts and nature experiences. The program is an active part of the [Institute for Integrative Health](#), a health-centered nonprofit and think-tank founded in 2007, which builds healthier communities by asking—and answering—questions that examine the biological, behavioral, and societal factors that impact health and wellness on a daily basis. In addition to supporting a team of researchers (TIIH Scholars and Fellows) who explores the science of integrative health, the Institute creates and tests programs with the goal of improving the health and wellness of the communities they engage.

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