

Creative Forces Community Engagement Grants 2023 Recipients

Below are the recipients of the second round of Creative Forces Community Engagement Grants for projects beginning on or after July 1, 2023. Each project includes an organization with a history of creative or artistic programming and one or more partners. In order to provide opportunities for new projects to begin and established programming to expand, there are two tiers of grants:

Emerging: matching grants of up to \$10,000 for one-year projects

Advanced: matching grants of \$10,000–\$25,000 for one-year projects or up to \$50,000 for two-year projects

Anchorage Concert Association, Anchorage, Alaska

Project: The Healing Power of Music: Community Cafe

Grant Amount and Tier: \$10,000, Emerging

Project Partner: Connect Vets

Anchorage Concert Association's The Healing Power of Music: Community Cafe project seeks to bridge the gap between military service members, veterans, and the greater arts sector. The monthly events bring together local artists, veterans, and active-duty service members experiencing traumatic brain injuries (TBI) and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), along with their families and caregivers, to explore healing through songwriting and music performance. As Alaska has the nation's highest per capita population of veterans, and between 12-15% have been diagnosed with PTSD, ACA's project is an essential resource for the community. It creates sober and creative activities for veterans in recovery and provides a valuable opportunity for participants to connect with the greater arts community. The grant period runs from July 2023 to June 2024.

Armed Services Arts Partnership, Alexandria, Virginia

Project: ASAP Hampton Roads Chapter

Grant Amount and Tier: \$50,000, Advanced, Two-Year

Project Partner: Virginia Stage Company

Armed Services Arts Partnership (ASAP) will offer evidence-based community arts programming to 200 veterans in Hampton Roads, Virginia, a major military-affiliated population center. This program will foster creative communities where veterans build skills and improve their well-being through the arts. Programming will include seven-week immersive classes, workshops, and frequent performances in various art forms. These programs provide participants with an outlet for creative expression, skill development, and camaraderie in a supportive environment. ASAP's program model aims to significantly and sustainably improve veterans' social connectedness, resilience, and self-esteem through creative expression. Ultimately, veterans can develop a sense of belonging, learn new skills, and improve their well-being through the arts. The grant period runs from September 2023 to August 2025.

Art for the Journey, Midlothian, Virginia**Project:** Veterans Art Program**Grant Amount and Tier:** \$15,000, Advanced, One-Year**Project Partner:** Richmond VA Medical Center

Art for the Journey's Veterans Art Program provides monthly art-making experiences for veterans with service-related disabilities and PTSD/polytrauma at the Richmond VA Medical Center, St. Francis Home, and other appropriate community locations. Veterans create beautiful art to take home and exhibit annually in the community. Projects include a range of media, from clay-work and memorial boxes to acrylic pour projects and artmaking with watercolor, acrylic, pencil, and oil pastel. Led by a team of artists and volunteers, the program aims to create a positive communal environment characterized by personal engagement, friendship, and well-being. The program allows veterans to experience a higher quality of life and greater well-being. The grant period runs from July 2023 through June 2024.

Arts Center Association, Inc., dba Morean Arts Center, St. Petersburg, Florida**Project:** Operation: Art of Valor**Grant Amount and Tier:** \$25,000, Advanced, One-Year**Project Partner:** James A. Haley Veterans' Hospital

Arts Center Association's Operation: Art of Valor glassblowing program provides weekly sessions of arts instruction for veterans and their families. With a six-part curriculum, beginning and advanced cohorts allow participants to become familiar with glassblowing techniques and create unique glass pieces. The program is open to active-duty service members, National Guard or reserve members, veterans, families, and caregivers. The Morean Arts Center Hot Shop is the venue for this program, which has been running since 2018. The program's primary partner, James A. Haley Veterans' Hospital, connects interested veterans transitioning from clinical care into the community. Running from July 2023 through June 2024, this program offers a creative outlet for veterans and aims to contribute to their overall well-being.

ArtsQuest, Bethlehem, Pennsylvania**Project:** In Service of Empowerment: The Artistry of Women Veterans**Grant Amount and Tier:** \$10,000, Emerging**Project Partner:** Women Veterans Empowered & Thriving

In Service of Empowerment: The Artistry of Women Veterans is a collaboration between ArtsQuest and Women Veterans Empowered & Thriving (WVE&T) to promote the artwork of women veterans and create awareness about the issues they face. The project offers multidisciplinary arts engagement projects such as film screenings, spoken word performances, artwork exhibitions, and education events for local students. The goal is to foster healthy camaraderie, creativity, and community among women veterans, their families, and communities. Programs will run from July 2023 to June 2024 and occur at the ArtsQuest Center and online to ensure inclusivity.

BLIXT Locally Grown, Lincoln, Nebraska**Project:** Not Too Far Distant**Grant Amount and Tier:** \$34,000, Advanced, Two-Year**Project Partner:** History Nebraska

BLIXT Locally Grown's Not Too Far Distant project aims to build connections and strengthen relationships between Nebraska's veterans, active-duty military personnel, families, and communities through live theater performances, community engagement, and education. Not Too Far Distant is a play that tells the story of Clarence Williams, a Nebraska veteran, and those who loved and cared for him. The play, written by Becky Boesen, honors the experiences of American soldiers and emphasizes the responsibility we all share in creating a brighter future. The play also provides multiple entry points for veterans and non-veterans, resonating with participants from all walks of life, various generations, and urban and rural communities. The project targets rural areas where access to artworks and community engagement activities may be limited. The grant period runs from July 2023 through June 2025.

Caregivers on the Homefront, Inc., Kansas City, Missouri**Project:** Art on the Homefront**Grant Amount and Tier:** \$13,770, Advanced, One-Year**Project Partner:** Elsa's Eclectic Home & Studio

Caregivers on the Homefront's Art on the Homefront project will provide art workshops to support the mental health and wellness of military and veteran family caregivers and their children. This project aims to promote social connectedness and reduce isolation, a common factor in depression and anxiety among veterans and their families. The participants will create art together, forming bonds with others in similar situations, and gain resilience through each other's stories of hope. The workshops will be led by a local art teacher and available in person and virtually. This program will provide a space where participants can feel safe and not judged while reducing anxiety through the calming effects of art expression. The project will run from July 2023 to June 2024 in Kansas City, Missouri, at no cost to the participants.

Center for Traditional Music and Dance, New York, New York**Project:** Song Stories: West African Drumming as a Pathway towards Healing Among Bronx Veterans**Grant Amount and Tier:** \$50,000, Advanced, Two-Year**Project Partner:** The Resilience & Wellness Center at the James J. Peters VA Medical Center

The Center for Traditional Music and Dance's Song Stories project aims to provide U.S. military veterans in the Bronx with a pathway to healing and connectivity through West African music and drums. Led by Guinean artist Sidiki Conde, the project will consist of two interconnected workshop series held at the James J. Peters VA Medical Center and the Bronx Music Heritage Center. Participants will tell their individual stories through music, movement, and rhythm, creating a space for emotional expression and social connectivity. The program also aims to increase access and support for VA services and community organizations. Running from September 2023 - June 2025, the program offers a supportive environment for participants to take healthy risks and connect with their community.

Cohesion Dance Project, Inc., Helena, Montana**Project:** Creative Movement Engagement Program**Grant Amount and Tier:** \$10,000, Emerging**Project Partner:** VA Montana Healthcare System, Recreation and Creative Arts Therapies

The Cohesion Dance Project's Creative Movement Engagement Program will introduce military-connected individuals and families in Helena, Montana, to the healing and enriching qualities of movement, dance, and art creation. Six-week class sessions incorporate a variety of art mediums, such as painting, creative writing, poetry, and photography. The pilot program invites a broad group of participants to evaluate the potential success of an expanded program across the state through in-person and virtual engagement. The program aims to provide an outlet for military-connected individuals to engage with others in similar situations, improve physical activity, and connect with their bodies physically, emotionally, and mentally in a supportive environment. The project period runs from July 2023 - August 2024.

Community Radio Project DBA KSJD Radio, Cortez, Colorado**Project:** The Warrior Narratives**Grant Amount and Tier:** \$10,000, Emerging**Project Partner:** Montezuma County Veteran Services

The Community Radio Project's Warrior Narratives initiative is a storytelling program that gathers and shares veterans' experiences and those of their families. Through audio recording and digital publishing, these personal stories will be documented and distributed nationwide via platforms such as Google, Apple, and Spotify. The program aims to give veterans and their families a platform to share their stories, highlighting the importance of understanding and recognizing their experiences. Through this initiative, the Community Radio Project hopes to connect communities, celebrate the service of veterans and their families, and offer them a platform to share their stories with a broader audience. The program runs from July 2023 - June 2024 in Cortez, Colorado.

COSACOSA art at large, Inc., Philadelphia, Pennsylvania**Project:** Serving Justice**Grant Amount and Tier:** \$46,000, Advanced, Two-Year**Project Partners:** Veterans Empowerment Center (VEC),
Veterans Multi-Service Center (VMC)/Women Veterans Center (WVC)

COSACOSA's Serving Justice project offers multidisciplinary art workshops for veterans in Philadelphia in partnership with the Veterans Empowerment Center (VEC) and Veterans Multi-Service Center (VMC). Through community-building activities, veterans can explore their creativity, collaborate with peers, and share their stories through various art forms. The project seeks to address the psychosocial impacts of military service by providing an alternative means of communication and expression, reducing stress, and increasing resilience. Veterans build positive, meaningful relationships, empower each other, and work together to bridge the military/civilian divide. Each sets an "empowerment goal" and receives regular support from peers, project artists, and partner organization staff to achieve their desired outcomes. The project runs from July 2023 - June 2025.

Dancing Well: The Soldier Project, Inc., Louisville, Kentucky**Project:** Dance and Community**Grant Amount and Tier:** \$25,000, Advanced, One-Year**Project Partner:** Louisville Country Dancers

Dancing Well's Dance and Community provides traditional dance, live music, and community to veterans, families, and loved ones in Louisville, Kentucky. The program welcomes any veteran with PTSD or brain injury and provides a rare community where everyone dances together, regardless of background or beliefs. The program aims to reduce tendencies to isolate, improve feelings of connectedness, and improve mood and outlook on the future among veterans with PTSD. The grant will strengthen partnerships and collaborations and increase community awareness of the value of the arts to veterans. The program runs from July 2023 - June 2024.

Donna Lexa Community Art Centers, Waukesha, Wisconsin**Project:** Veteran Open Studio**Grant Amount and Tier:** \$10,000, Emerging**Project Partner:** Department of Veteran Affairs Great Lakes Medical System

The Donna Lexa Community Art Centers' Veteran Open Studio program in Waukesha, Wisconsin, will provide a safe and welcoming space for veterans to express themselves through arts and crafts. The program is open to any veterans who wish to immerse themselves in the creative process for self-expression and to develop their creativity. The project aims to support veteran community reintegration and provide veterans access to art materials, supplies, and a space to create. The Donna Lexa Community Art Centers is committed to serving the needs of veterans at the Milwaukee Veterans Administration by fostering an environment of creativity and self-expression. Participants can enhance their resilience, independence, and ability through the physical aspects of artmaking. The program runs from July 2023 - June 2024.

Des Moines Art Center, Des Moines, Iowa**Project:** Veterans Access Programs**Grant Amount and Tier:** \$10,000, Emerging**Project Partner:** VA Central Iowa Health Care

Des Moines Art Center's Veterans Access Programs will provide formal art education and classes by partnering with a residential care facility for veterans and the Des Moines VA. Through individual workshops, weekly classes, and semester-long sessions, the Center's teaching artists will offer courses tailored to the desired media and art instruction outcomes identified by the participants. Ultimately, the program will fulfill veterans' expressed desire for an outlet for self-expression while addressing the isolation of veterans and the need for formal art opportunities outside of the Des Moines VA. The program runs from July 2023 - June 2024.

Footprints, Inc., Kansas City, Missouri**Project:** Arts Accessibility for Veterans**Grant Amount and Tier:** \$10,000, Emerging**Project Partner:** Help Heal Veterans

Heroes Home Gate will develop and implement 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 is designed to serve approximately 100 veterans annually, including current residents and alums, with each veteran's stay varying from a few weeks to several months. The program aims to offer a variety of outlets for artistic expression, engagement, skill-building, and support recovery and social reintegration. The program will allow veterans to engage in creative expression to help support their successful reintegration into civilian life. The program runs from July 2023 - June 2024.

Geffen Playhouse, Inc., Los Angeles, California**Project:** Veterans Writing & Performance Project**Grant Amount and Tier:** \$24,270, Advanced, One-Year**Project Partner:** Veterans in Media & Entertainment

Geffen Playhouse's Veterans Writing & Performance Project is an initiative that provides an opportunity for military veterans of all ages, branches, and backgrounds in Los Angeles, California, to create original, personal monologues and share their work in a public performance. Veterans can access quality learning with theater arts professionals, writers, and teaching artists through this workshop. They also develop a sense of reintegration with the community as they educate audiences about their experiences. The project aims to address the need for connection, artistic expression, and community, allowing participants to build strength, resiliency, support, self-expression, and fellowship. Veterans from diverse cultural backgrounds and different generations are selected to create a well-rounded artistic veterans' community. This project provides a highly impactful theater-making experience that supports participants' reintegration with the community and helps them process trauma. The program will take place July 2023 - August 2024.

Joe Goode Performance Group, San Francisco, California**Project:** The Resilience Project**Grant Amount and Tier:** \$25,000, Advanced, One-Year**Project Partner:** San Francisco VAMC - Downtown Clinic

The Resilience Project by Joe Goode Performance Group aims to promote mind-body connection through movement and story-sharing classes for Bay Area veterans. The ongoing Movement for Humans classes, open to all interested veterans, VA social workers, and staff, will be hosted at the SF Downtown Veterans Clinic and partnering veteran housing locations. Additionally, 15-minute Movement for Humans sessions will be offered online for Northern California VA staff members. The classes are designed to be adaptable for all bodies and levels of mobility and will focus on promoting well-being through easeful movement and embodied expressivity. The program aims to provide critical social networks and reconnection with comprehensive services available at the center for veterans who experienced a loss of support networks during the pandemic. The program runs from July 2023 - June 2024.

Kentucky Shakespeare, Louisville, Kentucky**Project:** Shakespeare with Veterans Program**Grant Amount and Tier:** \$7,500, Emerging**Project Partner:** US Veterans Outreach Center

Kentucky Shakespeare's Shakespeare with Veterans Program brings together veterans from all branches and dates of service for weekly discussion groups and theatre arts performance ensembles. Through Shakespeare's stories and human truths, participants talk about their re-entry into civilian society and experience with PTSD and moral injury, supporting each other while helping educate civilians and destigmatize the military. The program allows anyone who walks in the door to let their guard down and feel normal for a few hours each week, an essential part of their healing and re-entry process. The meetings and performances are free of charge, and the program is designed to support the needs of veterans as they navigate their re-entry into civilian society. The program runs from July 2023 - June 2024.

Literary Cleveland, Cleveland, Ohio**Project:** Veterans' Voices**Grant Amount and Tier:** \$7,500, Emerging**Project Partner:** VA Northeast Ohio Healthcare System

Literary Cleveland's Veterans' Voices program offers free creative writing workshops to military service members and veterans in Northeast Ohio. These poetry, fiction, and creative nonfiction classes allow participants to express their creativity, develop writing skills, and connect with other service members. The program culminates in publishing an anthology of the participants' writing, which will be available to the public and distributed throughout the community. The program runs from July 2023 - June 2024.

Maryland Hall for the Creative Arts, Inc., Annapolis, Maryland**Project:** Veterans Glass Studio**Grant Amount and Tier:** \$10,000, Emerging**Project Partner:** n/a

Maryland Hall for the Creative Arts will offer the Veterans Glass Studio, a free workshop for veterans and military families to learn the art of glass fusing and explore artistic expression in a safe and supportive environment. The workshop will be taught by U.S. Army veteran Clare Shepherd, who learned to process trauma through this art form. Participants will learn about glass fusing and creating unique pieces during the workshop. The program is open to military and military-connected families and individuals to promote artistic expression for anyone in the community who has experienced military life and would benefit from the project's intended outcomes. The Veterans Glass Studio will allow participants to process their experiences, express their creativity, and build relationships with others who understand their experiences. The program runs from July 2023 - June 2024.

Museum of Glass, Tacoma, Washington**Project:** Hot Shop Heroes**Grant Amount and Tier:** \$50,000, Advanced, Two-Year**Project Partner:** n/a

The Museum of Glass Hot Shop Heroes program provides free glassblowing classes to active duty, reserve, and veteran service members diagnosed with TBI and PTSD in Tacoma, Washington. Shaping hot glass at the end of a pipe helps participants concentrate on the task, release the burden of worry and fear, and build a new sense of well-being and freedom. Hot Shop Heroes inspires and heals participants through the hands-on creation of artwork. Through the team environment, participants become more open to the joy of creating art, coping with anxiety, and healthily interacting with others. The program runs from July 2023 - June 2025.

Open Studio Project, Inc., Evanston, Illinois**Project:** Art & Wellness Program for Veterans & Summer Camp for Families of Veterans**Grant Amount and Tier:** \$10,000, Emerging**Project Partner:** Evanston Vet Center

Open Studio Project's Art & Wellness Program for Veterans & Summer Camp for Families of Veterans is a visual arts and reflection program designed for veterans and their families. The program will be offered in two parts, a 12-week workshop series for veterans and a two-week half-day camp for elementary-aged children. Through art-making and personal reflection, participants will explore their emotions, process trauma, and address unique experiences faced by military families. The project recognizes the long-term emotional impact of military service on veterans and their families and aims to offer an art-based approach to support their healing and reintegration. The project will partner with local veterans and military organizations and will primarily work with Evanston Vet Center in Evanston, Illinois, to serve participants who live locally. The program will take place from July 2023 - June 2024.

Outside the Lens, San Diego, California**Project:** Cameras in Communities: Our Family, Our Story**Grant Amount and Tier:** \$50,000, Advanced, Two-Year**Project Partner:** USO San Diego

Outside the Lens' intergenerational photography program, Cameras in Communities: Our Family, Our Story, will partner with military-connected families in San Diego to explore digital storytelling and documentary photography. This free program culminates in a public exhibition of participants' media art. The program recognizes the emotional impact of military life on families and is committed to providing culturally relevant, inclusive, and accessible programming that meets the needs of its participants. Designed with input from the military community and in partnership with organizations such as USO San Diego, the program brings decades of research and experience working with veterans and military families. Running from July 2023 - June 2025, the program offers a safe and transformative space for participants to connect, share stories, and make art, providing opportunities for healing and growth.

Path with Art, Seattle, Washington**Project:** Veterans Path with Art**Grant Amount and Tier:** \$40,000, Advanced, Two-Year**Project Partner:** Southern Crescent Veteran Services, Inc.

Veterans Path with Art is a year-round, trauma-informed multidisciplinary arts program that provides free online and in-person classes, workshops, choir, art kits, and community-building for veterans, families, caregivers, and allies in Seattle, Washington. The project creates a safe and non-judgmental space for participants to explore the transformative power of the arts, facilitating individual well-being and community solidarity. Recognizing the disproportionate impact of homelessness on veterans, the program aims to provide community-based, veterans-helping-veterans programming through cross-sector partnerships. Through its veteran-cohort programming, Path with Art is a low-barrier entry point for veterans to engage in arts, which is especially valuable for those experiencing a disability. Path with Art is dedicated to utilizing the transformational power of art to support healing among these underserved populations. The program runs from July 2023 - June 2025.

Piece by Piece, Los Angeles, California**Project:** Piece by Piece**Grant Amount and Tier:** \$10,000, Emerging**Project Partner:** Village for Vets

Piece by Piece is a Los Angeles, California, program that allows veterans to explore mosaic art, build community, and improve their well-being through creative expression. The program offers workshops twice a month, where participants can create a piece of art for an exhibition that serves as the program's culmination. Piece by Piece recognizes the impact of isolation, trauma, and mental health issues on veterans and seeks to address these issues through the healing lens of mosaic art. By providing a welcoming and supportive environment for veterans to engage in creative expression, the program aims to promote social connections and improve mental wellness. Piece by Piece is committed to supporting veterans through their artistic journey and providing a unique outlet to explore their creativity. The program runs from July 2023 - June 2024.

Resounding Joy Inc., San Diego, California**Project:** Sounds of Service**Grant Amount and Tier:** \$10,000, Emerging**Project Partner:** Bespoke Underground LLC

Resounding Joy's Sounds of Service program provides the military-connected community in San Diego with access to music arts engagement. The program aims to improve participants' quality of life and resiliency through various trauma-informed music programs that are enhanced by the expertise of Board-Certified music therapists. Sounds of Service offers arts instruction, performance opportunities, and individualized support to multiple participants, including service members, veterans, families, and caregivers. The program seeks to address various challenges this community faces, including injuries, difficulty transitioning to civilian life, and the challenges of caregiving. Through the power of music, Resounding Joy strengthens community connections, improves well-being, and facilitates the transition to civilian life for military-connected individuals in San Diego, California. The program runs from July 2023 - June 2024.

Seattle Rep, Seattle, Washington**Project:** Public Works**Grant Amount and Tier:** \$10,000, Emerging**Project Partner:** Compass Housing Alliance: Renton Veterans Center

In partnership with Renton Veterans Center, Seattle Rep's Public Works program provides year-round free theater classes, workshops, and events to local veterans, families, and partners. The program aims to empower participants by building confidence and resilience while celebrating their creativity. For veterans with PTSD and other mental health conditions, Public Works is a valuable way to increase confidence, build empathy, and foster personal agency. By participating in artmaking activities in a community setting, veterans can develop a sense of resilience, making it easier to reintegrate into civilian life. The program runs from July 2023 - June 2024.

Tacoma Arts Live, Tacoma, Washington**Project:** Strengthening Social Emotional Learning through the Arts**Grant Amount and Tier:** \$50,000, Advanced, Two-Year**Project Partner:** Exceptional Family Member Program

Tacoma Arts Live's Strengthening Social Emotional Learning through the Arts project aims to provide military personnel, families, and caregivers with arts-integrated social-emotional learning and relationship-building opportunities. Through the LENS Project (Learn Empathy, Negotiation, and Sense of Self) and Restorative Practices, participants will benefit from proven arts workshops that restore social, creative, and emotional frameworks. This project addresses the practical barriers of partnering with the military and will help boost the well-being and quality of life of the military community in Tacoma, Washington. The project runs from July 2023 - June 2025.

The Theatre Lab, Inc., Washington, DC**Project:** Healing and Community Building for Military-Connected Individuals**Grant Amount and Tier:** \$44,000, Advanced, Two-Year**Project Partner:** Camp Brown Bear

The Theatre Lab's Healing and Community Building for Military-Connected Individuals project aims to provide women veterans and families grieving the loss of a military loved one access to healing, community-building, and the empowering benefits of participation in the arts through Life Stories workshops. The workshops will use acting, improvisation, and storytelling techniques to help participants develop and perform original dramatic works drawing from their lived experiences, offering them an opportunity to reframe their narratives with support from a safe community of peers. The project will be conducted in partnership with Camp Brown Bear and TAPS, with the former providing access to women veterans and the latter addressing the specific needs of families, parents, and active-duty women survivors of a lost spouse. Based in the DC area, the project runs from July 2023 - June 2025.

Theater and Arts Foundation of San Diego County, San Diego, California**Project:** Military Engagement Initiative**Grant Amount and Tier:** \$50,000, Advanced, Two-Year**Project Partner:** n/a

The La Jolla Playhouse's Military Engagement Initiative provides service members, veterans, and their families in San Diego access to free-of-charge arts activities that foster self-expression, healing, and quality time with loved ones. Programs include the Veterans Playwriting Workshop, Military Nights Out, Military Families at WOW, and arts learning programs for children in military families. The Playhouse's Military Engagement Initiative recognizes the effectiveness of the skills in reducing the impact of PTSD and other trauma-related injuries, strengthening relationships between service members and their families, and providing alternative methods for service members to confront challenges faced while serving. Through the Military Engagement Initiative, the Playhouse is actively expanding the military community's access to and participation in the arts. The initiative runs from July 2023 - June 2024.

University of Alabama at Birmingham, Birmingham, Alabama**Project:** Creative Arts for Alabama Veterans**Grant Amount and Tier:** \$10,000, Emerging**Project Partner:** Department of Veterans Affairs - Birmingham VA Healthcare System

The University of Alabama at Birmingham's Creative Arts for Alabama Veterans project offers virtual arts workshops to at least four veterans groups through the Birmingham VA. Veterans can participate in any of the four ten-week workshops, covering creative writing, visual arts, mindful movement, theater, and reflective visual artmaking with compassionate listening. The workshops aim to reduce anxiety and perceived pain, improve self-confidence, provide a sense of control and autonomy, and create space for social connection, aligning with the goals of the Whole Health program. The program is open to all veterans receiving services from the Birmingham VA and runs from July 2023 to June 2024.

University of Nevada - Reno, Reno, Nevada**Project:** An Iliad: Activating Veteran Histories**Grant Amount and Tier:** \$9,993, Emerging**Project Partner:** n/a

An Iliad: Activating Veteran Histories is a project that brings veterans into a dialogue about their wartime experiences through the prism of a living, breathing epic war poem. Veterans in communities across the American West watch a modern adaptation of Homer's The Iliad, discuss the play, and reflect on their time in the armed forces. Then, inspired by the performance and discussion, the veterans write monologues that fuse personal experience, canonical literature, and humanistic expression. The project will occur in California, Arizona, and Oregon from July 2023 to December 2023.

Virginia Beach Art Center, Virginia Beach, Virginia**Project:** Connecting with Clay**Grant Amount and Tier:** \$10,000, Emerging**Project Partner:** Armed Services YMCA of Hampton Roads

Virginia Beach Art Center's Connecting with Clay project provides active-duty service members, reservists, guardsmen, veterans, and their families a creative outlet through clay. Through introductory classes, participants will learn how to create their pieces using hand-building techniques or the pottery wheel. The project aims to provide a space to connect with others, share experiences, and build camaraderie while exploring self-expression. The project's focus on creativity allows participants to relieve stress and build community, promoting wellness and healing through the arts. The program runs from July 2023 - June 2024 in Virginia Beach, Virginia.

West Nebraska Arts Center, Scottsbluff, Nebraska**Project:** Veterans Art Project**Grant Amount and Tier:** \$7,250, Emerging**Project Partner:** Veterans and Military Families Emergency Relief Organization

The West Nebraska Arts Center will provide a year-long series of art instruction classes for veterans, their families, and caregivers. The program will offer instruction in various disciplines, such as drawing, painting, pottery, photography, metalsmithing, and writing. The program aims to help veterans and their families reconnect through creative expression and form bonds with fellow veterans. The program allows participants to express themselves meaningfully, fosters a sense of community, and provides a space to explore their creativity. It will also provide support to those who may be struggling with daily life after returning from active duty. The program runs from July 2023 - June 2024 in Scottsbluff, Nebraska.