

Miami **Veteran**

Miami VA Healthcare System
Summer 2012





Honor to Serve

It is an honor for me to return to the Miami VA Healthcare System. I am looking forward to guiding the Miami VA through the unique challenges we face as a complex tertiary care academic and research facility. I am reminded every day that "Freedom is not Free" when I walk our halls, and it is the ideals of honor, service and sacrifice that I wish to emphasize as foundations of our way forward to organizational excellence.

We have the best jobs in healthcare because of our unique mission to provide exceptional health care to America's Veterans. We constantly strive to achieve that mission under Secretary Shinseki's three guiding principles

We are people-centric with our care focused around the needs of Veterans and their caregivers. Our culture is based on the values of Integrity, Commitment, Advocacy, Respect and Excellence. Our employees and volunteers are this organizations greatest asset, and with the help of Veteran Service Organizations, congressional offices, our academic affiliates and community partners, we are proud to provide the healthcare services our Veterans have earned at a level they deserve.

We are results driven and as stated by the Secretary we will be measured by our accomplishments not our promises. I am ready, willing and able to work hard with all staff to ensure that we achieve and sustain the high level of performance that supports exceptional health care for our Veterans.

We are forward looking and seek out opportunities to perform effectively, efficiently, smarter with available resources and with a high degree of patient and staff satisfaction. This often means doing things differently and navigating change effectively. The VA is in the midst of transformational change and so is the Miami VA Healthcare System.

Together we will overcome our challenges that weigh on the organization and move the organization forward to honor America's Veterans,

Paul M Russo

Paul M. Russo, MSHA, FACHE, RD
Director, Miami VA Healthcare System

MVAHS

MIAMI VA HEALTHCARE SYSTEM
PROUD TO SERVE VETERANS
★★★★★

Our mission is to honor America's Veterans by providing exceptional health care that improves their health and well-being.

Our vision is to continue to be the benchmark of excellence and value in health care and benefits by providing exemplary services that are both patient-centered and evidence-based.

This care will be delivered by engaged, collaborative teams in an integrated environment that supports learning, discovery, and continuous improvement. It will emphasize prevention, population, health, and contribute to the Nation's well-being through education, research, and service in national emergencies.

For more information about the Miami VA Healthcare System, visit www.miami.va.gov.

This publication is presented by the Miami VA Healthcare System. For more information please contact Shane Suzuki, Public Affairs Officer, shane.suzuki@va.gov.



- **Team Spirit.** Harvey Buchholz and Razz the service dog sport team pride with matching outfits.
- **Pumped Up.** Donald Thomas and Jose Prado show their excitement for the Richmond games.

Rally the Troops!

Every year, hundreds of Veterans participate in VA sponsored events around the country highlighting their athletic drive and devotion to overcoming injury. The biggest of these events, the National VA Wheelchair Games, was hosted in Richmond, VA this year and the Miami VA Healthcare System sent a team to participate in a number of events such as archery, track and field and even bowling!

Before leaving Miami, a pep rally was held at the Miami VA to celebrate their accomplishments and highlight those who had participated in the April Winter Sports Clinic in Colorado.

"We wanted to share their accomplishments with the medical center," said Brooke Westmoreland, Occupational Therapist with the Spinal Cord Injury Unit. "These Veterans have overcome so much and they work so hard to compete in these events, it's a great chance to share their stories and hopefully inspire other Veterans in their personal battles to overcome their injuries."

The local chapters of the Paralyzed Veterans of America also held a raffle to raise money to send Veterans to these events, with the winner receiving an iPod Shuffle.

"The Veterans have to pay their own way to the games, although we do work with community partners like the PVA to help defray the costs" said Westmoreland. "We are always looking for ways to get the word out and help ensure our Veterans have the chance to participate in these events."

The next VA event is the annual Summer Sports Clinic in San Diego Sept. 16-21.

Visit www.summersportsclinic.va.gov to learn more about the clinic and to find photos of the Miami VA team at past events!



● **The Winner Is.** Maria Lacayo with the Red Cross facilitates the raffle benefiting participants.



● **Motivation.** Marty Ball shares inspiring words with Vets.



● **Shout Out.** Rolando Quintero and all participants were given cheers and shouts as they were presented to the crowd.



WALK + ROLL

Thank you to the more than 300 Veterans, staff and volunteers who made the 2012 VA2k walk and roll an overwhelming success!

Although the weather forced us inside, it was still an honor to have City of Miami Mayor Tomás Regalado, Miami Dade Medical College President Dr. Armando Ferrer and former acting Director Cheri Szabo lead us through the halls raising awareness of Veteran homelessness!

Most of all, thank you to everyone who donated goods to the Miami VA homeless program. More than \$2350 of items were donated that will be put to good use by Veterans and their families throughout South Florida!



Vets Supporting Vets. Joseph Delvecchio and Laquantis Morton support the cause.



Proud Staff. Denis Hurtado, Vanessa Zulon, and Yvette Sawyers-Haughton joined the walk to bring awareness.



MOVE! Success Story

“It started when my doctor told me that he was putting me in MOVE!” said Aqeelah As-Salaam. “I weighed 220 on my home scale and my health was a mess – he was insistent that I make some lifestyle changes, and I was ready for that message – I knew that I needed to do it”.

As-Salaam attended the Broward MOVE! Introductory session October 2009, began the 10-week program January 2010 and by May had lost 35 pounds! She then continued her weight management/lifestyle change program in the MOVE! Metabolic Clinic where she received a comprehensive metabolic evaluation, review of her medications, insight into weight-related health issues and received information on the risks and benefits of weight loss medications.

After following the medication protocol and a low-fat nutrition plan for 6 months, she lost an additional 33 pounds. This success motivated As-Salaam to continue working toward her 140-lbs target weight by setting realistic weight loss goals of “10 pounds at a time” to avoid being overwhelmed.

In February 2011, barely a year after she started, As-Salaam reached her target weight and “lost a few extra pounds to give me some cushion.” She now maintains her weight with healthy eating habits and exercise, walking two miles a day, five times a week.

“I don’t always want to walk – I have pain issues like everyone else – but I just have to do it, it is part of honoring my body and my health,” she explained. She also attends follow-up sessions at the Metabolic Clinic to monitor weight and weight-related conditions. As-Salaam enjoys the fruits of her efforts, explaining that she is no longer limited to shopping for clothes in the larger plus sizes. She also reports feeling better, with more energy and improved physical functioning – “I still have pain, but it is easier to manage without the excess weight.”

Congratulation Aqeelah As-Salaam on your weight-loss success and thank you for your willingness to share your experience and success with other Veterans. To learn about the MOVE! program, speak with your primary care provider.

Recognizing Recovery

Thank you for serving. That simple phrase is what the PTSD Memorial by the flag pole across from the main lobby of the Miami VA represents. A simple phrase said on too few occasions until a few Veterans from the Miami VA PTSD unit decided to do something about it.

First erected in 2003 by Veterans attending the residential program, the memorial had fallen into disrepair. When Zuleika Smith, Recreational Therapist in the PTSD Unit, heard of the memorial, she found an overgrown palm tree and cigarette butts all over the place. She took a couple of pictures and showed it to the residents of the unit. Dishearten by how it looked, it was agreed that something had to be done to renew this meaningful memorial.

“I am elated to have worked with such a motivated group of individuals who were willing to make a statement in regards to their memorial. It helps signify the sacrifices they have made for our country and continue to deal with on a daily basis,” said Zuleika. Being that June is PTSD Awareness Month this is a great way to get people’s attention that PTSD wounds are not always visible. “Many do not know that this memorial area exists, I am hopeful that by refurbishing the area it will bring more attention and respect to the space that has been neglected in the past.”

The restoration project began in February 2012, spearhead by Marine Corps Veteran John Patton and Army Veteran Shelton Ferguson. While on weekend passes from the residential program, they would go home and come back with items needed to beautify the memorial. Service decals for each branch were ordered, weeds were



Remembering Those Who Served . Shelton Ferguson and John Patton visit the memorial site to keep it clean.

pulled and, the post was painted red to match the “River of Red” plaque that marks the memorial.

John stated that he hopes that future residents of the PTSD unit will keep it up.

“Whenever I have an appointment I stop by there to make sure that it is being kept up,” he said. The restoration was completed in April 2012.

For the Veterans recovering in the Miami VA PTSD unit, this memorial is a way of embracing the military’s invisible wounds while still giving back to their fellow brothers and sisters in arms. Done by a few, but for all.



Veterans Find Peace Among

the Waves

“ I find the great thing in this world is not so much where we stand, as in what direction we are moving - we must sail sometimes with the wind and sometimes against it - but we must sail, and not drift, nor lie at anchor. ”

- Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr.

The Ocean. It's part of what makes South Florida so special. The calm waters of Miami's Biscayne Bay, the coral reefs near the Keys, or the beautiful beaches near Fort Lauderdale all provide millions of visitors the opportunity for relaxation and recreation each year.

For Veterans involved with Veterans Ocean Adventures, the ocean is also a place to test your limits, learn new skills or just find peace among the waves. Led by Army Veteran Branson Rector, this non-profit organization is devoted to helping disabled Veterans discover the healing power of the water through sailing, diving, and other water activities.

For more information about Veterans Ocean Adventures, visit www.vetssailing.org



Learning the Ropes. A Veteran learns the ins and outs on how to control the sail.

Relaxing Atmosphere. Veterans and their loved ones also get to enjoy the sun rays and warm winds of the ocean.



Staying on the Right Path

There is a difference between special treatment and the right treatment. For some Veterans struggling to transition to civilian life, a few bad choices can often lead to a confrontations with the police and criminal justice system.

Many times, these bad choices are related to drug and alcohol abuse, or even untreated mental health issues. Although millions of Veterans do receive care at their local VA medical center, some unfortunately don't receive the care they need and end up abusing substances while attempting to self-medicate their issues away.

However, now South Florida Veterans have another option. Following the lead set by Miami-Dade County's Drug Treatment Courts, Broward County has begun a Veterans Treatment Court for Veterans accused of low-level crimes who, with proper treatment and supervision, are able to get the help they need to make the successful leap into the civilian world.

"The Army has a creed - leave no one behind. That is what Veterans courts are all about, leaving no one behind," said William Gunn, General Counsel for VA. "It takes those who may have begun to self-medicate with drugs or

alcohol, or are dealing with mental health issues, and provides them a forum where they can get the help they need, and deserve; from the VA and from our community partners."

Despite more than 10 years of war, less than 1 percent of U.S. citizens are Veterans. In an all-volunteer service, these men and women join the military motivated and dedicated to serving their family, their neighbors and their country, said Gunn. This willingness to serve is contradicted by the image of a group that is suffering from depression or traumatic brain injury or PTSD.

This is why the Veterans Treatment Courts are so important. They provide another place to match Veterans to the services they have earned and need, he said.

"Together with our community partners and the criminal justice system, we can do great things for those who have worn the uniform of the United States military," said Gunn.

In Broward County, the judge presiding over the Veterans Treatment Court is an Iraqi War Veteran himself, giving him a unique perspective on what it means to serve and what it means to be a Veteran.

"What I love about Veterans, is that there are no 'General' Veterans, or

'Private' Veterans," said Judge (and Army Colonel) Edward Merrigan. "There are just Veterans - and I can think of no higher title."

The mechanics of the Veterans Treatment Court are similar to the successful "Drug Court" model that is used in nearly 4,000 communities across the country. By offering treatment instead of automatic jail time, the goal is to help the underlying cause of the behavior and help them find a path back toward contributing to society.

"It is not special treatment for Veterans in that this is not a "get out of jail free card". Veterans who agree to participate in the Veterans Treatment Court must comply with all the court requirements and address their criminal behaviors," said Dr. Giovanna Delgado, Miami VA Veterans Treatment Court liaison and psychologist. "There are no excuses being made for their criminal behaviors; however, they are being offered the opportunity to get treatment. Going through the Veterans Treatment Court is often more demanding and strenuous than going through a regular court, especially for misdemeanor charges."

Judge Edward Merrigan presides over the Broward County Veterans Treatment Court.



Valor & Sacrifice

Make Memorial Day a Special Holiday

For someone who has served in the military, there are two Memorial Days – before military and after military. The before military Memorial Days are spent like most Americans; barbecues and beach parties, maybe seeing a parade or visiting a national cemetery. The after military Memorial Days are something different, especially for combat Veterans who know and served with those who sacrificed their lives alongside their comrades in arms.

“There is nothing wrong with going to the beach or having fun, but remember why this is a holiday and why these people died,” said Christopher Alban, a wounded Marine Corps Veteran and South Florida native. “It’s different now that I know people who have fallen, or are still fighting for their lives in Afghanistan.”

Memorial Day traces its roots to the American Civil War, remembering those who fought for both the Union and Confederacy and the terrible costs of that war. Following the Civil War, most American battles and wars affected most of the population. However, in the most recent conflicts in both Iraq and Afghanistan, a smaller percentage of Americans are bearing more of the weight of combat. Indeed, public opinion polls seem show that more and more Americans view Memorial Day not as a day of remembrance for those who served, but as a day to mark the beginning of summer.

Alban, like thousands of young men and women, always knew he was going to serve in the military. A month after graduating high school, he found himself on the famous yellow footprints at Parris Island, S.C., taking the first step on a journey that would ultimately lead to a gruesome leg injury and new appreciation for life.



● **Once a Marine Always a Marine.** Christopher Alban before (left) and after his injury (right).



Following his training in North Carolina, he soon found himself in Afghanistan support combat operations in Helmand Province as a motor transportation specialist. With the rest of his unit, they transported the three beans of combat – beans, bullets and bandages – to Marines and NATO forces readying to push into more remote areas of the country.

“When I heard we were going, I was pumped up, I wanted to go,” he said. “It hit me on my first convoy that I was really in Afghanistan. My heart was beating and all I could think was that I was really here.”

It wasn’t until later when he experienced the blast of his first IED that the 22 year old realized, “they are really trying to kill us.”

During his time in country, he took part in nearly 100 convoys supporting both Marines and Georgian fighters who were supporting the mission. Convoys such as the ones Alban were taking part in were often targeted by insurgent forces as easy targets because of the ease of making and

deploying IEDs. Alban said his trucks were hit with three IEDs while he was there, but two of them did nothing but damage the truck.

“I remember July 4, looking up at the sky and thinking about what people were doing back home while I was sitting here,” he said. “It was very surreal, but I was proud to be doing my part.”

A few weeks later, on his last scheduled convoy before returning to the United States, third IED blast would flip his vehicle and break most of the bones in his left leg.

“I’m driving the truck talking with my assistant driver and the next thing I know, a huge explosion flips the 7-ton refueling truck” he said. “What’s weird is that there was a strange silence right before the explosion, like I knew something was about to happen. I knew something was wrong, and BOOM, the explosion hit.”

Now, nearly two years after his injury, he walks only with a slight limp - from the metal rods inserted into his lower leg and heel. But more than the injury, he said, what really changed

Memorial Day is America’s most solemn day. While most American’s take a moment to honor the fallen, nowhere is the tribute to our heroes more pronounced than at a National Veterans Cemetery like the South Florida National Cemetery near Lake Worth, Florida.

This year, nearly 500 people came together to give their thanks and listen to local Veteran leaders speak about what Memorial Day means to them and their community. New Miami VA Director Paul Russo spoke about the devotion that service members have to each other in combat - and how he wants to instill that devotion to service at the Miami VA. Former interim Director, Cheri Szabo, spoke about her family and what it means to be in a military family.

More photos from the South Florida National Cemetery Memorial Day ceremony can be found at www.facebook.com/vamiami



▲ **The Damage.** Albans vehicle after the blast.

after the explosion was his view on life and what is really important.

“In the hospital I was really down, having some bad thoughts,” he said. “But then I started to realize what is really important. The Marine Corps gave me discipline, but this event gave me perspective. In a strange way, it was a blessing in disguise.”

Later though, when his unit had returned to Afghanistan and two of his friends died in combat, he started to realize what it meant to be a Veteran and how the bonds of service never really go away.

“You have friends, you have family, but then you have Marines,” he said. There is really something different and special about being a Marine. When I was hurt, I saw the real Marine Corps; how they take care of their own, how they care for each other.”

Now out of the Marine Corps and living in Tamarac, FL., Alban is about to enroll in school and study engineering. He has a girlfriend that he met while he was recovering in a Virginia hospital and a new outlook on what Memorial Day means.



▲ **In the Field.** Chris Alban (right) stands with his fellow Marines in Afghanistan.

Hurricane Season: *It's Not Too Late to Be Prepared*

Being ready for a hurricane or any disaster is simply a matter of preparation. Evacuations can happen in a moment's notice, meaning the kit you've been meaning to build is now the kit you should have built. In an emergency, you will not have time to buy the items you need.

You may need to survive on your own after an emergency. This means having your own food, water and other supplies in sufficient quantity to last for at least 72 hours. Local officials and relief workers will be on the scene after a disaster, but they cannot reach everyone immediately. You could get help in hours or it might take days.

Recommended Supplies to Include in a Basic Kit:

- Water, one gallon of water per person per day, for drinking and sanitation
- Food, at least a three-day supply of non-perishable food
- Battery-powered radio and a NOAA Weather Radio with tone alert, and extra batteries for both
- Flashlight and extra batteries
- First Aid kit
- Whistle to signal for help
- Infant formula and diapers, if you have an infant
- Moist towelettes, garbage bags and plastic ties for personal sanitation
- Dust mask or cotton t-shirt, to help filter the air
- Plastic sheeting and duct tape to shelter-in-place
- Wrench or pliers to turn off utilities
- Can opener for food (if kit contains canned food)

Below are some other items for your family to consider adding to a supply kit. Some of these items, especially those marked with a * can be dangerous, so have an adult collect these supplies.

- Emergency reference materials such as a first aid book
- Rain gear
- Mess kits, paper cups, plates and plastic utensils
- Cash or traveler's checks, change
- Paper towels
- Fire Extinguisher
- Tent
- Compass
- Matches in a waterproof container*
- Signal flare*
- Paper, pencil
- Personal hygiene items including feminine supplies
- Disinfectant*
- Prescriptions and medications
- Important Family Documents such as copies of insurance policies, identification and bank account records in a waterproof, portable container



For more information, visit www.ready.gov

Miami HEAT Supporting Miami Veterans

While on their way to winning the 2012 NBA Championship, the Miami HEAT have continued to support South Florida Veterans. Beginning a \$50,000 donation to the Miami VA Fisher House in May, Veterans and their families were later treated to a complimentary lunch in July.

During the NBA Finals, Miami-Dade County Mayor Carlos

Gimenez and the mayor of Oklahoma City each put a local food favorite on the line (Miami: Stone Crabs, OKC: Steaks). When the HEAT won the championship, Oklahoma City's mayor sent the steaks and the Capital Grille graciously volunteered to cook the steaks and provide some amazing side dishes.



Partnership. Fisher House receives a donation from the Miami HEAT.

Spreading Joy. Miami HEAT and the Capital Grille feed Veterans and family members at the Fisher House.



Federal Employee of the Year



Congratulations. Federal Employee of the Year Herman Cheung (center) and Miami VA staff.

Congratulations to Miami VA Career Research Scientist Herman Cheung, PhD, for being named the 2012 Federal Employee of the Year!

Cheung is a biomedical engineering researcher at the Miami VA and professor at the University of Miami College of Engineering. He has been with the Miami VA since 1996.

Along with being named Federal Employee of the Year, Cheung was also given an award in the Scientific Category.

The Miami VA had 14 employees recognized, including Privacy Officer Christina Gonzalez in the Management Category and Polytrauma and Post Deployment Clinic Social Worker Michelle Zeilenski in the Professional Category.

The Federal Employee of the Year Program is administered by the South Florida Federal Executive Board. It represents more than 35,000 federal workers in Palm Beach, Broward, Miami-Dade, and Monroe Counties.

Miami VA Medal Winners

AIR GUNS



Harvey Buchholz

ARCHERY



Chatriex Goodson

TABLE TENNIS



Charles Brown
Donald Thomas



Raul Acosta

9-BALL



Charles Brown

BASKETBALL



Enrique Lopez



Cletis Mays

TRACK



Chatriex Goodson

100 Meters
200 Meters



SOFTBALL



Mark Lerman
Raul Acosta

SLALOM



Enrique Lopez



Charles Brown



Richard Glazer
Donald Moore

BOWLING



Charles Brown
Harvey Buchholz
Chatriex Goodson

Team Miami VA WINS BIG at National Games

The annual National Veterans Wheelchair Games is a chance for Veterans from around the country to show the world they've not only overcome their injuries, but that they are ready to excel and compete against some of the best wheelchair athletes in the country. At this year's event in Richmond, Va., the team of athletes from the Miami VA Healthcare System not only excelled – they dominated by winning 19 medals, including 14 golds, in nine events.

Rules for wheelchair sports are essentially the same as their stand-up counterparts, with some adaptations made as needed for wheelchair use. For example, basketball rules are determined by the National Wheelchair Basketball Association (which follow NCAA basketball rules) with the wheelchair considered part of the player's body in ruling physical contact fouls. Several sports offered at the Games have no able-bodied version, such as the wheelchair slalom, a challenging obstacle course for wheelchair users. Handcycling, the motorized wheelchair rally and quad rugby, while similar to able bodied sports, are also specific to wheelchair users.

The Games enjoy a partnership with the U.S. Paralympics, a member of the U.S. Olympic Committee. Every four years since 1984, several athletes from the National Veterans Wheelchair Games have been selected to represent the United States in the Paralympic Games. This year's Paralympic Games will be held in London beginning Aug. 29.



Photo courtesy of VA

▲ Team Miami. Miami Veterans at the 32nd National Wheelchair Games.



I Got the Music In Me

▲ More Than Therapy. Veterans find healing and joy through Music Therapy.

Boyd Dounveor and Walter Gibbons always knew they had the music in them. What they did not know was how learning a musical instrument would change their lives and help them heal.

Walter Gibbons, a native Miamian and Marine Corps Veteran had a rough childhood and feels that if he had not gone to Vietnam when he did, he probably would not be here today. Following his 18 months in the jungles of Vietnam, Gibbons found himself an angry young man, always looking for fights and trouble. Plagued daily by bouts of nervousness and doubt, he soon found himself turning to drugs. After a lost decade, a plea from his mother to give church a chance changed his life. Now, 33 years later, Gibbons is a pastor of his own church – and is using music to celebrate his faith and stay on the straight path.

For WWII, Korea and Vietnam Army Veteran Boyd Dounveor, music has always played a key part in providing respite and opportunity. The Washington, D.C., native joined the military after not making any money as a boxer, never thinking that

singing would be a useful skill in the Army. However, after training as a Chaplain's clerk, he found himself traveling the world and becoming the first African-American member of the Army Chorus. He even came across Elvis Presley, recalling, "He was a fine soldier, always cleaning his tank." A lover of traditional Irish music, Dounveor's favorite singers are Irish singers Dennis Day and Bobby Green, while his favorite song is "Danny Boy".

After Dounveor became a deacon at Gibbon's church, both Veterans eventually found themselves receiving care at the Miami VA Healthcare System and enrolling in the Music Therapy program headed by Elizabeth Torres.

While Gibbons joined the "Piano for Beginners" class because he wanted to be able to sing and play the piano at the same time, he soon found that the music helped with his PTSD. "Music soothes the savage beast," he said.

He found that learning to play the piano takes unique concentration and practice, but with the assistance of Torres, he has come a long way. He even began writing his own songs to

perform with his congregation.

"I would like to sing like the angels," said Gibbons. "Singing and playing the piano gives him a sense of serenity, I begin to feel good and my nervousness goes away."

Dounveor's first experience with music therapy came when he joined the group to learn how to play the guitar; he noticed that it helped him with his anxiety and concentration. He stated "At 84 years young, music is my life. I love life and I love music."

Both Gibbons and Dounveor wish Veterans knew about music therapy and how it can help them. Although learning an instrument is not easy, one thing that Gibbons, Dounveor and Torres agree on is that "Practice does not make perfect, practice makes better."

Considered both an art and a science, music therapy helps patients improve their health and achieve treatment goals and objectives in a variety of ways, said Torres. Patients enrolled at the Miami VA Healthcare System can ask their primary care provider about Music Therapy and other innovative programs available to them.



Our Vets Have Talent!

● **Gifted Veterans.** Voices From Home singing in the preliminary competition. Left to right: Christine Pointer, Marc A. Hansen, and Julia McGuire.

It's said everyone has a hidden talent. For some Veterans at the Miami VA Healthcare System, these talents have been on display regularly during the Annual National Veterans Creative Arts Festival.

Every year the Miami VA hosts its own preliminary competition for the national event. This year 30 Veterans produced more than 50 performing art entries. Of those, 33 were selected to compete nationally and eighteen returned with either third, second, or first place awards.

The group 'Voices from Home' are veteran competitors, having earned national recognition at the Festival for the past six years and have been invited to perform in this year's festival in Boston, Oct. 15-18.

Marc A. Hansen is an Air Force Veteran who has received national recognition in the National Veterans Creative Arts Festival each year since 2005.

Julia McGuire is a Navy Veteran who performed with the Navy Band during her years in service. She has also received numerous awards for her participation in the national festival. She currently sings with Florida Grand Opera.

Christine Pointer, an Army Veteran, began entering the Creative Arts Festival in 2003 and has won both individual and group awards every year for either her singing, dancing, or both.

Javier Garcon has been invited to Boston on the strength of his first place award for his dance, "Move With Me" in the Solo Folk/

Ethnic/Cultural dance division as has Christine Pointer for her performance of "Raise Me Up" in the Inspirational Dance Solo category.

In the literary field, Eugene Paul will be heading to Boston to recite his first place entry in the Personal Experience category titled "I Never Knew His Name".

Clarion Diaz will be packing his sax to Boston to play "Watermelon Man" and "Quataca City", his second and first place finishes in Instrumental Solo Pop and Instrumental Solo World/Ethnic divisions.

On the 'visual arts' side of the festival, 22 Veterans participated in 20 categories locally. Charles Blank received a national third place award for his entry in the Jewelry (not beads) category.



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“

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.

The Declaration of Independence July 4, 1776

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MVAHS **VA** **HEALTH** **CARE** **Defining EXCELLENCE**
MIAMI VA HEALTHCARE SYSTEM PROUD TO SERVE VETERANS in the 21st Century