

# ARTS & NATIONAL INITIATIVE FOR HEALTH IN THE MILITARY

*A collaborative effort to advance the arts in health, healing, and healthcare, for military service members, staff, veterans, their families, and caregivers.*

**THE CHALLENGE:** Over the past two centuries, the United States has sent millions of men and women into harm's way to defend American interests and to protect our allies and weaker nations. There have been **6,644 US fatalities** and over **48,000 US wounded** in the most recent conflicts. There are over **22 million veterans in the U.S. today**. Military service constitutes a major influence on the lifespan of service members and their families. While overall the combat death rate has decreased, the number of service members returning home suffering from both physical and psychological traumas has increased. They face a myriad of challenges—from post-traumatic stress to the loss of a limb or brain injuries to invisible injuries such as depression—challenges which require more than medical treatment to resolve.

**THE OPPORTUNITY:** The military has identified four factors as critical to the success and preparedness of our troops: **Readiness, Resiliency, Retention** and **Reintegration**. The arts are uniquely

suiting to address these factors by helping service members to deal with the challenges in each phase of the military lifecycle—from pre-deployment to deployment to homecoming, and in eventually rejoining the civilian community. The National Initiative for Arts & Health in the Military's three inspiring convenings and investigation of promising practices has delivered input from more than 500 individuals from every category of stakeholder—from military to civilian—regarding the role the arts can play in meeting these challenges: The arts help people to express themselves and share their experiences; when effectively employed in communities, the arts offer lifelong opportunities for service members, veterans, and their families not only to address, but to transcend, their challenges. We see evidence of a strong and significant role for the arts in addressing the needs of service members, veterans, families, and caregivers across the military continuum. Moreover, for the first time, this question is being addressed across military, government, and nonprofit sectors—and with a sense of urgency that now is the time to get something done.



**AN INITIATIVE FOR CHANGE:** In the Spring of 2010, a small group of arts and health leaders and military leaders began a conversation about the role of the arts in addressing the challenging issues confronting our military—from pre-deployment to deployment to homecoming. In October 2011 the *National Summit: Arts in Healing for Warriors* was hosted by Rear Admiral Alton L. Stocks and held at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center (WRNMMC) to explore the possibilities. The following year the **National Initiative for Arts & Health in the Military** was established to work across military, government, private, and nonprofit sectors to:

1. Advance the policy, practice, and quality use of arts and creativity as tools for health in the military;
2. Raise visibility, understanding, and support of arts and health in the military; and
3. Make the arts as tools for health available to all active duty military, staff, family members, and veterans.

Co-chaired by Americans for the Arts and Walter Reed National Military Medical Center, the National Initiative represents the first time the military has come together with a coalition of civilian public and private sector agencies to ensure quality access to the arts for the health and well-being of servicemembers, veterans and their families in communities across the country.



## **LEADERSHIP:**

**Americans for the Arts** and **Walter Reed National Military Medical Center** cooperate in leading and coordinating the **National Initiative for Arts & Health in the Military**, in order to advance the planning and implementation of the Initiative over the next three years. A key component of the Initiative is the active engagement of the nation's arts, health, and military non-profit, federal, state and local agencies, as well as individuals interested and able to advance the goals of the Initiative in their communities and for the people they serve, through a National Member Network.

The **National Initiative for Arts & Health in the Military National Leadership Advisory Council** is chaired by Brigadier General Nolen V. Bivens, USA, (RET). The National Leadership Advisory Council is comprised of high level national leaders from the military,

government, corporate, foundation, philanthropic and non-profit sectors who are trusted voices in engaging national, state and community leaders and decision-makers on the need to ensure adequate resources and access to the arts throughout the military continuum. They guide and oversee progress on the Arts & Health in the Military national action strategy.

The **National Initiative for Arts & Health in the Military National Member Network** are grassroots leaders from throughout the military, veteran, health, arts, public and private sectors committed to working together to ensure that quality arts practices are available and accessible to military service, medical staff, caregivers and family members throughout the military lifecycle—from pre-deployment, deployment, homecoming and reintegration into the community.

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## **PROJECTS AND PRODUCTS:**

Following the inaugural **National Summit: Arts in Healing for Warriors** in 2011 and since its official founding in 2012, the National Initiative for Arts & Health in the Military has implemented two national convenings: the **Arts & Health in the Military National Roundtable** (November 2012), and the **National Summit: Arts, Health and Wellness across the Military Continuum** (April 2013). Participants at these meetings were asked to propose recommendations for action to further the National Initiative's goals. From these meetings came a series of recommendations in the areas of research, practice, and policy detailed in the seminal report, *Arts, Health and Wellness across the Military Continuum—White Paper and Framing a National Plan for Action*, which will be released in October, 2012.

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### **National Convenings:**

- **October 14 - 15, 2011.** Inaugural *National Summit: Arts in Healing for Warriors*, Walter Reed National Military Medical Center, Bethesda, MD.
- **November 15, 2012.** *Arts & Health in the Military National Roundtable*, John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, Washington, DC.
- **April 10, 2013.** *National Summit: Arts, Health and Well-being Across the Military Continuum*, Walter Reed National Military Medical Center, Bethesda, MD.

### **Publications:**

- *The Arts: A Promising Solution to Meeting the Challenges of Today's Military—A Summary Report and Blueprint for Action* (Report from the 2012 Arts & Health in the Military National Roundtable, April 10, 2013)
- *Arts, Health and Well-being across the Military Continuum—White Paper and National Plan for Action* (Release date October, 2013)