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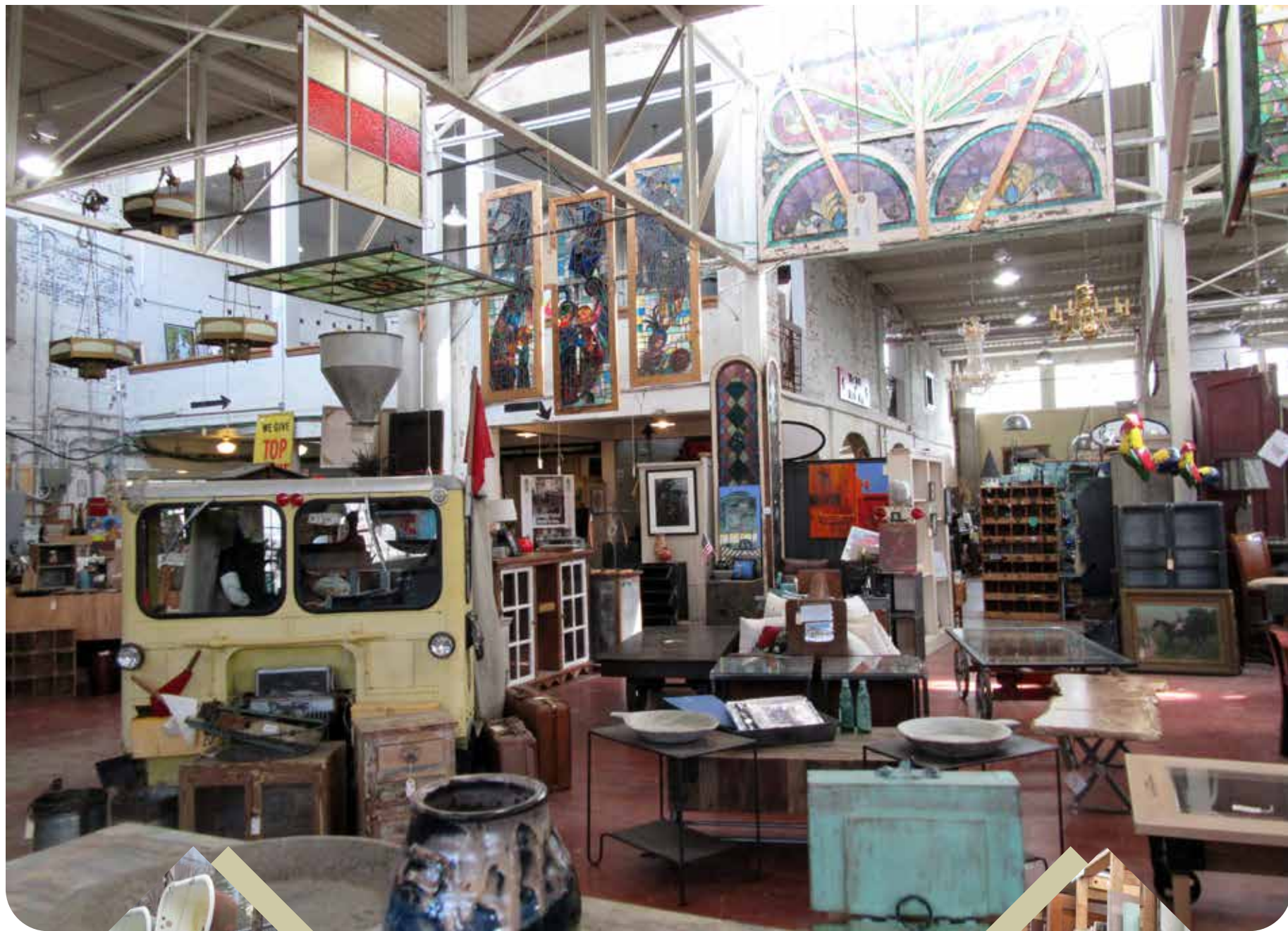
UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND
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VETERAN ART

Meet The United States
Veterans' Artists Alliance

GO ARMY

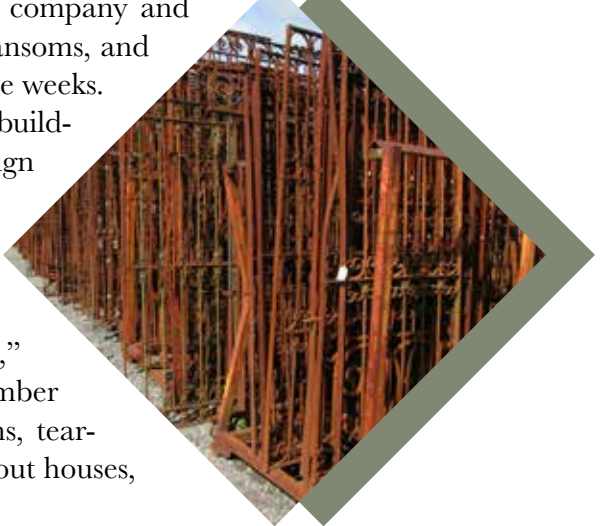
Celebrating the 247th birthday
of the United States Army



For starters, there are iron gates, sinks, toilets, bathtubs, light fixtures, barn wood, doors, doorknobs, hinges, bowling pins, plumbing hardware, mantels, tools, statues, wrought iron gates, and dishes. This mishmash is antique, vintage, contemporary, funky, artsy, undefinable. The showroom is a maze of used, reclaimed, repurposed, restored furniture, home goods, art, and more.

In 1999, the local hospital, Carilion, wanted land to expand and tore down an 1892 building. Whiteside reached out to the demolition company and offered to salvage the pieces, things like stone columns, transoms, and seven-foot mantels. His team salvaged most of it in three weeks.

They hauled it all to a 3,000-square-foot storage building with three acres outside and hand painted a sign that said, "Salvage." Today, the sprawling collection takes up a 44,000-square-foot building and a 22,000-square-foot warehouse. Whiteside won't put a number on the inventory. It's in "the multiple thousands," maybe 50,000, he gingerly estimates. And the number changes constantly. The items come from demolitions, tear-downs, estate sales, landfills, downsizers, people cleaning out houses, and crumbing commercial buildings.



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Visioning and Revisioning

Black Dog Salvage rescues and saves things, things that many might call junk, rubbish, or used goods. They have salvaged items from barns, firehouses, strip malls, restaurants, banks, a power plant, a Moose Lodge, a cigarette factory, a water turbine, a church, and a ferry. They then offer these materials for sale, reuse, and redesign. The showroom is a jumble of odds-and-ends, a hodgepodge of this and that.

Their specialty is repurposing. In America's throw-away society, when many people reject materials because they seem outdated or have defects, like a chip, a crack or a missing hinge, Black Dog Salvage sees a new life. A door can be a table or a headboard, for example. Corrugated metal can be the base of a bar. It's recycling, high style. The walls of Whiteside's office are made of wood from a barn. His desk is a folding table that might be put out for a church basement supper. One yellow wall was formerly a church door.

With designers and a fabrication shop on site, they design and make whatever the customer wants. "It's art with a story," says Whiteside. They've become known for custom, one-of-a-kind furniture. "If you can imagine it, we can build it," touts the website. "My only restriction is gravity," Whiteside quips. "Everyone knows how to design. They just don't know they know."

The company also uses and sells a water-based, matte finish paint customizable for furniture projects with virtually no limit to the colors one can create. Upstairs, the Loft Gallery showcases local art, pottery, sculpture and sustainably-made furniture.

Out back is the Dog Bowl, an outdoor music and event venue. The stage is a converted semi-trailer salvaged from a drive-in movie theater. Nearby is a LOVEwork installation, made of industrial elements and musical instruments like a 1960s trombone from the USS Independence CVS-62 ship's band.

Next door is The Stone House, a home built by an Italian stone mason in 1911 that they refurbished with reclaimed materials and now rent out as a guest house.

TV Fame

In 2012, the Black Dog guys "went national" with "Salvage Dawgs" on the DIT television network. By its end in 2019, in 11 seasons they had done 143 episodes. At first, it was a "guy show," Whiteside commented, but eventually they made it more educational "with no cussin'" and featured a project on each show. In one show they loaded up stone tubs and three-tier chandeliers from a Mediterranean-style mansion. In another, they rescued a booth and stage from a diner and used the metal to build a bar. In another they salvaged a fireboat and repurposed materials into unique foot baths for Hotel Roanoke. Today Mike and Robert do the "Black Dog Salvage Podcast," which they describe as "unscripted reality tv."

From Parachutes to Repurposing

After stocking shelves and being a "ski bum," Whiteside joined the Navy and became a parachute rigger. He packed, inspected, and repacked parachutes and gear, explaining that if someone has to eject from or jump out of an airplane, he or she needs survival gear like a gun and rafts. He learned to machine sew parachute materials. He was based in San Diego, deployed on the Kitty Hawk aircraft carrier, and went to the western Pacific twice, including Japan, Hong Kong, and Korea, where he saw men fall off ships in ferocious typhoons.

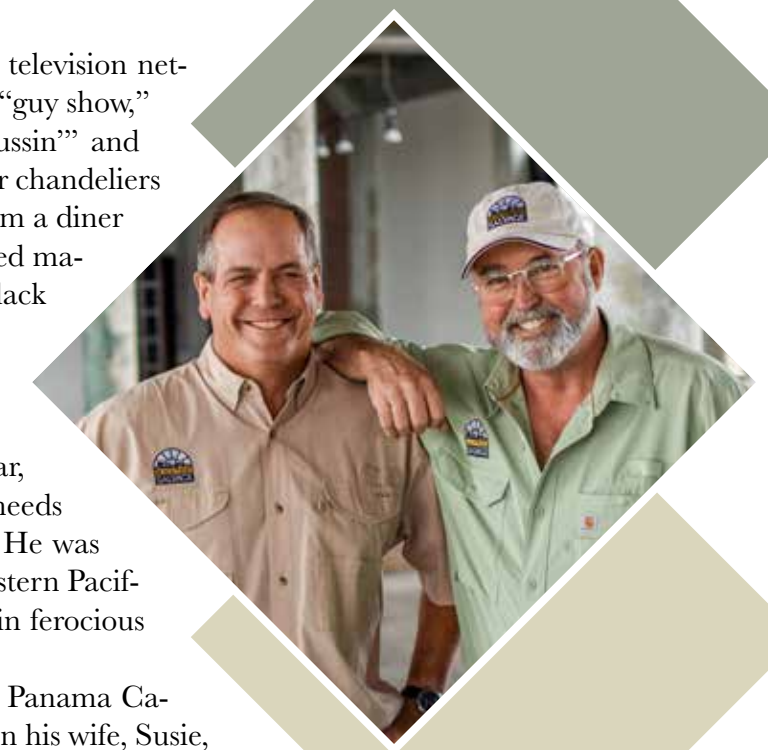
For a while, as a yacht captain, he did three Atlantic crossings, sailed through the Panama Canal, up and down the St. Lawrence Seaway, and up and down both U. S. coasts. Then his wife, Susie, wanted to move back to her hometown, Roanoke.

His military experience taught him discipline and how systems work, but he always knew he wanted to be self-employed and "not work on a clock," so he found his niche. Susie is an interior designer; his son Taylor, a metal fabricator; his daughter, Gracie, a glass blower.

About the dog, Whiteside's always had a Labrador shop mascot roving about.

Some are mixes. Mixes fit right into this bounteous smorgasbord of miscellany, he believes.

Information www.blackdogsalvage.com





§ Story by Katie Begley
Submitted photos

To serve a creative muse: The United States Veterans' Artists Alliance

"There is nothing to writing. All you do is sit down at a typewriter and bleed." Ernest Hemingway knew the vulnerability it takes to pursue art. He also knew the life of wartime service and was even wounded while serving as a World War I ambulance driver.

Today, many former service members also sit down to meet their muse. Now, their time is spent working at a laptop, in front of a canvas, before a piece of marble, or behind a camera, all in the service of their creative vision.

The United States Veterans' Artists Alliance promotes the work of artists who are also Veterans, providing opportunities for growth, development and networking.

USVAA was founded in 2004 in Los Angeles, Calif., when founder Keith Jeffreys realized that the learning curve to get into the arts community

there was very steep.

"I began thinking about how difficult it is for a person who doesn't know the arts," said Jeffreys. After finishing his military service in the Army, he moved to Los Angeles to pursue screenwriting and producing. "I found that LA was a different animal and somewhat difficult to navigate."

Looking to pass the knowledge he gained to other Veterans interested in the arts, Jeffreys and a team of other creatives started USVAA to provide industry insight for those moving to LA.

"Within three years, we realized that this might be a bigger thing than we thought. What had started as a Los Angeles-based organization quickly became a national organization."

Programs now span the entire United States and promote artists of all types: Fine art, writers, entertainment, photography, sculpture and others.

Forging an artist's path

USVAA began to provide industry expertise to Veterans wanting to work as a professional artist. The organization has also helped current artists cultivate their skills, showcase their work and connect with the larger arts community.

"We came up with a working model where we would add colleagues in various fields and really be a conduit to their website, publicize our activities, and look for more opportunities," said Jeffreys. "It grew from there steadily to where we are today, including launching a publishing imprint called Onward Press."

Workshops and events for creatives also help foster a community of support and mentorship among Veterans working in the arts. USVAA-sponsored workshops helped author Steve Miska see his work in a whole new way.

"The writers will take a scenario from whatever you're working on, print out copies, and professional actors perform your work," said Miska. "It's such an interesting way to get feedback. You hear your work performed."

Current service members and Veterans interested in the arts can learn a lot just by watching the paths taken by USVAA colleagues and members.

"If you are trying to find your passion, it's about figuring out who you are creatively," said Laura Hatcher, a U.S. Navy Veteran and photographer. "Go take a class. Go to a museum. Go find some inspiration somewhere. Join an art-related or creative-focused organization."

Many Veterans in the arts today experience the profound pull that comes with working as a professional artist. Informed by their military service, their work is as diverse and far-reaching as the artists themselves. Some dive into their military experience, telling the story of other Veterans through images or memoir. Others explore color and technique to forge a new identity outside of what they did in the military. Some Veterans, like Jeffreys, even rally other creatives to create a collective meant to inspire, empower, and promote each other's work as Veteran artists.

"It's been fantastic to meet all these super talented Veterans who bring so much to the table," said Jeffreys. "We are able to advocate honestly for them whenever we're working with other organizations. And we're contacted a lot by other organizations to find Veterans with particular skills."

Artists can also collaborate to work on projects. Fine artists, such as Amy Roberts, illustrate book covers for Onward Press. Working with author Dava Lara, she created the cover art for *Zippo Boys*, a memoir about being gay in the military during the Vietnam War.

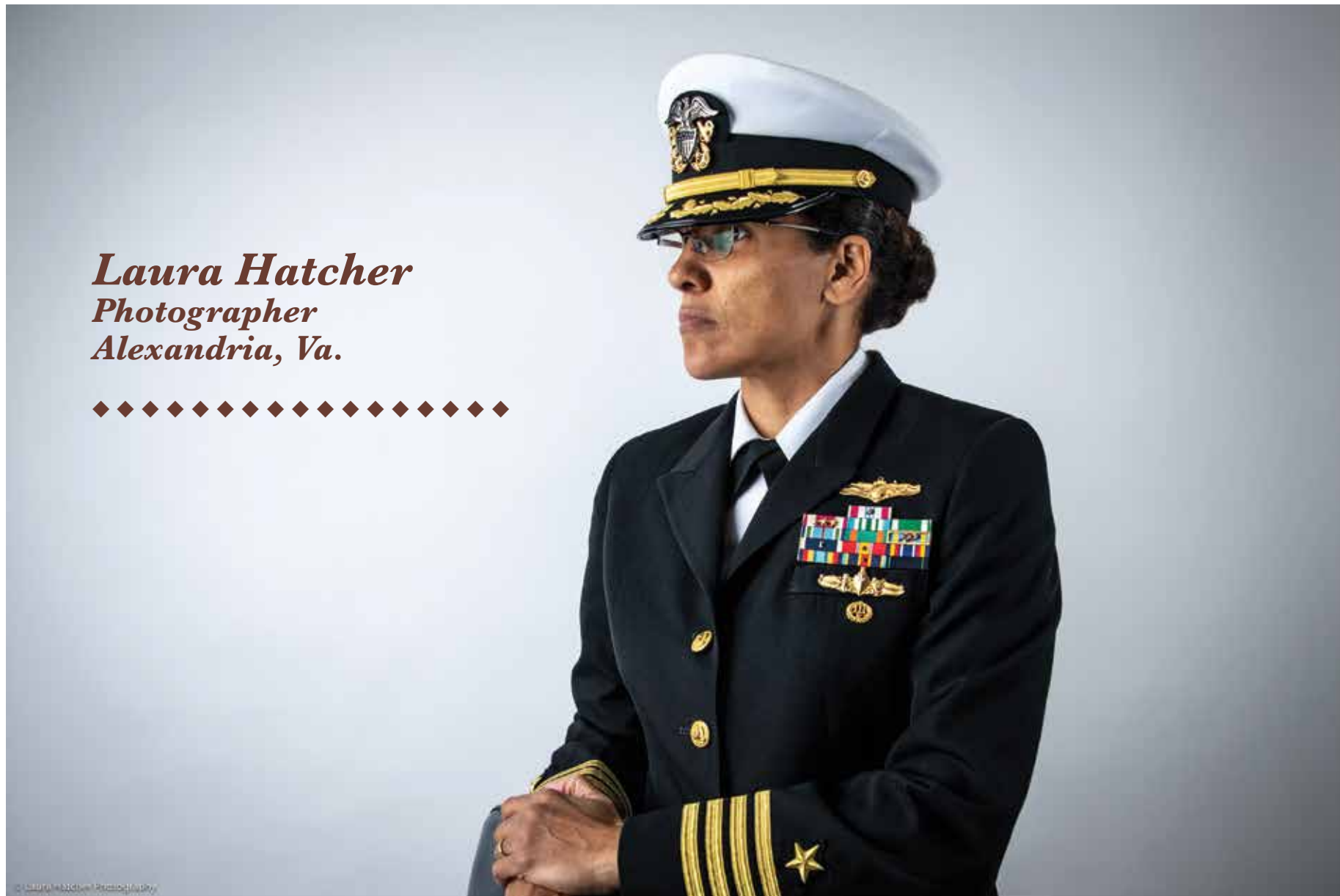
"It's exciting!" said Jeffreys. "It's exciting for the author, it's exciting for the illustrator."

Additional opportunities for networking, showcasing Veteran work through opportunities like publication by Onward Press, and developing a supportive community are all part of what USVAA does.

"The real exciting opportunity is to continue to expand this network and get people to recognize who we are as Veterans and what we bring to the table," Jeffreys said.



Veteran artists are tapping into their military experience to inform their art. Whether it's photography, painting, or writing, these Veterans are making waves in the art world.



Laura Hatcher
Photographer
Alexandria, Va.



After over 30 years in uniform, retired Naval Officer Laura Hatcher picked up a camera at an arts class in her adopted hometown of Alexandria, Virginia.

“That first night, I wanted to quit because there was math involved. I was freaking out because I’m hearing F stops and shutter speeds,” she said of her first introduction to photography toward the end of her military career. “Our instructor took us on a field trip to the National Cathedral. Of course, the lighting there is not something for the amateur. But I was hooked.”

Laura now works in her own Alexandria-based studio, Laura Hatcher Photography. Her work focuses on events, headshots, and branding, often working with Active Duty members and Veterans.

“I was all over the place when I first started,” Hatcher said. “And the niche found me. When you’re struggling to figure out who you are, you go back to what you know.”

See more of Laura’s work at her website, laurahatcherphotography.com, or visit her at her studio in Old Town Alexandria, just blocks away from where she took that first photography class at The Torpedo Factory. Follow her on Instagram @spikenavy, Facebook @laurahatcherphotography, or on LinkedIn .



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CELEBRATING THE ARMY'S 247TH BIRTHDAY ON JUNE 14TH

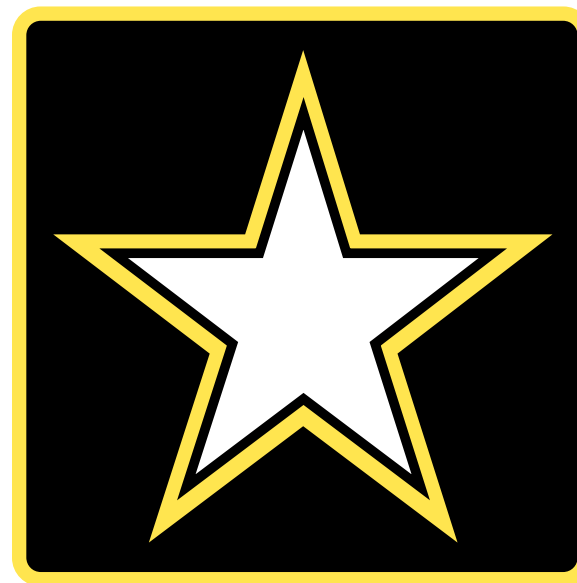


§ Story by Denise Lew Chiang
Pentagram file photos



High ranking Army officials lead Soldiers and service members through Arlington National Cemetery for the Army Birthday Run in 2018.

The Army celebrates its 247th birthday on June 14, which also coincides with Flag Day. At Joint Base Myer-Henderson Hall, home to the Army's elite ceremonial units including the 3rd U.S. Infantry Regiment (The Old Guard) and the U.S. Army Band, "Pershing's Own," this year's Army Birthday means returning to in-person events once again.



U.S. ARMY

On June 14, the annual Army Birthday Run returns after a brief hiatus since the pandemic began. Hosted by senior Army leaders from the Pentagon, historically, hundreds of service members start their birthday run journey on the Fort Myer side of the Joint Base, run through Arlington Cemetery and return back to the installation.

The Old Guard will once again host the Army Birthday Cake Cutting, featuring the time-honored tradition of the youngest Soldier and the oldest Soldier cutting the cake with swords.

Starting on Wednesdays from May 4 through July 27, Twilight Tattoo performances will resume at Summerall Field, hosted by the U.S. Army Military District of Washington. All ceremonial units will depict the history of the U.S. Army with music and re-enactments. A special salute will commemorate the Army's birthday at the June 15 performance.

"JBM-HH's mission is to provide ceremonial support to these units, senior leaders and Department of Defense organizations from the Pentagon and the region — as needed on the Joint Base," said Leah Rubalcaba, community relations officer for JBM-HH. "We are able to showcase the Army's elite ceremonial units by inviting our community leaders, partners and neighbors to these special ceremonies and pageants held on the base."

Joint Base Commander Col. David Bowling, who took command last May, said since the Army's 246th birthday, his team has made remarkable progress to include small, measurable improvements across the joint base all while accomplishing the mission in an extremely difficult COVID-19 environment.



Soldiers, Marines, civilian employees and guests participated in JBM-HH's 3-mile birthday run on the Fort Myer side of the base and Arlington National Cemetery in 2018.

Former Joint Base Myer-Henderson Hall Commander Col. Mike Henderson, far left, and other joint base leaders participate in the Army Birthday run in 2016 on the Fort Myer portion of JBM-HH. Hundreds of Soldiers, Marines, civilians and other guests participated in the annual run, this year in recognition of the Army's 241st birthday, along a four-mile course through the joint base and Arlington National Cemetery.



Soldiers from 3d U.S. Infantry Regiment's (The Old Guard) Honor Guard Battalion ran past Joint Base Myer-Henderson Hall's Old Post Chapel following a silent run through Arlington National Cemetery on June 16, 2017, during the annual Army Birthday Run.

“Our Directorate of Public Works has done a good job repairing some of the failing infrastructure around the joint base and our Department of Emergency Services has done a phenomenal job in tackling and answering emerging requirements while maintaining the same level of resources,” said Bowling. “Everybody has done a really good job balancing mission requirements with available resources.”

Other accomplishments Bowling highlighted in the past year include continued developments in IWEP (Installation, Water and Energy Plan). “The team has done a great job in developing IWEP,” said Bowling.

“As we continue to reduce reliance on other folks, the team is taking a look at how we can become more self-sufficient and enable energy resilience.”

By the Army's 248th birthday, Bowling said he wants to see continued improvements in modernized information technology, interconnectivity and security at the Joint Base. “Transitioning to a joint base of the future includes determining requirements, cost, and a detailed plan,” he remarked, stating that it is a work in progress. “The Joint Base team is excited to look out across the next year and continue to get after those things that we can do to help take care of our people,” said Bowling.

As one of his top priorities, Bowling emphasized the importance of taking care of the Families of service men and women. “It is no small feat for those Families to support their service members as they execute their duties. I think it's important that we've done a really good job within this country at recognizing that especially since 9-11. But I think that the importance of recognizing families is still needed and we need to continue to do that,” said Bowling.

The excitement leading up to the Army's upcoming birthday has already been felt at the base even during its initial planning stages. Due to the pandemic and in lieu of an Army Birthday Ball this year, Army leaders are planning an outdoor event on the grounds of the Joint Base.

Sgt. 1st Class Edward Gonzalez is part of the Army's birthday planning committee. “I'm pretty excited. It is just like any other birthday. Now it's an extra celebration that Soldiers get to have, besides their own birthdays. And especially being here at Joint Base Myer-Henderson Hall, it's a whole different side you never see unless you're actually here,” Gonzalez said, describing the incredible work that goes behind the scenes.

As the Army's upcoming birthday approaches, a number of Soldiers are reminded of their own personal milestones in the military. Spc. Brian Lozano is a

regimental announcer for The Old Guard who joined the Army in July of 2019. He credits the Army for helping him develop independence, a sense of purpose, belonging and camaraderie. To celebrate, Lozano plans to research the life of a fallen Ranger, such as in The Airborne Ranger in the Sky, which is a memorial to remember fallen U.S. Army Rangers. “Every Army birthday, I have researched their lives and taken the time to learn about them, what they stood for, and the circumstances surrounding their death. This is my way to pay my respects to those who paid the ultimate price in the name of freedom,” he said.

Lozano recognizes how far he has come by being in the Army. “The military is the hardest thing I have ever done. It forced me to push myself to places I didn't think I was capable of reaching. It made me grow into a hard working adult and has considerably accelerated the pace at which my life goes.” said Lozano. “I give thanks every day for the opportunity I was given to serve.”



Leading hundreds of Soldiers, Marines, civilian employees and other guests in the annual Army Birthday run in 2016 on the Fort Myer portion of Joint Base Myer-Henderson Hall are, from left: U.S. Army Maj. Gen. Paul K. Hurley, U.S. Army chief of chaplains; Under Secretary of the Army Patrick Murphy; and Lt. Gen. Gary Cheek, director of the Army Staff.

Happy Birthday U. S. Army

ROANOKE,

*a place of beauty
away from
the city*

§ Story and photos by Glenda C. Booth

Roaring Run, near Roanoke.

As a popular hangout in the 1930s and '40s, Green's Drugstore in Bedford, Virginia, served the best ice cream floats around. Today, it's crammed full of World War II mementos, like military uniforms, helmets, mess kits, Spam cans, Palmolive soap, photos, letters, and more, all donated by families whose loved ones served in that war. In July 1944, somber messages came across the telegraph machine still there today: "The Secretary of War desires me to express his deep regret . . ." Western Union operator Elizabeth Teass, age 21, learned that 20 Bedford sons, average age 24, had perished.

Thirty-seven Bedford men were in Company A of the 116th Infantry Regiment, 29th Division. At 0636 hours, June 6, 1944, in the Allied troops' first assault wave in Normandy, France, 20 Bedford men died on Omaha Beach. Then a town of 3,200, Bedford suffered the nation's highest per capita loss on D-Day of any U.S. town. The Bedford Boys Tribute Center honors those young men.

A mile away, the National D-Day Memorial pays tribute to those young men and the D-Day invasion's 150,000 Allied troops, 5,000 ships and landing craft, 11,000 aircraft and 50,000 vehicles, the largest amphibious assault in human history. The memorial is modeled after the shoulder patch of the Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force and tells the D-Day story chronologically. It includes busts of General Dwight D. Eisenhower, Winston Churchill, Franklin Roosevelt, and Eisenhower's principal subordinates. The Gray Plaza symbolizes the channel crossing and landing and the 45-foot triumphal arch bears the word "Overlord," the official code name of the landing 3,853 miles away northeast of Bedford.



Guide Jerry McCloskey and the telegraph that transmitted the news that Bedford soldiers had died during the D-Day invasion. The telegraph is displayed at the Bedford Boys Tribute Center.

Roanoke, railroad town

A city of 100,000, Roanoke lies on the western end of the Shenandoah Valley surrounded by mountains, punctuated by one smack in the middle of the city, Mill Mountain.

The railroads made Roanoke when coal was king and a steady procession of trains hauled the "black gold" from southwest Virginia mines through the city to Norfolk. Today, the O. Winston Link Museum documents the Norfolk and Western (N&W) Railway's last years of steam railroading. A true "trainiac," Link traveled from Connecticut to Roanoke between 1955 and 1960 to photograph the magic of trains, using hundreds of flashbulbs and large reflectors to spotlight the features of these iron behemoths. His sound recordings and motion pictures captured the trains, crickets, kids, cars, and crossing bells. His keen eye recorded the trains' context, what people were doing and how the railroad helped communities.

There's more train lore at Roanoke's Transportation Museum, where exhibits explain that N&W Railway established its headquarters in Roanoke in the late 1800s and built locomotives and railroad cars. Visitors can study the nuances of the locomotives on display and admire the Roanoke-built, bullet-nosed 611, one of N&W's fourteen class J coal steam locomotives, retired in 1959.

The museum explores road and air transportation too. One exhibit looks inside a Greyhound bus station. A Washington, D. C., trolley car, circa 1962, sits outside. The vintage car section has a 1913 Ford Model T, a 1926 Whippet, a 1936 Cadillac with a rumble seat, and a 1950 Studebaker. The aviation gallery offers World War I and II airplane engines.

Another landmark, thanks to railroad magnate Frederick J. Kimball, is Hotel Roanoke, the "Grand Old Lady on the Hill," completed in 1882 in a wheat field. To local youngsters, it's a "castle" because of its distinctive Tudor features. The AAA 4 Diamond Regency Room restaurant is known for its creamy, signature peanut soup and eggy spoonbread served for breakfast, lunch, and dinner since the 1940s. The hotel is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.



A locomotive built at Norfolk and Western Railroad's "shops" in Roanoke.

The National D-Day Memorial



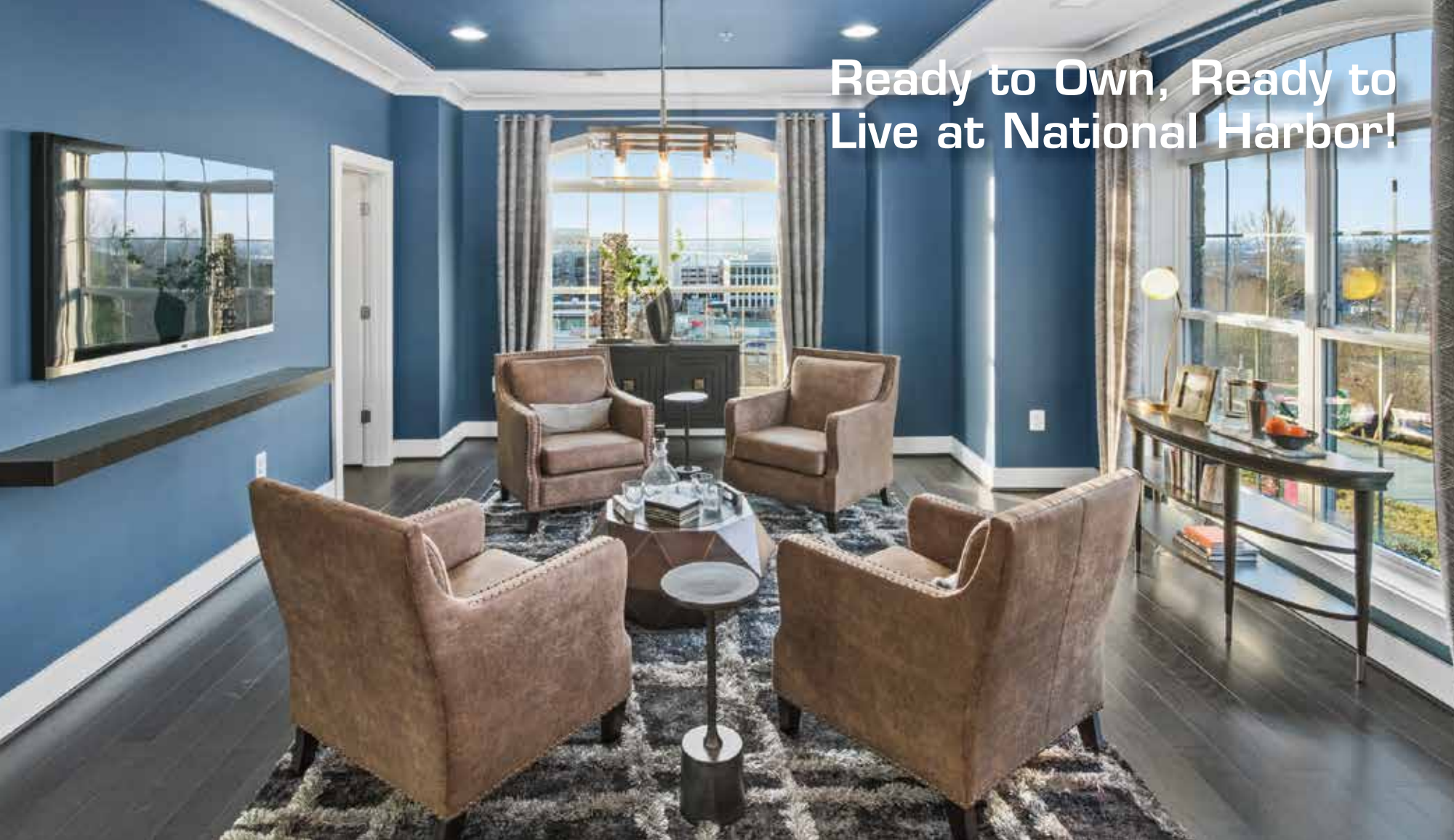
Soldier climbing up a cliff at Omaha Beach, Normandy, during the D-Day invasion.



Peanut soup and spoonbread in the Hotel Roanoke's Regency Room.



Roanoke skyline with logos of two past local companies and the Mill Mountain Star in the background.



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Pickles, pinballs and parakeets

The historic city market, the heart of downtown since 1882, is worth a meander; a seven-day-a-week destination for vegetables, fruits, plants, cheese, preserved and baked goods, and crafts. The 1922 Market Building has several take-out food options. Nearby is Billy's, which in 1912 as the Ritz Hotel, offered small rooms "for short-term companionships."

The market abuts Center in the Square, a multi-level complex of museums and the Mill Mountain Theater. The Harrison Museum of African American Culture highlights African American accomplishments in western Virginia. One exhibit showcases the Hunton Life Saving and First Aid Crew, the first African American rescue crew in the nation, founded in 1941 and in service until 1987. Many of its 40, on-call volunteers served in World War II.

Aspiring astronauts can "fly" to the moon, Mars, or Jupiter at 1,750 miles per hour in the astronaut simulator at the Science Museum. There's more flying nearby, 150 chirping, Australian parakeets. Guides explain that parakeet parents regurgitate their food to feed their young and that males are usually blue, females, pink.



Roanoke's Pinball Museum.

There's even noisier chirping going on at the Roanoke Pinball Museum, a showcase of 65 pinball machines dating from 1932. Guests can play most of them and even study the inside mechanics of some. The whole place is a neon, blinking, clanking cacophony of family-friendly machines with names like the Harlem Globetrotters, Beatles, Whirlwind, and Star Trek.

The Taubman Museum of Art soars, a sharp, contemporary, visual contrast to the city's traditional 19th and 20th century buildings. Designed by Randall Stout Architects to reflect the surrounding mountains, the 81,000-square-foot building has varied forms and textures to emphasize the rivers and geology of the region, topped by an undulating, stainless steel roof. In its 10 galleries, permanent exhibits display art from 1850 to 1950, including paintings by Norman Rockwell, Winslow Homer, and John Singer Sargent. Another gallery features art from 1950 to the present.

For a throwback to another era, Milan Tobacconists, founded in 1912, is a quiet, cigar "bar," selling hand-rolled cigars, custom-blended tobacco, pipes, ash trays, lighters, and humidor bags. "A cigar is not a big giant cigarette," explains the owner, David Meyer. "Smokers don't inhale cigars."

The outdoors beckons in and out of the city. A regional greenway network has over 400 miles of pedestrian and bicycle trails in the city and in surrounding towns and counties. The Blue Ridge Parkway slices through the city. Nearby mountains, rivers, and state parks invite adventurers to hike, bike, fish, paddle, and take scenic drives.



The Taubman Museum of Art.

Finger-lickin' food

Roanoke has a full range of eateries for all tastes and diets. On the traditional side, southern cooking has been front and center at the Roanoker since 1941, where restaurateurs serve 2,500 fluffy biscuits, sausage gravy, and homemade potato salad to up to 1,500 people daily. The Roanoke Weiner (locals say "Weenie") Stand opened in 1916 with five stools when hotdogs and a coke cost 25 cents. The hotdogs are well worth their \$2.87 price today, topped with mustard, onions, and chili beans. The Texas Tavern, née 1930, is called the "Roanoke Millionaires Club" because owners say they treat everyone like millionaires. Locals gobble up hamburgers, ham sandwiches, and chili, as did Johnny Cash and Willie Nelson when they dined there.

Roanokers love the star atop Mill Mountain at 1,693 feet, first turned on in 1949. Promoters say it is the largest, free-standing, man-made, illuminated star in the world. The Mill Mountain Star reigns like a crown jewel with its 2,000 feet of neon tubing gleaming through the darkness every night for miles around and greeting visitors from all directions.



Texas Tavern, a local favorite eatery.



The Mill Mountain Star.

Information

Bedford Boys Tribute Center,

<https://bedfordboystributecenter.com/>

National D-Day Memorial,

<https://www.dday.org/the-memorial/>

Visit Roanoke, www.visitvbr.com

Blue Ridge Parkway, www.blueridgeparkway.org

Admission to the Taubman is free.

The museum participates in the Blue Star Museums program, <https://www.arts.gov/initiatives/blue-star-museums>, which means that active duty military families also get free admission to Art Venture, the interactive creativity gallery for children and families.



An outdoor mosaic at the city market honoring Roanoke's railroad history and workers.

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NEXT

It tests your willpower, stamina and resilience. And most important, it helps you heal. Warrior Expeditions is a nonprofit organization that helps veterans transition to civilian life by organizing long-distance hiking, biking and paddling trips.

Army veteran, Jay Waters, was one of five veterans who biked 3,829 miles together in 2021 over 106 days from Washington, D.C., to La Push, Washington, on the Pacific Ocean, mostly on the Great American Rail Trail.



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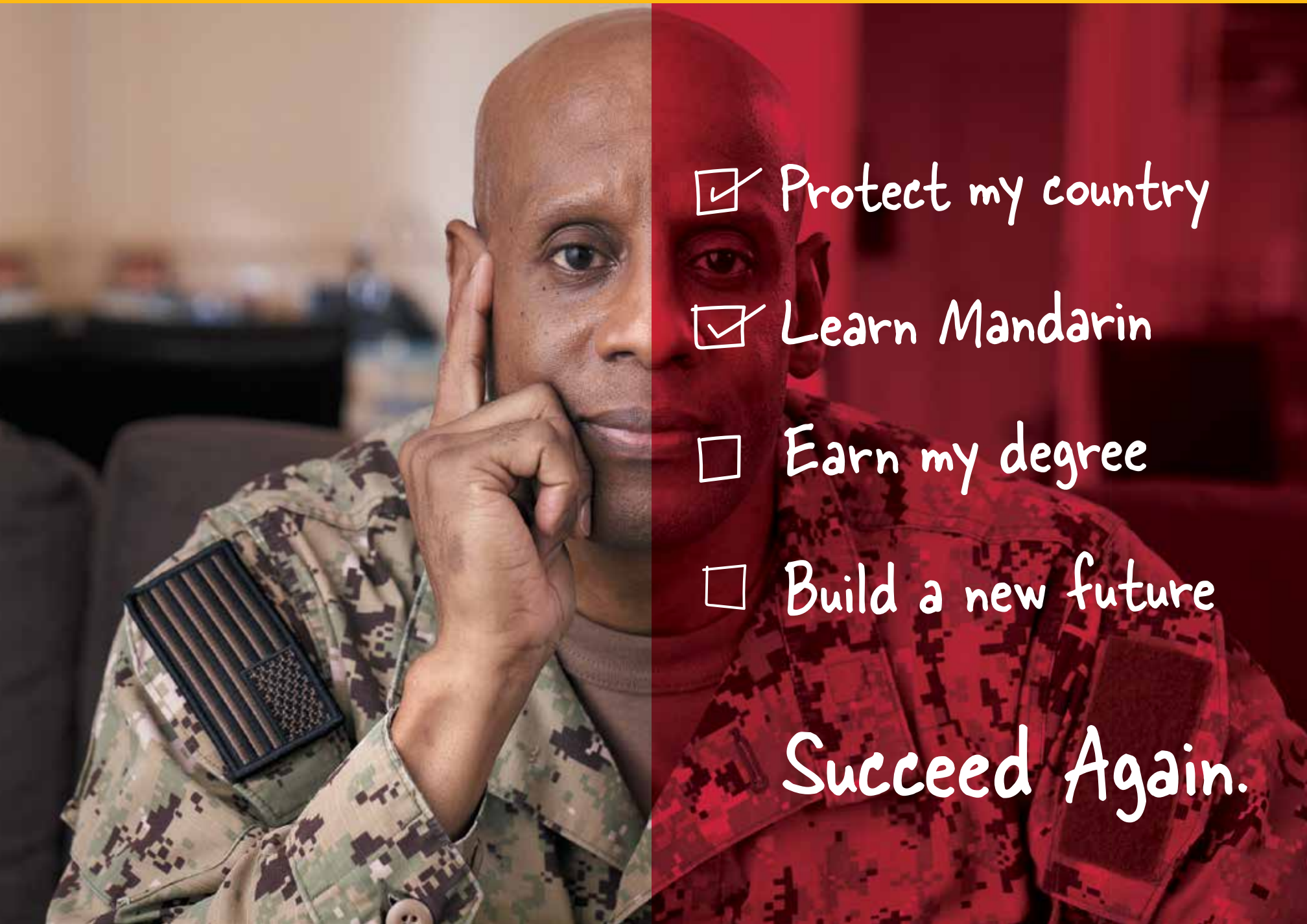
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Veterans are amazing people

This month's title speaks for itself. I am so lucky to be in a position where I get to meet some incredible people doing some wonderful things. Beyond that, I get to be a part of a team who gets to share their stories.

In this edition in particular, we have so many Veteran voices talking about how they've become involved in the arts since their separation from active duty. Art is so much more than drawing or painting, which is why I am thrilled to share stories of photographers, actors, sculptors, composters and more. Art is an opportunity for expression, but it is also an avenue for healing. The Veteran community is ready to connect with you no matter what your circumstance may be.

It's also June, so you know what that means... Happy birthday, Army! We partnered with Joint Base Myer-Henderson Hall to share a story celebrating the big 247.

A big thank you to the University of Maryland-Global Campus and their continued partnership with us, and a big thank you to all of our readers and advertisers who recognize the mission of At Ease.

Additionally, I would like to thank our page designer Jennifer Helmer, an Army Veteran herself, and congratulate her for another Maryland, Delaware, D.C. Press Association win. Thank you, Jenny, for making At Ease an award-winning magazine *every single year*.

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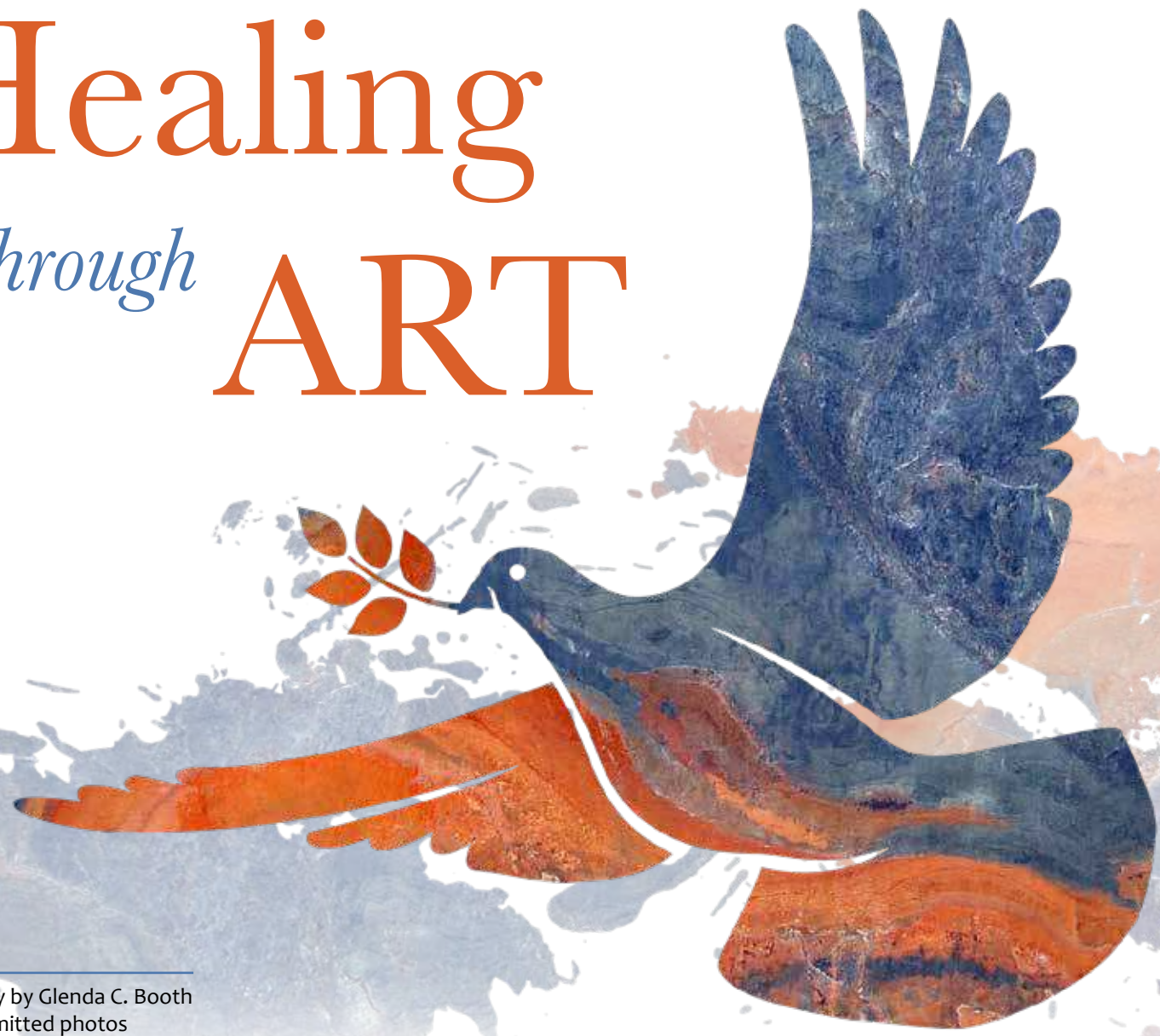


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Healing through ART



§ Story by Glenda C. Booth
Submitted photos

Anyone can create art and art is therapeutic. Better than pharmaceuticals, arts advocates contend, especially for people recovering from trauma. Jamie Wigginton tells the story of

a female gunnery sergeant who was encouraged by her therapist to try art. She came to a class, firm-jawed, tight-lipped, wearing camouflage. Using dyes and shaving creams to create a marble effect on her canvas,

suddenly the shape of a dove appeared, which she saw as a dove of peace. “It pulled something out of her,” said Wigginton, Director of Operations for Richmond’s Art for the Journey.



Richmond Arts

Art for the Journey is a nonprofit that offers people opportunities to create visual art, based on the premise that artistic activities have positive impacts on one’s emotional and psychological health. Project managers find that art especially helps veterans who feel scarred.

“Something in the creative process, especially when combined with a positive and encouraging communal setting, can produce miracles of well-being and even healing,” says Mark Hierholzer, the organization’s founder. “Not only is the art beautiful, but the most amazing result of these events is in the positive changes that take place in the mood and outlook of the veteran participants. Sometimes there are tears and hugs, which we love. And healing,” he stresses.

Once a month, the organization hosts group workshops at the Virginia War Memorial for 10 to 15 veterans for a two-hour art experience. The veterans, many from Hunter Holmes McGuire Veterans Hospital, can choose to come or not. (During the pandemic, volunteers delivered supplies to them and held Zoom events.) The veterans work with watercolors, clay, wire, charcoal, and decoupage, for example. They may decorate boxes, called memory boxes, for storing things. One Vietnam veteran who made a memory box put in objects from his Vietnam War experience and said he would never open it again, determined to finally move on.

Art for the Journey offers nonthreatening, non-judgmental experiences. The projects are self-executed with minimal direction.

“We don’t dictate,” says Melba Gibbs, Community Engagement Coordinator. “If they want to choose blue, they can choose blue. They take control.” She emphasizes that Art for the Journey does not offer professional art therapy, but that art eases the mind, brings peace and calmness, she believes, and it “uses a different side of the brain.” In doing abstract art, “Everyone can be successful,” adds Wigginton.

Hierholzer, who served in the Navy, also lauds art’s healing powers. “For years, as a mental health professional and artist, I found solace, peace, and a sense of calm whenever I was painting. I used to tell people that they could measure the quality of my mental health by the amount of time it had been since my last painting.” One of his brothers, a combat veteran, is a life-long artist and making art has been a major factor in addressing his post-traumatic stress disorder.

Art for the Journey also displays the veterans’ work and offers it for sale, which sponsors see as part of the therapy. They will hold an art show and fundraiser on September 22, 2022, in the Richmond area featuring veterans’ and others’ works. Visit <https://artforthejourney.org/program/veterans-art-program/>.

Lorton Arts

Using art to enhance well-being is also the theme of the Workhouse Military in the Arts Initiative (WMIA) at the Lorton Workhouse Arts Center, a program that offers visual art classes and mental health counseling by a trained art therapist. WMIA leaders strive to look at the whole person — the mind, body and spirit — and meet multiple needs. They also support the whole family because service members’ experiences at times not only leave life-long personal injuries, they can have ripple effects on their families, partners and caregivers.

Many WMAI participants suffer from service-related trauma and anxiety and find learning a new skill or profession to be an effective coping strategy, explains Alyssa Goggan, Managing Director and Art Therapist. All instructors are trained “to understand military culture,” she says, adding, “We try to provide a safe place.”

Thanks to a grant from the Potomac Health Foundation, all programs are free for active and retired military people and reservists. Instructors teach techniques like drawing, acrylic painting, photography, frameworking, and ceramics to 100 to 200 people a year. The average class size is around 10.

The program also offers veterans’ an open studio, which can be structured or open-ended art experiences like painting, sculpture, and drawing. These sessions encourage creativity and experimentation in a communal atmosphere and foster conversation, cultural exchange, and free expression. Participants can choose from a large range of materials.

The WMIA program can also create a class specific for service members with a guest instructor who addresses their special needs. The program has ties to several nearby military installations including the Army’s Fort Belvoir and Marine Corps Base Quantico.

On the participants, Goggan says, “They need help off base too.” Visit <https://www.workhousearts.org/military-in-the-arts-initiative>.

The arts are powerful.

“Research shows that the arts play a role in helping the military sustain and promote troop force and family readiness, resilience, retention, and for veterans, the successful reintegration into family and community life,” summarized Robert L. Lynch, President and Chief Executive Office for Americans for the Arts in a guest column for the National Association of Counties. “Service members and veterans with opportunities to express themselves and share their stories are better able to cope with post-traumatic stress disorder, traumatic brain injury, and depression. Evidence shows that individuals engaging in expressive arts therapies sleep better, have lessened depression and anxiety, and improved impulse control and concentration — qualities necessary for successful reintegration into the community and workforce.”

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How does your garden GROW?



Gardens have always been a source of food, joy, relaxation and pride. In recent years, people interested in gardening are either creating or joining gardens. Individuals and groups are always looking for new and better sources of compost to add to their endeavors. For those who want organic compost and want to help military veterans, consider using Veterans Compost.

§ Story and photos by Patsy Lynch



Justen Garrity, the founder and CEO of Veteran Compost, is a ten-year Army veteran who started the company in 2009.

“I was a combat engineer-five years in the regular Army and five years in the Pennsylvania National Guard,” said Garrity. “When I returned from a 15-month deployment in Iraq, it was in the height of the recession and job opportunities for a combat veteran were nonexistent.”



Garrity, who has an interest in sustainable products, was concerned about the tremendous amount of food product waste and decided that there was an opportunity for a new business.

“I wanted to be close to my family,” he said. “There were no jobs for veterans. I looked around me and saw that there was so much food waste. I thought this would be an opportunity for me to create a business that would address this. I had no real business experience.”

Garrity continued, “While friends would give me a ‘thumbs up,’ it was a struggle. I also wanted to be able to provide employment opportunities for Iraq and Afghanistan veterans who may find it difficult to find work, as they have a high-

er-than-average unemployment rate. We now work with veteran support groups, employment sites and word-of-mouth to let Veterans know about our company and potential jobs.”

Located on a 30-acre farm in Aberdeen, Md., the Veteran Compost site has an assortment of buildings which are used for the soil and fertilizer mixing operations. The fields around the buildings are used to aerate the compost piles. Each pile is connected to a water source which ensures the pile is kept at a consistent moisture level.

Veteran Compost prides itself as being “Made by Hand and Backed by Science.” This is the company’s signature statement. Each bag of compost is made of food scraps and wood chips, so it is free of pesticides and other contaminants.



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“It takes between three to six months for the food wastes to break down into organic materials,” he said. “We have soil scientists and several licensed composters on staff to oversee our daily operations. We regularly conduct internal and external product testing to ensure that our products are optimized for growing.”

While the Veteran Compost “busy season” runs from about April to May, Garrity said that gardeners start working on their gardens and compost early, which has been

active for between three to six months.

“We are quite busy between Halloween, Thanksgiving, Christmas and Super Bowl week,” he said. “People have lots of parties, which leads to more food waste. This provides us with lots of organic materials ready to be composted,” he said with a smile.

One of the mounds that Garrity pointed out contained crab shells and discarded crab products.

“Being in Maryland, we wanted to be able to produce and provide a ‘home grown product.’ We have an arrangement with companies that manufacture crab products and need a place to dispose of the waste products,” Garrity said. “Be-

cause crab shells have nutrients and other products that are beneficial to the soil, we wanted to be able to offer this to our customers.”

Other mounds located on the Aberdeen property consist of food waste collected from residential and commercial properties.

“We have been able to reach out to industrial companies and hospitals in the area to provide an alternative to using landfills,” he said. “We can compost their waste products into a usable and organic product, and we are less expensive than the fees that would have to pay for using landfills.”



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Mark Meinke is a residential client who is happy with Veteran Compost's product.

"We have been absolutely delighted by Veteran's composting service," Meinke said. "A colleague at our Quaker Meeting had recommended them when we were discussing net zero initiatives and our food waste is being converted into beneficial compost which we use in our flower beds. We received our first 20-pound bag a few weeks ago. It is perfect for our spring garden work."

Walking around the Aberdeen facility, Garrity looked around the property, his hands covered with dirt with a big smile on his face.

"I never thought that I would end up doing this kind of work, but in spite of some hard times, it has been fun!"

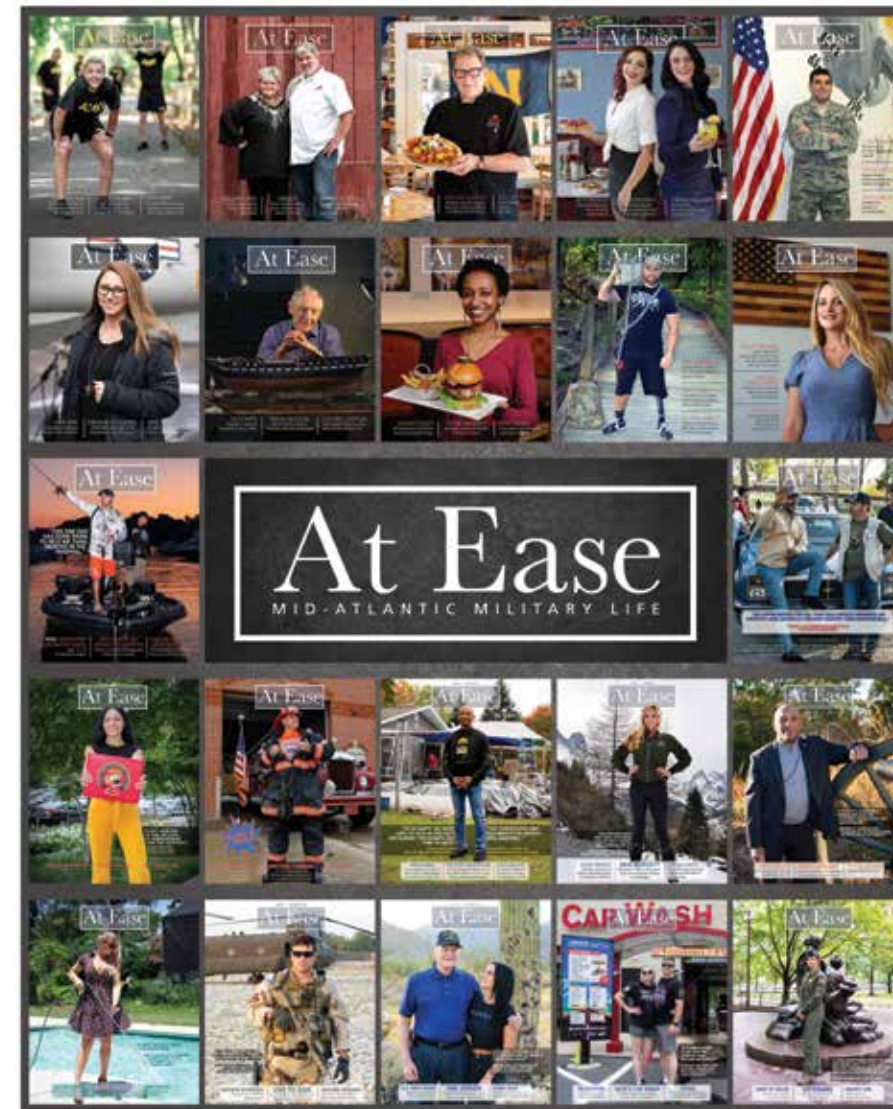


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Rescuing Reimagining



§ Story and photos by Glenda C. Booth

They started with a truck, a forklift, and a black dog in 1999, as Mike Whiteside tells it, the story of the origins of Black Dog Salvage in Roanoke, Va. They had no business plan, but today, he and his partner, Robert Kulp, have two buildings of stuff. You name it. They've got it.