

# Oklahoma Arts and the Military Initiative



## 2015 Community Survey Report





PO Box 52001-2001 • Oklahoma City 73152-2001 • 405.521.2931  
Fax 405.521.6418 • [okarts@arts.ok.gov](mailto:okarts@arts.ok.gov) • [arts.ok.gov](http://arts.ok.gov)

# Preface



The Oklahoma Arts Council is developing an Arts and the Military Initiative to serve veterans in our state as part of their reintegration and clinical rehabilitation. Additional reach will be made to active duty troops, including guardsmen and reservists, and family members. The initiative aims to aid community organizations in providing arts-focused programs to those who have courageously served our country.

As part of the first phase of the initiative, the Oklahoma Arts Council distributed the Oklahoma Arts and the Military Initiative 2015 Community Survey in order to collect data from across the state to assess the presence of arts programs serving members of the military community. Survey responses will directly help us to achieve our goal of building and strengthening connections between the arts and military communities as well as leveraging the arts as part of the military experience in Oklahoma.

Thank you to everyone who provided feedback and to those who shared the survey with their colleagues. We extend a special note of appreciation to the Oklahoma Museums Association for disseminating the survey to their membership.

Again, we appreciate the participation of Oklahomans from across the state and look forward to engaging the arts to enhance the quality of life for our service members and their families.

Amber Sharples  
Executive Director



## About the Survey



The Oklahoma Arts Council administered the Oklahoma Arts and the Military Initiative Community Survey from January through March 2015 using SurveyMonkey.com.

Disseminated directly to 4,682 individuals representing arts and cultural organizations, social service nonprofits, K-12 schools and career tech, colleges and universities, and state and local government, as well as practicing artists and arts supporters, the survey link received more than 450 registered clicks. We used social media channels, including Facebook and Twitter, to push the survey link to over 14,000 followers with multiple shares. In addition, the Oklahoma Museums Association sent the survey electronically to their 580 members. While it is difficult to provide an accurate sample size, it is estimated that the reach of the survey link was just over 19,500. A total of 400 individuals, representing 86 cities and 51 counties across the state, responded to the survey.

The majority of survey participants have not served in the military but have a friend or family member who has served. Others responded that they live in or near a military community, are employed by an organization that serves the military, or have no ties to the military.

This nine-question survey assessed the presence of arts-based programs and activities directly targeting the military population in communities across Oklahoma. If arts-based programs existed, the survey recorded the population being served as well as the name of the organization providing targeted programming in the community.

Additionally, the survey tool assessed individual interest in community-based arts programs that directly serve military populations. Respondents identified the specific needs of service members, veterans, and their families that could be met by these programs.

Lastly, the survey collected contact information from individuals wishing to take part in follow-up interviews.

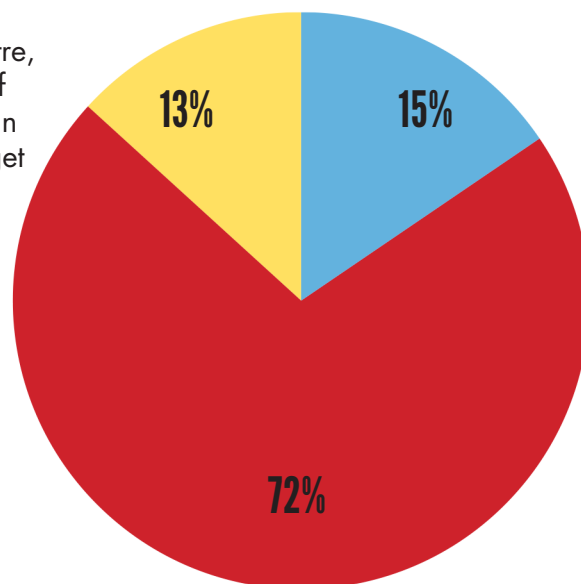
## Current Program Offerings



When asked about awareness of arts-based programs or activities that directly target and serve the military population in Oklahoma, 62 individuals (15%) responded that they are aware of specific programs taking place in their local communities. The majority of respondents indicated that they are not aware of programming or are not sure, underscoring the need for arts programs for Oklahoma service members and their families.

Thinking about all art forms (creative writing, visual art, dance, music, theatre, and traditional arts), are you aware of any arts-based programs or activities in your local community that directly target and serve the military population?

- Yes
- No
- Not Sure



Existing arts programs in Oklahoma serve individuals across the military continuum, including families and caregivers; however, the majority of services reported target veterans and VA community systems. Community-based nonprofits throughout the state offer the highest number of arts programs. Additional service providers include government agencies at the municipal, county, and state level, as well as tribal entities, public libraries, colleges and universities, and K-12 public and private schools.



## NewView Oklahoma

In collaboration with the Oklahoma City Museum of Art, NewView Oklahoma offers a “Creative Visions” program to ensure that blind and visually impaired people in the community have the opportunity to participate in the arts in the same ways as those who are sighted. The program includes arts events for members of their VITAL veterans support group.

# Communities of Practice



Seventy respondents to the survey provided additional details about arts-based programs for members of the military in Oklahoma communities. From Altus to Tulsa, veterans, active duty military, and their families benefit from free or discounted admission and tickets to programs as well as a number of rich arts experiences and instruction.

## **Altus**

- Home to Altus Air Force Base, the city is also headquarters for Shortgrass Arts and Humanities Council, which hosts arts instruction and performances throughout the year that reach service members and their families.

## **Bartlesville**

- Theater Bartlesville performed the compelling drama about the wartime experience *If All the Sky Were Paper* as part of its 2014-15 season.

## **Broken Arrow**

- The Military History Center (formerly Military History Museum) provides programs and events for area veterans, including exhibitions and patriotic celebrations.

## **Duncan**

- Chisholm Trail Arts Council and Duncan Little Theatre offer military ticket pricing for their performances and workshops.

## **Enid**

- Enid Symphony Orchestra (ESO) maintains an active relationship with Vance Air Force Base, providing military discount to all ESO events, recognizing military personnel at the annual Fourth of July concert at Meadowlake Park, and hosting squadron events throughout the year at the Enid Symphony Center.
- Also mentioned for providing arts experiences to service members were: Enid Arts, Gaslight Theater, Leonardo's Discovery Warehouse, and Northern Oklahoma College Community Band.



## **Jenks**

- “The Poppy Project” creatively connects veterans with thousands of students from East Elementary School, Jenks High School vocal and drama programs, and members of the Jenks High School ROTC through “Home of the Brave” Veteran’s Day concerts and “Valentines for Vets” handmade student valentines mailed to veterans, among other service learning veterans awareness projects.

## **Lawton**

- Lawton is the site of Fort Sill Army post, home of the United States Army Field Artillery School and one of four locations for Army Basic Combat Training. At nearby Cameron University, a number of arts experiences are offered for the general public which includes veterans, service members, and their families. Concerts have taken place on campus by Bella Voce Singers and the Lawton Community Choir. The Military Experience & the Arts Symposium, hosted by Cameron University, took place May 14-17, 2015 and featured more than 70 workshops and special presentations by visual artists, dancers, filmmakers, musicians, writers, and others. This is planned to be an annual event for veterans and active duty service members.
- Lawton Community Theatre and Lawton Philharmonic Orchestra provide free tickets to Fort Sill’s Family and Morale, Welfare, and Recreation department which distributes the tickets to active duty service members and their families.
- Lawton Arts & Humanities Council and Lawton Fort Sill Art Council host art shows, demonstrations, a teen drawing club, and arts workshops for children and adults.

## **Lone Wolf**

- Lone Wolf is the site for the Oklahoma Summer and Fall Arts Institutes at Quartz Mountain, serving base member families from Fort Sill in Lawton and Altus Air Force Base.

## **Midwest City**

- “Tinker Living,” at Tinker Air Force Base, hosts visual arts, dance, and craft classes for all ages, serving active-duty military, reservists, retirees, dependents, and civilians. Tinker Air Force Base Youth Center has hosted the touring company Missoula Children’s Theater for residencies in past years.

## **Muskogee**

- Korean War Veteran and artist Cotti Lorango, Jr., Cotti Fine Oils, donated his time to teach painting to veterans of Afghanistan and Iraq at the Jack C. Montgomery VA Medical Center. The VA Medical Center hosts performances by Tulsa Symphony's Heart Strings musicians and offers several creative arts therapies for veterans on-site.

## **Norman**

- Norman Veterans Center offers a "Music & Memory" program for their residents with dementia, provides arts instruction in a variety of media, and holds guitar lessons as part of a music therapy program.

## **Oklahoma City**

- NewView Oklahoma, working in partnership with Oklahoma City Museum of Art, offers "Creative Visions," a series of visual arts classes serving individuals who are visually impaired. A component of this program reaches veterans and their caregivers by providing hands-on instruction in the visual arts and arts experiences such as tours.
- Oklahoma City VA Medical Center provides a Therapeutic Recreation Clinic that offers educational treatment groups and Leisure Skill Development groups including pottery, jewelry making, drumming, and open studio.
- Combat Paper Project—a program that offers papermaking workshops for veterans in which participants use uniforms worn in service to create works of art—has completed arts instruction and an exhibition at Individual Artists of Oklahoma gallery.
- Youth Trumpet & Taps Corps, founded by Girl Scout Katie Prior, performs at community events and trains high school trumpet players to sound taps at veterans' funerals.
- A group of five established Native American artists have partnered to help heal the community in an untraditional way, using their work as the Urban Indian 5. Through "Art with a Cause" events, these individuals work with various populations to create artwork to shed historical trauma and inspire wellness.

## Skiatook

- Skiatook Public Schools holds an annual Veteran’s Day assembly with their high school choir and invites veterans from the community. Past performances have included spoken word presentations as well as a one-act play about a military subject.

## Tahlequah

- Cherokee Nation Veterans Center shares stories of past military service by Cherokees using original artworks.

## Tulsa

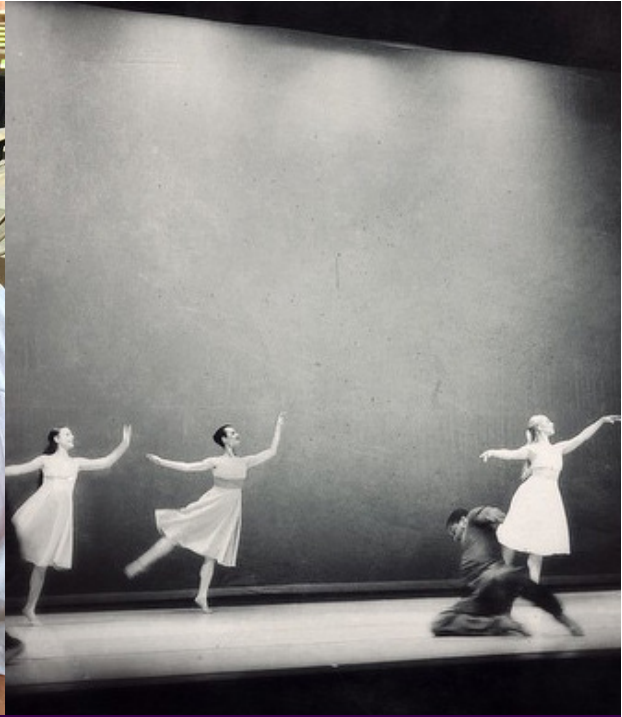
- Tulsa Symphony takes part in the national VetTix program, providing discounted tickets to military personnel and their families, as well as complimentary tickets to main stage concerts for caregivers at the VA Hospital in Muskogee. In addition, their Heart Strings program brings live music to the patients, families, and staff of the VA Hospital in Muskogee.
- Combat Paper Project has also provided arts instruction in the Tulsa metro area.
- Philbrook Museum of Art offers free admission year-round for active-duty military members as well as to veterans on Veteran’s Day.



## Youth Trumpet & Taps Corps

Founded by Katie Prior, the Youth Trumpet & Taps Corps Association trains, supports, and recognizes high school trumpet players who use their musical gifts to honor military veterans.

Photo courtesy of Youth Trumpet & Taps Corps



## Military Experience & the Arts Symposium

The second national Military Experience & the Arts symposium, held May 2015 in Lawton, provided free access to over 70 workshops, performances, and events. Presenters included flute maker and performer Albert Gray Eagle, contemporary dance company EXIT12, and photographer Tif Holmes, among others.



## **Across Oklahoma**

Statewide, a number of organizations are part of the Blue Star Museums initiative—a collaboration between the National Endowment for the Arts, Blue Star Families, and the U.S. Department of Defense. The program provides free admission to the nation’s active-duty military personnel and their families, including National Guard and Reserve, from Memorial Day through Labor Day each year. In Oklahoma, these include:

- Broken Arrow Historical Society Museum and Military History Center, Broken Arrow
- Washita Battlefield National Historic Site, Cheyenne
- Grady County Historical Society, Chickasha
- Will Rogers Memorial Museums, Claremore
- Chisholm Trail Heritage Center and the (W. T. Foreman) Prairie House Foundation, Duncan
- Edmond Historical Society & Museum, Edmond
- Fort Sill National Historic Landmark and Museum, Fort Sill
- Har-Ber Village Museum, Grove
- OK Territorial Museum, Guthrie
- Muskogee War Memorial Park, Muskogee
- Fred Jones Jr. Museum of Art and Sam Noble Oklahoma Museum of Natural History, Norman
- American Banjo Museum, Gaylord-Pickens Museum (Home of the Oklahoma Hall of Fame), National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum, Oklahoma History Center, and Oklahoma City Museum of Art, Oklahoma City
- Pawnee Bill Ranch and Museum, Pawnee
- Elsing Museum at Oral Roberts University, Gilcrease Museum, Philbrook Museum of Art, The Sherwin Miller Museum of Jewish Art, Tulsa Historical Society & Museum, Tulsa

Additionally, Oklahoma City Repertory Theatre (CityRep) is a Blue Star Theatre, part of a national program providing discounted tickets to active-duty U.S. military and their immediate families as well as veterans.

Oklahoma Educational Television Authority (OETA), working in partnership with Oklahoma Humanities Council, presented a special episode of “Native Oklahoma” that focused on the experiences of Native American Vietnam War veterans and ways that different tribes prepare servicemen and women for combat, welcome them home from war, help them readjust to civilian life, and honor them.

## Conclusion



Survey participants expressed interest in having arts-based programs available that directly serve military personnel and their families, including members of the National Guard and Reserve. More than 350 individuals, 98% of the total respondents, stated some level of interest ranging from “somewhat interested” to “very interested.” Participants responded that the specific needs of the military population to be met by arts programs include combat stress and recovery, family support, community support, engagement, physical rehabilitation, and economic empowerment.

Further research will be required to identify individual and community needs as well as gaps of service across the state to determine how and where the Oklahoma Arts Council will have the most impact. In addition, follow up interviews will be conducted with those survey participants who expressed an interest in providing additional insights.



### Theater Bartlesville

Directed by Theater Bartlesville’s Artistic Director Joe Sears, *If All the Sky Were Paper* is a compelling drama about our soldiers, written by our soldiers through their personal letters during our many American wars.

Photo courtesy of Tom Mardis

**Oklahoma Arts and the Military Initiative**





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