

Introduction: Features

Veteran Artist Program

Jenny Bell

The editorial staff of *The Journal of Military Experience* is pleased to introduce a “Features” section to our second volume. This section will showcase a veteran organization that is setting new precedents for others in alternative, ground-breaking ways. With this volume, we have chosen to recognize the work of the Veteran Artist Program (VAP) through the inclusion of an article written by VAP’s founder, B. R. McDonald.

The key to VAP’s success seems to lie in their belief in collaboration. Instead of trying to replicate what others are already doing, or just going it alone, the leaders of VAP have made a conscious decision to join forces with other service-driven organizations, such as the 6th Branch. These collaborative relationships have led to theatrical productions (*The Telling Project*), gallery events, and community-service projects (*Operation: Oliver*). They have provided a forum for veterans to pursue their artistic gifts, to heal from wartime trauma, to be a voice for others and, perhaps most importantly, to continue to serve their nation.

Over the course of the last ten years, hundreds—if not thousands—of new organizations have popped up all over the country with the common goal of supporting our veterans. VAP has gone beyond this basic goal; their team members have taken leadership skills instilled in the military and applied them in a tangible way to society. For this reason, we believe that VAP deserves to be recognized.