



## MESA ARTS CENTER

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Mesa Arts Center's Arts in Service program to receive a \$50,000 Creative Forces Community Engagement Grant to help support arts activities for Active Service Members, Veterans, their Families and Caregivers.**

**Mesa, AZ** – Mesa Arts Center is one of 26 organizations nationwide selected to receive a Creative Forces® Community Engagement grant. A grant of \$50,000 will support **Mesa Arts Center's Arts in Service** program, which provides creative pathways for veterans and service members to use studio art experiences in reaching their personal goals, whether those are finding a supportive community, stress relief, working toward overall health and wellness, or pursuing career interests in art making.

"Mesa United Way and the Mesa Veterans Resource Center are excited to partner with Mesa Arts Center in the NEA Creative Forces initiative," said Mark Young, Mesa United Way President and CEO. "We know that the power of art can provide self-awareness and therapy for our nation's heroes. We applaud the Mesa Arts Center for its commitment to those who served our nation with selflessness and passion and anticipate great outcomes from this work."

Creative Forces Community Engagement Grants are part of the National Endowment for the Arts' Creative Forces® initiative and are in partnership with Mid-America Arts Alliance. Thanks to generous additional support from The Boeing Company, the Salt River Pima Maricopa Indian Community, and AZ Department of Veteran Services, **Arts in Service** provides educational studio art classes free for veterans and service members.

"We are honored to have been selected for the NEA Creative Forces Grant. With this funding, we are excited to continue and grow studio art classes to reach more service members and veterans, and with this funding, we will be able to increase our family events and offsite exhibitions.," said Laura Wilde, Studio Manager, Mesa Arts Center.

The ongoing program consists of eight weeks of veteran/service member-exclusive sessions ranging from welding, ceramics, printmaking, painting, photography,

blacksmithing, jewelry, playwriting, glass flameworking, and belly dancing. AIS sessions focus on the art form to enable skill-building, relationship-building and a sense of achievement, all while building resiliency and achieving wellness.

“We are thrilled that the many years of extraordinarily powerful and beautiful work and strong community created by Mesa Arts Center’s Arts in Service program has been recognized, honored and supported by this grant award,” said Cindy Ornstein, Executive Director of Mesa Arts Center. “The funds will enable us to continue expanding this vital service that fills up quickly each session.”

Creative Forces®: NEA Military Healing Arts Network is an initiative of the National Endowment for the Arts in partnership with the U.S. Departments of Defense and Veterans Affairs that seeks to improve the health, well-being, and quality of life for military and veteran populations exposed to trauma, as well as their families and caregivers. Creative Forces Community Engagement grants will increase access to arts activities in more communities and will serve a broad population, including active-duty service members, guardsmen, reservists, veterans, military and veteran families, as well as caregivers and healthcare workers providing care for military service members and veterans.

“It is inspiring to see how arts programming is being utilized **by Mesa Arts Center’s Arts in Service** program to support and promote healing for our nation’s military, veterans, and all those who care for them,” said Dr. Maria Rosario Jackson, chair of the National Endowment for the Arts. “Engagement with the arts—the act of doing, seeing, creating, teaching—is crucial to living healthy and artful lives. The expansion of Creative Forces from clinical sites into communities like Mesa provides significant opportunities for this critical work to reach more people and make a difference in their lives.”

By providing opportunities for engaging in art or art making, **Mesa Arts Center** seeks to help participants gain a better understanding of themselves and others through creative expression while increasing their sense of belonging to our community. Participation in the arts often leads to an individual and shared sense of purpose, as well as positive self-worth, supporting their ability to adapt and readjust to life’s challenges.

Todd Stein, President and CEO of Mid-America Arts Alliance, said “we are excited to support this project with **Mesa Arts Center** to promote continued healing through the arts for military populations in communities across the country. The art experiences offered show how art can connect and heal.” He added, “Through the Creative Forces Community Engagement Grant Program, we are humbled to have the opportunity to work on this initiative with the National Endowment for the Arts, created in partnership with the U.S. Departments of Defense and Veterans Affairs.”

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## **ABOUT MESA ARTS CENTER**

Mesa Arts Center, owned and operated by the City of Mesa, is a unique, architecturally stunning, international award-winning facility located in the heart of downtown Mesa. Arizona’s largest arts center is home to four theaters, five art galleries, and 14 art

studios. Guests, patrons, and students come to Mesa Arts Center to enjoy the finest live entertainment and performances, world-class visual art exhibitions, and outstanding arts education classes. The facility is an architectural showpiece and a destination for visitors to the Phoenix area. Mesa Arts Center's mission is to invite all people to create and discover entertaining, challenging and diverse art and arts experiences within joyous, dynamic and welcoming environments. For more information, visit [mesaartscenter.com](http://mesaartscenter.com).

### **ABOUT THE CREATIVE FORCES INITIATIVE**

Creative Forces®: NEA Military Healing Arts Network is an initiative of the National Endowment for the Arts in partnership with the U.S. Departments of Defense and Veterans Affairs. The initiative seeks to improve the health, well-being, and quality of life for military and veteran populations exposed to trauma, as well as their families and caregivers. Creative Forces is managed in partnership with Americans for the Arts, the Henry M. Jackson Foundation for the Advancement of Military Medicine, and Mid-America Arts Alliance. More information can be found at [arts.gov/creativeforces](http://arts.gov/creativeforces) and [creativeforcesnrc.arts.gov](http://creativeforcesnrc.arts.gov)

### **ABOUT THE NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE ARTS**

Established by Congress in 1965, the National Endowment for the Arts is an independent federal agency that is the largest funder of the arts and arts education in communities nationwide and a catalyst of public and private support for the arts. By advancing equitable opportunities for arts participation and practice, the NEA fosters and sustains an environment in which the arts benefit everyone in the United States. To learn more, visit [arts.gov](http://arts.gov) or follow us on Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube.

### **ABOUT MID-AMERICA ARTS ALLIANCE**

Mid-America Arts Alliance (M-AAA) strengthens and supports artists, cultural organizations, and communities throughout our region and beyond. Additional information about M-AAA is available at <https://www.maaa.org/>.