

ABOUTFACE is making art programs available to the Contra Costa County Veterans Community

The California Arts Council's *Veterans Initiative in the Arts* program is rooted in the desire to address the needs and improve the lives of California's Veterans through quality arts programming that is sensitive and responsive to Veterans' unique experiences.

Contra Costa County offers ABOUTFACE to encourage arts learning and self-expression. Veterans learn acrylic painting techniques that allow them to express their feelings by visualizing, painting self-portraits and by telling their stories. The program also contributes to public appreciation for the diverse range of Veterans' experiences through gallery exhibits.

The Arts & Culture Commission of Contra Costa County is dedicated to advancing the arts in a way that promotes education and collaboration throughout Contra Costa County so that we may grow creatively as a community that preserves and celebrates our diverse cultural expression.

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Content & design by Ryan Berg and Roger Renn



Bringing Art to the Veteran Community



This activity is funded in part by the Contra Costa County Board of Supervisors and the California Arts Council, a state agency.



Our Beginnings

Contra Costa County has participated in the *Veterans in the Arts Program* since it was established in 2015 by the California Arts Council. **ABOUTFACE: Self-understanding through Self-portraits** is a program created by the Arts & Culture Commission in response to the needs of veterans in our community. A collaboration with the Veterans Service Department, Contra Costa TV and the County Library has enriched many Veterans' lives through our workshops. Veterans have been enthusiastic about participating and their portraits have been appreciated by the public when exhibited in galleries.

The Arts & Culture Commission and the Physical Rehabilitation Service at Veterans Affairs Health Care in Martinez developed a portrait workshop based on the belief that **“This was an eye opening experience for me”** individuals have the capacity to heal themselves. Using best practices and a mentoring approach, ABOUTFACE effectively engages Veterans in the process of painting and encourages artistic expression. This program is rooted in the desire to improve the lives of local Veterans by engaging them in recreational painting.

One of the most difficult experiences for Veterans is the transition from military to civilian life. Workshop activities include meditation, peer discussion, and sketching one another; as well as painting a portrait.

ABOUTFACE workshops were initially held in a small art studio, but as word spread, we expanded into libraries and Veterans' buildings throughout the county. Since establishing a strong relationship with the Concord Veterans Center we're able to bring an even deeper quality of art engagement that is both sensitive and responsive to Veterans' unique experiences.



Meet the Team



Felisa Gaffney
PsyD., Air Force Veteran

“Doc G,” as she is known by Veterans, served twenty years in the Air Force, and deployed twice to Kuwait. She is a licensed Marriage and Family Therapist and currently serves as a readjustment counselor at the Concord Veterans Center.



Victoria Bianco
Visual Artist

Victoria wrote the curriculum for ABOUTFACE. She teaches watercolors to veterans at the Martinez VA and is instrumental in guiding Veterans through the painting process.



Ryan Berg
Marine Corps Veteran

Ryan served in the Marine Corps and deployed twice to Iraq. He obtained an MA from Saint Mary's College. Ryan coordinates the workshops and supports community outreach.



LaMar Anderson
AC5 Commissioner & Project Director

Nathan D. Johnson
Contra Costa County Veterans Service

ABOUTFACE Goals

We believe Veterans can play an active role in determining their wellness. ABOUTFACE helps Veterans and their families to:

- Think positively & be non-judgmental
- Be creative & try new solutions
- Accept mistakes & adapt to change
- Self-reflect & gain insight
- Increase self-esteem & reduce stress

“I have always enjoyed looking at art now I'm learning that I enjoy making art”

- Veteran participant

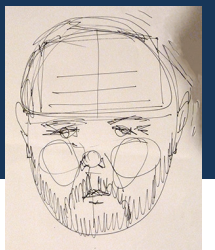


Visual art contributes to healing by providing enjoyment, relaxation and inspiration. The Arts introduce creative processes to enhance self-awareness.



Research Shows

Engaging in the arts promotes wellness and alleviates pain. Art programs provide a sense of achievement that diminishes emotional stress, creates an outlet for expression of feelings and channels energies into healthy behavior. Painting can encourage self-expression, communication and socialization.



PARTICIPATION CONTINUES TO INCREASE



Positive Impact

ABOUTFACE is successful because of our careful integration of self-reflection and painting. Workshops develop artistic abilities and create space for Veterans to reflect on their process.

- Veterans consistently report that the workshop allows them to express themselves on canvas; providing an outlet for memories to surface
- Thomas, an Army Veteran, picked up a paintbrush at ABOUTFACE and has since completed dozens of paintings
- A husband shared long-held memories of his time in Vietnam with his wife after his portrait was publicly displayed
- A Vietnam Veteran reported that he felt like nobody cared about him when he came home and that ABOUTFACE gave him the sense that someone cared

