

About the Cover Art

Colors of Dementia was created by a group of eight Veterans who reside together in the Community Living Center at the Albany Stratton Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center, Albany, New York. The Veteran artists, Peter Fondino, John Sullivan, Robert Mikus, John McCauley, George McBride, Tom Ryan, Hector Quesnel, and Douglas Norton, aptly dubbed Victory's Heroes, live with different forms and severities of dementia, along with other diagnoses such as posttraumatic stress disorder, traumatic brain injury, arthritis, and impaired vision and hearing. The Veterans represent the Army, Air Force, and Marine Corps from varying war eras (World War II, Korean War, and Vietnam and post-Vietnam conflicts).

These Veterans, while very active in recreation therapy and creative arts therapy programs, have no formal art training. In fact, their creation, *Colors of Dementia*, began during a random art group led by recreation therapy staff. Over a 2-month period, the Veterans were asked to explain what dementia was to them. They used words like "insanity," "dazed," "anger," "chaos," "loss," "frenzy," "spinning," "confusion," and "forgetfulness." Next, they were asked to put their words into art. Group members were invited to use any medium that helped them to describe how dementia makes them feel. The Veterans used ceramic tiles, mosaic tiles, stones, and beads in a spiral pattern with multiple paint colors brushed, dripped, and flung at the canvas. Each Veteran had a role, whether leading the group, contributing ideas, choosing colors, painting, or placing objects.

"Throughout this project, the Veterans took pride in what they did, working together with their recreation therapy staff members Tamika Richardson and Kathleen Fitzgerald and most importantly having fun," said Christina Rulison, LCAT, MT-BC, NMT, co-chair of the local art show committee at Albany. "This is truly an interpretation of dementia through the eyes of these Veterans and it was a memorable experience to watch it come together."

"I am an advocate of the Special Events, having seen firsthand how participation in these types of rehabilitation programs benefit our Veterans," said Shirley Groer, the new editor of *JRRD*. "Since the 1980s, the VA has provided opportunities for Veterans to participate in specific sports programs (such as the National Veterans Wheelchair Games) or special events (such as the National Creative Arts Festival and Golden Age Games) as a means to successful rehabilitation. We are honored to be able to display highlights of Veteran's artwork that was presented at the 2014 Creative Arts Festival, and thank the Veterans for their willingness to share their art."

