

About the Cover Art

Draw a block of circles with pastel pencils. Blend in other colors. Fill spaces between the circles with colored pens. Repeat a thousand times. What seems like a relatively straightforward process is used by Army Veteran Daniel Jones to not only create beautiful art but also to battle his “many demons.”

Mr. Jones’ work *September Haystack* was selected to represent the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) American Lake Medical Center at Puget Sound in Tacoma, Washington, during the 2014 National Veterans Creative Arts Festival, earning a second place award. While the second place finish was gratifying, Mr. Jones says the “greater reward is the emotional calm I receive when creating the art. Most people have a place or places where all is calm emotionally, all is raised spiritually, and where healing is available for the asking. Mine is in my art, and a few other special spots, including Haystack Rock.”

After growing up on the rural Oregon coast, Mr. Jones was drafted into the U.S. Army following a stint at the University of Miami, where he majored in Engineering. He spent most of his tour of duty in Cold War West Germany during the Vietnam conflict. Like many Veterans who served during this period, and those who served before and after him, Mr. Jones says he was plagued by many demons, including depression, isolation, anxiety, and substance abuse. “I found my greatest solace in my art. It helped me through my challenges while I was living on the streets, during my periods in and out of hospitals and treatment centers, and through so many other challenges.”

While he has no formal art instruction other than a beginning drawing class at a community college in Eugene, Oregon, Mr. Jones finally got “clean and sober” in 1992 and took a janitorial job at a local art supply store, flourishing for 5 years while surrounded by artists and art materials. He married his wife Cheryl in 1999, and they settled into a home and have two children together.

The National Veterans Creative Arts Festival is one of the programs sponsored by the VA National Veterans Sports Programs and Special Events. To participate in the Festival, Veterans first compete at their local VA hospitals. Those selected are then provided the opportunity to attend the Festival and compete at a national level.

“I am an advocate of the Special Events, having seen firsthand how participation in these types of rehabilitation programs benefits 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.”

