



**Carl T Hayden Phoenix VA Medical Center
National Competition Winners**

Destroyer of Valor, Feliciano Fortuna
1st Place Combat Experience (top left)

The Seuss Amongst Us, Daniel Combs
1st Place Print Making (middle)

Floral, Tofe Eslava
2nd Place Leather Carving (bottom right)

Hot Air Balloons, Melissa Freed
3rd Place Fiber Arts (top right)

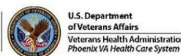


NATIONAL VETERANS CREATIVE ARTS COMPETITION



AMERICAN
LEGION
AUXILIARY

VA



January 15, 2026

Happy New Year from the Creative Arts Therapy Department at the Phoenix VA Medical Center!

We wanted to share some great news! We just received results from the National Competition. Out of 7000 entries nationally, the Phoenix VA had four entries that received an award!

In Third Place – **Melissa Freed** with her Fiber Arts piece, “Hot Air Balloon”

In Second Place – **Tofe Eslava** with his Leather Tooling piece, “Floral”

And there were TWO first place winners, who will be able to travel to the National Veteran’s Creative Arts Festival (NVCAF) on June 9, 2026, in Columbia, South Carolina!

For Combat Experience – **Felix Fortuna** with “Destroyer of Valor”

For Printmaking – **Daniel Combs** with “The Seuss Amongst Us”

[Congratulations](#) to all the winners and participants!

Save the Date for May 7, 2026, which is our next Creative Arts Festival!

You will receive more information about how to register and participate in this year’s local event in upcoming emails. Please feel free to share with anyone who might be interested.

Tim McAlee & Kristin Fray

Kristin Fray, MA, MT-BC

Creative Arts Therapist (Music)

Carl T. Hayden VA Medical Center – Phoenix

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Kristin.Fray@va.gov