

**EMBARGOED until 10:00 am Eastern, Wednesday, May 24, 2022**

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Modern Warrior LIVE co-founders Veteran Jaymes Poling and Artist Dominick Farinacci are available for interviews.

[Modern Warrior LIVE](#) website | [Facebook](#) | [Twitter](#) | [YouTube](#)

## **Unique Arts Program Empowering Veterans in Ohio to Heal & Grow from Trauma Receives Creative Forces® Community Engagement Grant.**

**Cleveland, Ohio – May 25, 2022** – Veterans, their caregivers, and communities in rural and urban Ohio will have new paths and opportunities to heal from the psychological trauma of war, thanks to a National Endowment for the Arts grant supporting the unique narrative and musical work of the [Modern Warrior LIVE](#) (MWL) project and its [Modern Warrior Experience](#) program.

The Cleveland-based MWL organization is one of 26 organizations nationwide selected to receive a Creative Forces® Community Engagement grant in partnership with Mid-America Arts Alliance. The \$50,000 grant will enable MWL to serve Ohio veterans with a program called the “Modern Warrior Experience,” in which MWL’s artistic team will coach veterans in an intensive 8-week experience to bring their voices to the stage to express their fears, frustrations, and hopes.

The grant also will support community performances of the group’s Modern Warrior LIVE shows.

“It is inspiring to see how Modern Warrior LIVE utilizes arts programming 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 Cleveland, Columbus, Findlay, and Ashland, Ohio provides significant opportunities for this critical work to reach more people and make a difference in their lives.”

Highlights of a filmed version of the program are available [here](#).

Creative Forces: NEA Military Healing Arts Network also awarded one of MWL’s partner organizations, the Lied Center of Kansas, a grant to host Modern Warrior LIVE’s signature theatrical performances for students, veterans, and the rural communities surrounding the University of Kansas.

Modern Warrior LIVE combines music and spoken word to chronicle one veteran’s journey. US Army 82nd Airborne veteran [Jaymes Poling](#) shares the story of his three deployments in Afghanistan and his subsequent transition back home. The show weaves honest first-person narration, world-class musicians, and stagecraft—empowering veterans to reflect, articulate, understand, and grow from trauma. Jaymes’ story is his own, but the themes explored in the show are universal. Generations of veterans and countless civilians have seen the show and found a deep connection with the stories and experiences. The Modern Warrior Experience also brings cohorts of veterans to the stage to tell their stories and help support their after-trauma growth.

“The power of hearing directly from an individual about his or her traumatic experience creates an intimate bond between the storyteller and the listener,” said Poling. “It breaks down preconceptions and generalizations and creates instant relatability because we all are faced with our own challenges in life,” he continued.

“We are proud to join a long and important lineage of arts initiatives that The National Endowment for the Arts has supported that help improve understanding and quality of life in our nation,” said co-founder and world renowned musician [Dominick Farinacci](#). “When Jaymes’ or other veterans’ stories are amplified by a powerful musical and visual experience, it creates a fully immersed and profound impact on the listener – and on those sharing their personal stories,” he added,

Todd Stein, president and CEO of Mid-America Arts Alliance said, “we are excited to support this project with Modern Warrior LIVE 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.”

By providing opportunities for engaging in artistic creations, Modern Warrior LIVE seeks to help participants better understand themselves and others through creative expression while increasing their sense of belonging to our community. Participation in the arts often leads to both an individual and a shared sense of purpose and positive self-worth, supporting their ability to adapt and readjust to life’s challenges.

“When our veterans come home,” Ohio-native Poling said, “all that many of them find is the narrative their communities unthinkingly leave for them, which I can tell you from personal experience can create a self-fulfilling prophecy of hopelessness and solitude. America’s veterans need to know that they are not mentally or physically alone. With support from the National Endowment for the Arts, Modern Warrior LIVE is coming home to host events and workshops across Ohio that together will save and improve lives,” said Poling.

The Creative Forces/NEA-backed workshops and performances will take place over the next two years. The MWL work in Ohio is further supported by Cuyahoga Community College, the National Veterans Memorial and Museum, Northeast Ohio Foundation for Patriotism, and the Veterans Affairs Central Ohio Healthcare System.

For more information on other projects included in this grant announcement and resources for arts engagement with military-connected populations, visit [creativeforcesnrc.arts.gov](http://creativeforcesnrc.arts.gov). For more on Modern Warrior LIVE and the Modern Warrior Experience, visit [modernwarriorlive.org](http://modernwarriorlive.org).

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## **Background**

More About 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 of 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 serve a broad population, including active-duty service members, guardsmen, reservists, veterans, military and veteran families, and caregivers and healthcare workers providing care for military service members and veterans.

### **About Modern Warrior LIVE**

Modern Warrior LIVE (MWL) is a national nonprofit dedicated to creating an understanding between veteran and civilian communities through live performances, collaborative workshops, and sharing stories. MWL destigmatizes mental illness and provides a catalyst for meaningful conversation about the effects of trauma, depression, post-traumatic growth, and resilience.

**Jaymes Poling** brings to Modern Warrior LIVE the fully immersed experience of a three-tour warrior with the 82nd Airborne in Afghanistan. Dealing with the memories of war, the loss of friends and the isolation a combat veteran finds when leaving the military, Jaymes began to find through narrative arts and dynamic public speaking that the potential for growth can indeed follow adversity.

Through education, writing, public speaking, and now with the added layer of music, Jaymes recognized the universality of his journey, which has evolved into a mission to bring to other veterans. He has engaged and interacted with military communities more than 120 times with Modern Warrior Live performances in schools, performing art centers, universities, and even in a prison, and now in a one-hour cinematic version. He's also spoken about mental health challenges at home and at the front with thousands of active-duty soldiers in Afghanistan through visits there with the Troops First Foundation.

He says he wants — needs — to share his journey from isolation to healing, whether one-on-one, in a cohort of five veterans, or in a concert hall seating 4,000.

Jaymes grew up in Warren, Ohio, and enlisted in the U.S. Army at the age of 17. He was assigned to the 82nd Airborne Division in Fort Bragg, North Carolina as an infantryman. During his eight years with the division, he spent three years fighting in Afghanistan as a Machine Gunner and Squad Leader. He earned a finance degree at John Carroll University in May 2018; he draws upon that knowledge and his armed forces experience in managing Modern Warrior's nonprofit operations and business planning.

**Dominick Farinacci**, a world-renowned trumpeter, is the lead artist for the Modern Warrior Experience + LIVE, and is passionate about integrating the arts into wellness and education. He's released 14 albums internationally, was a member of The Juilliard School's inaugural class of their jazz studies program, and was named by Wynton Marsalis as the first Global Ambassador to Jazz at Lincoln Center New York City. Music icon Quincy Jones says of Dominick's accomplishments in performance, recording, education, & advocacy, "This kid is 360 degrees!"

Always in Dominick's active circle — expanding the link between music and health.

Farinacci addressed a TED conference on mental health and music [at the Kennedy Center](#) and has been a featured artist for the Cleveland Clinic in Ohio and Abu Dhabi. Dominick organized the first jazz performance for patients in that country, collaborating with the clinic and the Abu Dhabi Music and Arts Foundation. He organized panel discussions around patient-doctor communication through music with Weill Cornell Medical College in Qatar and is an active advocate in music education development, most recently at the Community College Association of America. He has received foundation grants to establish arts programs in his native Ohio, served as Music Consultant to the Amy Winehouse Foundation, and is Director of the Tri-C JazzFest Academy at the Gill and Tommy LiPuma Center for Creative Arts at Cuyahoga Community College in Cleveland.

His recent recording, *Short Stories*, was produced by four-time Grammy Award-winning producer Tommy LiPuma for Mack Avenue Records.

Dominick resides in New York City and Cleveland.

His focus now is on sharing his journey with members of the military community and partnering with organizations to help veterans find their own peace after war.

**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 of military and veteran populations exposed to trauma and 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 the Mid-America Arts Alliance. More information can be found at [arts.gov/creativeforces](https://arts.gov/creativeforces) and [creativeforcesnrc.arts.gov](https://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 where the arts benefit everyone in the United States. To learn more, visit [arts.gov](https://www.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/>.