



## Community Outreach Martinez VA Facility

June 2018

### Maggie Metcalf Interview

#### What is the Community Outreach program at the Martinez VA?

Twice a month we volunteers set up a watercolor art studio in the Recreational Therapy Department. We have a prepared lesson plan, but accommodate whoever rolls through the door. Being in the center of the hospital we are visited by out-patients and in-patients who may have suffered loss of limb, PTSD, or other health-related issues. The veterans gather or are brought by nurses aids to observe, socialize and paint. Some vets come regularly and others only come when they are hospitalized.

**Can you tell me about some of your specific experiences as a volunteer?** First, confidentiality is of prime importance at the VA. It's the law that we not publish photos or reveal identities. That being said, we do get to know the vets and learn how to work with them. One younger vet was suffering from PTSD which, in his case, meant he had a short attention span. Once he was seated in front of watercolor paper taped to a board, we handed him a brush loaded with paint and walked away, but not too far. His laying the paint on the paper and covering a large area was his huge accomplishment. We and he celebrated. We are generous with our compliments, but always honest.

Another veteran consistently created postage stamp sized images. Over time, and with encouragement, he opened up and his images became larger and larger. Now he has no problem filling the whole paper with his artwork. In a recent work he depicted a fighter jet and was focusing on just the right greys for the body of the jet. On top of the jet he wanted a grey that reflected the cool blues of the sky and on the belly the warm greys of the earth. We are thrilled by his progress, and we let him know. Plus he inspires others with his paintings.



Maggie Metcalf in the Monet Garden

I interviewed Maggie Metcalf, a dedicated CWA Community Outreach volunteer at the Martinez, CA, VA facility. She

shares her prodigious knowledge of watercolor painting with the outpatients and shows great compassion when engaging with the less able-bodied in-patients. When I called Maggie, she was working in her studio painting on yupo.

*Sheila*



The Recreational Therapy Room transformed to a watercolor art studio.

# Community Outreach

*Martinez VA Facility*

## What is the guiding rule?

Our aim is to be a 'no copying' painting studio. We encourage the vets to draw from their imaginations or from life; for example, the self-portrait project. They know the no copying rule and bravely do some fantastic work. Still, some vets just cannot get started and we have a variety of images available to inspire those who need them. One vet arrived and knew that for his project he wanted to begin with a completely wet paper. He launched himself into the painting and produced quite a landscape. These are people who are seriously challenged on physical and mental fronts.

Smiles and honest appreciation have brought a stream of veterans to paint at the watercolor studio of the CWA Community Outreach program.

Thank you, Maggie, for giving us this picture of your volunteer work for CWA. Also, thank you for sharing your time twice a month at the Martinez VA, working with the vets and being the kind, generous spirit that you are.

*Sheila Cain*



## Wren Elementary School

### Ahhhh... The Mysteries of Watercolor

Wren Elementary School, a Visual and Performing Arts Magnet School in Concord, invited CWA to enlighten their staff about the mysteries of watercolor. I provided lots of project possibilities that I have used with my students at Country Club School in San Ramon. We demonstrated the wonders of using salt, saran wrap, sharpies, oil pastels, crayons and masking tape to create a little magic when coupled with watercolor, especially to 7 or 8 year olds!

I brought along a few disciples that gave the teachers the needed one on one support. Thank you, Iretta Hunter, Carol Husslein, Wendy Oliver, Sandi Sherwood, Annegret van Germeren and Georganne Zaro Eddy. You were a fabulous support staff!

We preached the word of watercolor! We had a delightful afternoon and hopefully picked up a few converts along the way!

*Ruth Miller*

