



## MEDIA RELEASE

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### **National Endowment for the Arts and Southern Arts Federation Announce New Series of *Operation Homecoming* Writing Workshops**

For the first time, VA medical centers and military hospitals host *Operation Homecoming* writing workshops

Atlanta, Georgia – U.S. Armed Forces active duty troops and veterans will have an in-depth opportunity to reflect on their service through the National Endowment for the Arts' groundbreaking initiative *Operation Homecoming: Writing the Wartime Experience*. For the first time, *Operation Homecoming* will invite veterans as well as active duty troops to participate in progressive, four-to-six-week writing workshops at 25 sites around the country. The new phase of *Operation Homecoming* is the first instance in which the NEA will hold writing workshops at Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) medical centers, military hospitals, and affiliated centers in communities around the country.

“*Operation Homecoming* is an important program in both human and historical terms,” said NEA Chairman Dana Gioia “In human terms, it brings the transformative power of writing to men and women who have undergone enormously challenging experiences in Iraq and Afghanistan. In historical terms, it gives voice to the troops who have served in this war.”

Nationally acclaimed writers, such as Andrew Carroll, Tobias Wolff, Jeff Shaara, and Marilyn Nelson, will lead sessions and local literary organizations and writers will partner with many of the workshop sites. In addition, new faculty members and Iraq and Afghanistan war veterans include playwright Ryan Kelly, poet Brian Turner; and journalist Nathaniel Fick. Matthew Eck, author of the novel *The Farther Shore* and an Army veteran who served in Somalia and Bosnia; Vietnam War veteran Robert Timberg, editor of the U.S. Naval Institute's *Proceedings* magazine and author of *The Nightingale's Song*; and Kristin Henderson, a military spouse and author of *While They're at War*, are other new faculty members.

To facilitate the workshops, the NEA has partnered with the Southern Arts Federation (SAF) to schedule and plan writing sessions, develop the *Operation Homecoming* guide for writers, and perform program evaluation. The NEA also collaborated with the Department of Veterans Affairs as well as the Department of Defense to develop current *Operation Homecoming* activities. *Operation Homecoming* is made possible with support from The Boeing Company.

“Throughout history, people and nations have been shaped by the military conflicts that they have endured and survived, and the stories that are born of those conflicts,” said SAF Executive Director Gerri Combs, “This next step of the *Operation Homecoming* project will establish a

bridge between those who are serving to those who have served and we look forward to making their voices heard.”

Each workshop participant will receive free materials to aid the writing process, including a guide for writers. The guide was edited by project consultant Andrew Carroll, a noted expert on wartime correspondence and editor of the *Operation Homecoming* anthology. The guide offers advice on writing and samples of notable wartime writing by veterans, civilians, and *Operation Homecoming* contributors. Participants also will receive a CD of audio recordings of war literature from the Civil War to the Vietnam War. Each participant also will receive a copy of the documentary film *Muse of Fire*, which chronicles the *Operation Homecoming* writing process with participants and their writing instructors. Workshop host sites will receive copies of the *Operation Homecoming* anthology for use as reference materials during the workshops.

### **Workshop sites and participation**

The 2008 *Operation Homecoming* writing workshops are free and open to active duty troops and veterans, with a focus on those who served in Iraq and Afghanistan. Military families may participate as allowed by host facilities. The initial workshops will be held in the following cities, with more workshops to be announced:

- VA Palo Alto Health Care System, Palo Alto, CA
- Walter Reed Army Medical Center, Washington, DC
- Miami VA Healthcare System, Miami, FL
- St. Louis VA Medical Center, St. Louis, MO
- U.S. Marine Corps Command and Staff College, Marine Corps University, Quantico, VA

For more information on registration, dates and locations, visit [www.operationhomecoming.org](http://www.operationhomecoming.org). The website contains other educational resources on writing, from essays on the craft of writing to sample audio clips from the *Operation Homecoming* CD.

Since 2004, the NEA *Operation Homecoming* writing program has preserved the stories of U.S. military personnel and their families. With support from The Boeing Company, *Operation Homecoming* has brought 59 writing workshops to troops at 27 domestic and overseas military installations from Camp Pendleton in California to USS *Carl Vinson* in the Persian Gulf and Bagram Airfield in Afghanistan. In tandem with the workshops, the Arts Endowment offered an open call for writing submissions to active military personnel and their families. Almost 100 of the submissions were featured in the anthology *Operation Homecoming: Iraq, Afghanistan, and the Home Front in the Words of U.S. Troops and Their Families* (Random House, 2006).

### **About the National Endowment for the Arts**

The National Endowment for the Arts is a public agency dedicated to supporting excellence in the arts, both new and established; bringing the arts to all Americans; and providing leadership in arts education. Established by Congress in 1965 as an independent agency of the federal government, the Arts Endowment is the largest annual national funder of the arts, bringing great art to all 50 states, including rural areas, inner cities, and military bases.

### **About the Southern Arts Federation**

The Southern Arts Federation, a non-profit regional arts organization founded in 1975, creates partnerships and collaborations; presents, promotes and produces Southern arts and cultural programming; and advocates for the arts and arts education. Working in partnership with nine

state arts agencies—Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina and Tennessee—SAF builds on the South’s unique heritage, and enhances the public value of the arts in our communities by promoting and supporting the arts in the South, enhancing the artistic excellence and professionalism of Southern arts organizations and artists, and serving the diverse population of the South. For more information, visit [www.southarts.org](http://www.southarts.org).

### **About The Boeing Company**

Boeing is the world’s leading aerospace company and the largest manufacturer of commercial jetliners and military aircraft combined. Additionally, Boeing designs and manufactures rotorcraft, electronic and defense systems, missiles, satellites, launch vehicles and advanced information and communication systems. The company also provides numerous military and commercial airline support services. Boeing has customers in more than 90 countries around the world and is one of the largest U.S. exporters in terms of sales. Headquartered in Chicago, it employs more than 160,000 people across the United States and in 70 countries.