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**“Oklahoma City University’s Red Earth Creative Writing MFA Program Lends Fiscal Support to**

**2015 Veteran Symposium!”**

**OKLAHOMA CITY --** *FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE* - - As December is notably the time of year when charitable contributions soar, goodwill is a concept tangible in the air and “one good turn deserves another,” it is pertinent to mention that Oklahoma City University’s prestigious Red Earth Creative Writing MFA program has extended the charitable arm to support an upcoming educational symposium at Cameron University in Lawton. Military Experience & the Arts (MEA), a national 501(C) 3 non-profit organization dedicated to serving military veterans and the artistic experience primarily through honoring creative expression in writing, poetry and visual arts - is a newly minted recipient of a $5000 donation provided by OCU Red Earth for symposium education and activities. Jeanetta Calhoun Mish, director of the Red Earth program, was inspired to support the Cameron MEA symposium effort as former graduates of the OCU creative writing department are also esteemed military veterans of wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

“The Red Earth Creative Writing MFA program has been supporting veterans and their writing since 2012. It’s essential that veterans’ stories are heard. Writing serves as one kind of emotional therapy to help with after effects of service. The stories themselves are part of the American story. New stories add to the ancient genre of veteran’s and soldier’s writings which include parts of the Old Testament, trench poetry from World War I, writings by Kurt Vonnegut (among others) on World War II, and Vietnam stories and poems,” said Calhoun Mish.

“Oklahoma City University, where our program is located, has been supporting veterans in their educational pursuits for a long time. The university has been listed as a ‘Military Friendly School’ for six years in a row by GIJobs.com<<http://GIJobs.com>>. We’re pleased that Military Experience and the Arts has come to our state. We intend to support the conference in many other ways as well,” Calhoun Mish said.

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Jason Poudrier, an Army veteran and Purple Heart recipient, is the local coordinator of the MEA symposium in Lawton, as well as a writing professor at Cameron. Poudrier worked closely with Calhoun Mish on the publication of two books of war-related poetry: “Red Fields” and “In the Rubble at Our Feet.” “There are three crucial qualities that every writer must possess in order to compose writing worth being read: life experience, knowledge of literature, and dedication to craft. The life experiences that military veterans go through, for better or for worse, provides them with a wealth of personal narratives. The Red Earth Creative Writing MFA Program at Oklahoma City University provides personalized instruction to enhance students’ knowledge of literature and craft,” said Poudrier. “Veterans, such as myself, learn how to better express our personal narratives through the study of the work of other veteran-writers. Most importantly, we learn the ways of the craft through guided-practice and instruction. The result is writing worth reading,” Poudrier said. “From the time I attended the first MEA symposium at Eastern Kentucky University, I have been in discussions with Travis Martin, the founder and president of the organization, about bringing the symposium to Cameron University, which is housed in a military community lacking any structured artistic outlets for military members. MEA2 Oklahoma is now quickly becoming a reality through generous contributions such as OCU’s,” said Poudrier. The OCU Red Earth donation is specifically earmarked for Exit 12, a New York City dance company that will perform at the symposium. Exit 12’s director and choreographer, Roman Baca, is a former U.S. Marine. The company is well known throughout the United States for performing intricate movements that often combine military combat maneuvers with the inherent grace of ballet. For Exit 12 information, log-on to: <http://exit12danceco.com/> As part of the important work of MEA, in addition to art and literature journals published several times a year filled with the historical experiences of veterans; volunteers, donors and sponsors are recruited nationwide to assist in the organization of first-rate educational and art-related symposia throughout the United States. The Cameron University MEA 2 Oklahoma Symposium scheduled for May 2015 will include art therapy programs; painting; music; creative writing classes; performance art; cinematic art; informative lectures and workshops tailored to veteran-issues and concerns; post-traumatic stress support; social support; and lodging/meals for veteran-attendees who are disabled or geographically or financially constrained.

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Benjamin Patton, filmmaker, author and the youngest grandson of World War II’s General George S. Patton, will be on-hand teaching the finer points of documentary filmmaking and sharing excerpts from his book, “Growing Up Patton: Heroes, History and Family Wisdom;” as well as Oklahoma artist and Vietnam veteran Albert Gray Eagle, who will provide flute-making workshops and patriotic performances. The entire symposium will take place on the Cameron University campus - in close proximity to Fort Sill Army Base - from **Thursday, May 14th through Sunday, May 17th**. Registration is currently open and costs $20 per person. Veterans of every generation – and every State - are invited and encouraged to attend. Additional background, as well as updates on guest speakers and workshop facilitators can be found at <http://www.militaryexperience.org>. For more information on Oklahoma City University’s Red Earth Creative Writing MFA Program, log-on to: [www.OKCU.EDU/ENGLISH/RedEarthMFA](http://www.OKCU.EDU/ENGLISH/RedEarthMFA)

**About MEA**:

Military Experience & the Arts (MEA) is a national 501(C) 3 non-profit organization dedicated to serving military veterans and the artistic experience primarily through honoring creative expression in writing, poetry and visual arts

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