

# News and stories

## Virginia International Tattoo moments you won't want to miss

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Dan Duke | [The Virginian-Pilot](#)

The Virginia International Tattoo has always tapped deep emotions as it presented its grand military spectacle. This year's event is going deeper than ever.

With the theme "Above and Beyond the Call of Duty," the tattoo is paying homage to recipients of the Medal of Honor, the nation's highest award for someone in the armed services for valor in action against an enemy. Nine of the country's 71 Medal of Honor recipients will take part in the festival.

Scott Jackson, Virginia Arts Festival general manager and producer of the Virginia International Tattoo, said there have been two shows that stand out for their emotional heft – the 2014 tattoo that honored Vietnam War veterans and this one.

"It's smiles and tears together," he said. "I think it will be a real powerful show."

Here are some of the must-see moments for the Virginia Arts Festival's 22nd tattoo, and a few insider tips.

### Medal of Honor recipients

When the U.S. Marine Corps Band, Quantico, does its signature Iwo Jima flag-raising re-enactment, it will be joined by the battle's last surviving Medal of Honor recipient. Hershel "Woody" Williams, 95, was rejected by the Marines for being too short when he first tried to enlist, but he was able to sign up the next year, 1943. "He's just a giant of an American," Jackson said. You might have seen Williams flip the coin in February before the kickoff of the Super Bowl.

Williams and the other Medal of Honor recipients will have their stories told when the corresponding branch of the Armed Services performs, and some will have cameo roles. The finale will include a tribute to them. Medal of Honor recipients also are visiting local schools to meet with students and talk about leadership, Jackson said.

### **The Changing of the Guard**

The Tomb of the Unknowns in Arlington National Cemetery is under constant guard by members of the 3rd U.S. Infantry Regiment – "The Old Guard," the oldest active infantry unit in the military. Sentinels will demonstrate the Changing of the Guard, the first time this has been done outside of the cemetery.

### **The horses**

Two members of the 3rd U.S. Infantry Regiment and Caisson will be part of the tattoo. Sergeant York is the riderless horse that walked in the funeral procession for President Ronald Reagan. He has been with the platoon since 1997. At 28, Sergeant York is the oldest horse in the group. He will be part of the finale. Sergeant Johnny is new to the platoon, and joined the team in February. He will be part of the triumphal entry.

### **The spectacle**

Don't miss the military obstacle race between USMC Fleet Antiterrorism Security Teams, whose members run while carrying 6-pound M4A1 rifles. It's an annual favorite, Jackson said. The Republic of Korea Traditional Army Band is returning with its brilliantly colored drums and traditional horns, pipes, and string instruments. Its national tae kwan do team puts on a powerful demonstration choreographed to the drums.

### **The free stuff**

For three hours before each tattoo performance, the Chrysler Hall plaza will be the scene for the Hullabaloo. A sort of mini-Tattoo, it includes many tattoo performers – pipers, dancers, drill teams – and the DrumLine Battle. Local dancers and musicians add to the entertainment. Food vendors and craft beer brewers will set up shop. Saturday's Hullabaloo starts at noon, when the American Pipe Band Championship will begin. Hundreds of bagpipers and drummers will strut their stuff in another free spectacle.

### **Flying logs and kegs**

The tattoo and the Brute Strength Gym are holding a Highland Heavy Athletic Championship from 11:30 a.m. to 2 p.m. Sunday on the arts festival green across East Charlotte Street from the plaza.

### **The music**

The music for this year's event includes four world premiere arrangements, two works by Leonard Bernstein in honor of his 100th birthday commemoration, "The Invincible Eagle" by John Philip Sousa and "Amazing Grace," sung in Flemish, Norwegian, Italian, Korean and English.

### **The tartan**

The Virginia International Tattoo Hixon tartan, an inspiration of past Virginia Arts Festival Board Chairman Jim Hixon, was designed in Scotland and is on The Scottish Register of Tartans. The dominant "Festival Blue" reflects the VAF, and red, white and blue threading symbolizes the patriotic themes. The Virginia flag and the Norfolk seal are represented by other shades of blue, and the gray stripes stand for the Navy ships stationed here. Tartan wear includes: ties, \$35; scarves, \$45; bow ties, \$10; cummerbunds, \$45; pocket squares, \$15; and large shawls, \$75.

### **Tattoo brew**

Young Veterans Brewing and Rip Rap Brewing developed a beer, dubbed Above and Beyond, for this year's show. With the specially designed label, the empties could make good souvenirs.

## Tips and pointers

This is a military-based event. It starts exactly on time, so don't be late. And with all there is to do and see at the Hullabaloo, there's every incentive to get there early.

Here's the protocol for "The Star-Spangled Banner." Stand and face the American flag. Active-duty military salute. Civilians place their right hand over their heart. Men should remove their hats. The tattoo is urging veterans and family members to stand when their service's song is sung, and to wear a cap, vest or other item that represents their service.

During the finale, a few verses of the service song will be played. Military tradition calls for the order to be youngest (Coast Guard) to oldest (Army).

The tattoo uses a showbiz, Navy town version: Army, Air Force, Marines, Coast Guard, Navy.

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