

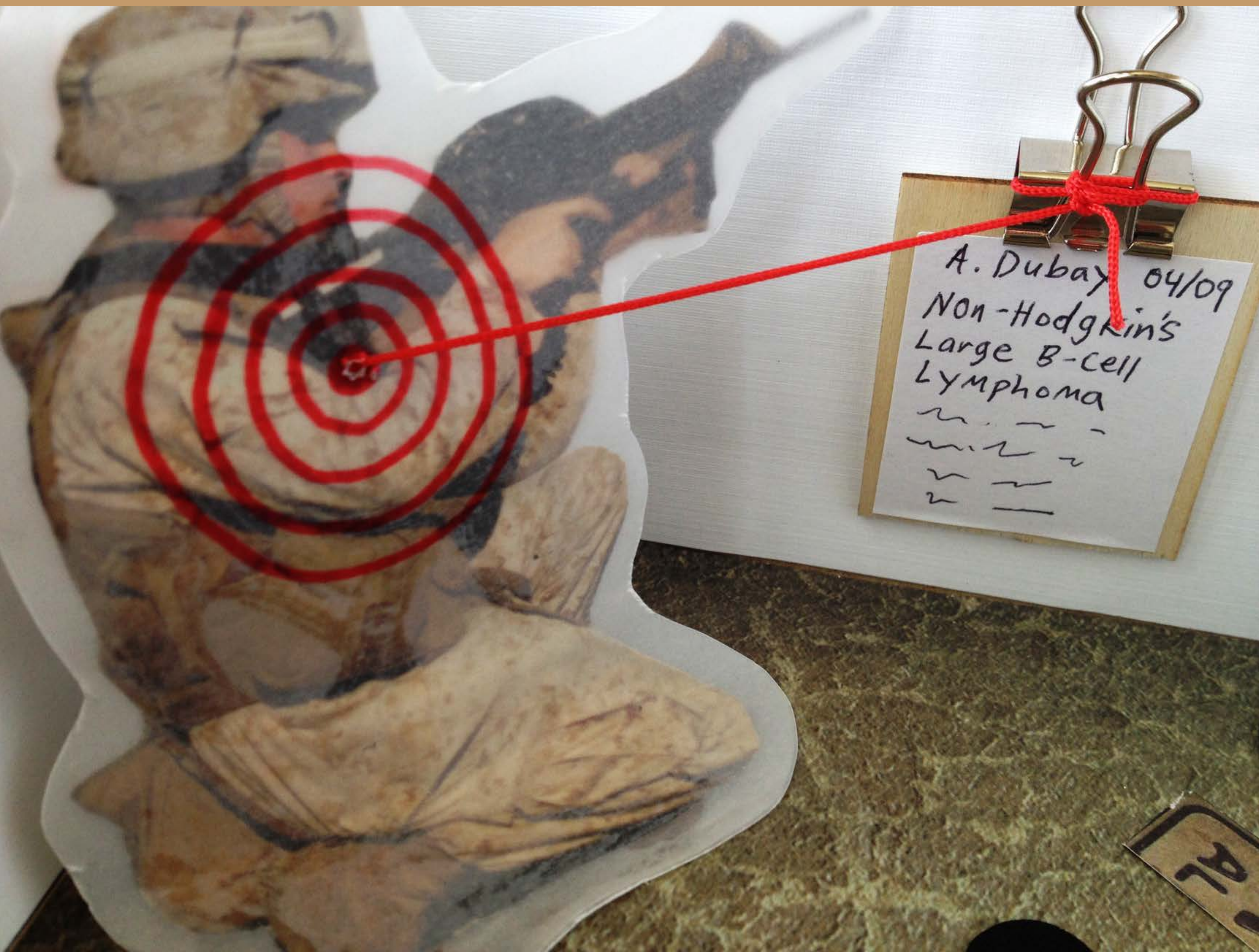
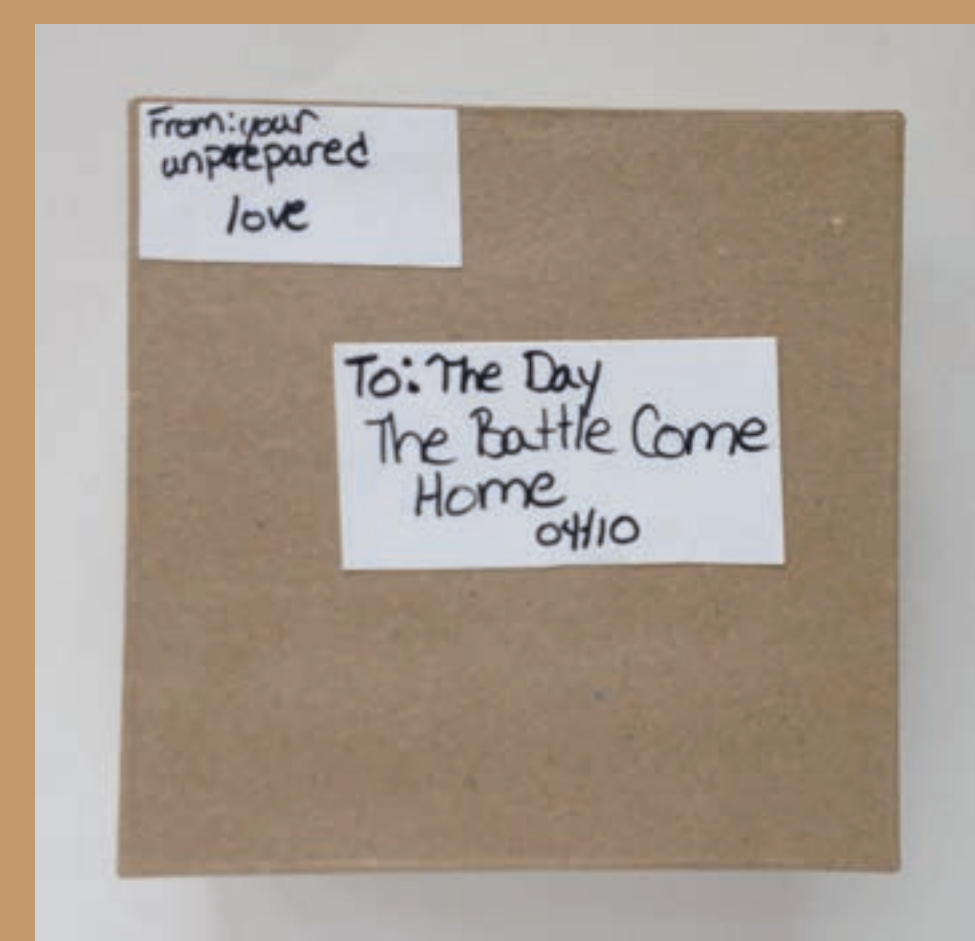
# BRIDGING THE MILITARY CIVILIAN DIVIDE

At Ease: Bridging the Military Civilian Divide is a community-based, multimedia project highlighting the complexity of voices, experiences, and perspectives surrounding military service since the Gulf War. The project's multiracial voices include Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marines, active duty and reservists, queer and straight, male and female, physically disabled and able, combat and support staff, as well as military spouses.

North Carolina has the 4th largest number of active and reserve duty components in the country. Because of its military population, the state is often at the crossroads, and sometimes in the crosshairs, of opinion about military funding, military service, and the moral questions of war.

At the same time, the state is home to many families with no connection whatsoever to military service. This disconnection, seen across the country, contributes to a widening gulf in our society between those who serve and those who don't, which also means a deepening sense of isolation for many. In 2014, when Hidden Voices entered this project, there were more suicide deaths than combat deaths. Our intent was to develop pathways for service members and their families to express their authentic experiences and thereby facilitate dialogue around the issues they brought forward.

Since that time, Hidden Voices has workshopped and conversed with hundreds of service members and their families. These exchanges have been held in facilities in Fayetteville, Jacksonville, Charlotte, Raleigh, Clayton, Durham, Chapel Hill, Greensboro, Goldsboro, and in private homes around the state. We are grateful for each participant's generosity, authenticity, and introspection.



# ABOUT THE EXHIBIT

## PORTRAITS:

“What part of your body do you most associate with military service?” We asked female service members this question and then watched, listened, laughed, and were deeply moved by their creative responses.

### In That Person's Shoes

I chose my heart, because in the military, I was passionate about the job I did. I was doing Human Resource, and I always just put myself in that person's shoes. I loved it. Any document came across my desk, had my name on it. It may not physically have had my name on it, but it was my responsibility. That's what I mean; I was passionate about my job and the people I served.



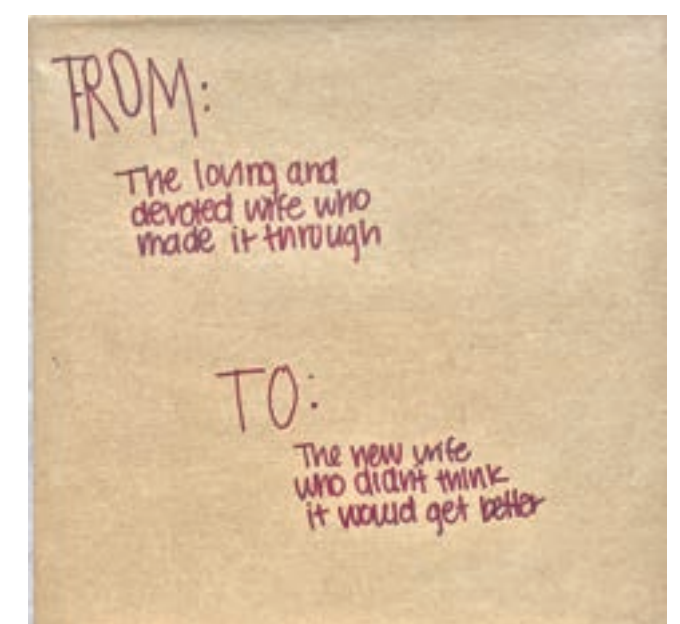
## CARE PACKAGES:

The care packages are dioramas that offer a glimpse into an issue or experience the service member or spouse cares about. The care packages address everything from the challenge of meeting the physical fitness requirements to the common recognition that “It only happens when the spouse is away” to the daily reality of living with a traumatic brain injury.

Please handle carefully as you explore.

## LETTERS HOME:

“What do others not understand about your experience?” We posed this question to many hundreds of service members from around the country and the world. “Others” might mean whomever they chose, from family to strangers attending the exhibit. For workshop participants unsure how to begin, we suggested they open with the words “You have no idea . . .” Perhaps because of this prompt, many of the letters deal with deeply personal and sometimes troubling reflections. The letters invite us to consider our own connection or disconnection to what we ask of our service members and their families.



## MONOLOGUES:

The monologues share first-person stories about life as a military service member. These monologues are read by community members at the opening for every exhibit installation. The stories provide a deep dive into the territory of military service. It is incredibly powerful to speak another person's words. It is mind-altering and heart-opening to hear and connect with authentic truths from voices perhaps dissimilar from our own.

Taking these new insights and sense of connection into the physical world of exhibit materials – reading, touching, exploring – allows those new insights to gain substance and depth. The combination of oral stories and the visual and kinesthetic exploration of the exhibit provides an immersive experience that allows many entry points for connection. The mixing of these artistic media does more than just enrich the participants' experience; it creates new openings for understanding to transform.

The cycle of monologues may also be read at conferences, in classrooms, as well as performed in a theatrical setting. For more information, contact [info@hiddenvoices.org](mailto:info@hiddenvoices.org)



hidden  
creating pathways  
VOICES

Hidden Voices is a radically inclusive, participatory, and co-creative collective committed to creating a just, compassionate, and sustainable world. Since 2003, Hidden Voices has collaborated with underrepresented communities to create award-winning works that combine narrative, mapping, performance, music, digital media, animation, and interactive exhibits to engage audiences and participants in explorations of difficult issues. Hidden Voices creates venues where stories from those rarely seen and heard by mainstream society take center stage. These life-changing stories provide insight about identity, place, and access. They help us understand the unrecognized, the unfamiliar, and displaced among us. **They help restore our souls.**



We are deeply grateful to the Theater Communications Group/Cape Fear Regional Theatre, the North Carolina Humanities Council, and the USO of North Carolina for supporting the years of fieldwork. The exhibit and cycle of monologues was supported by the NC Arts Council, a division of the Dept. of Natural and Cultural Resources. [www.ncarts.org](http://www.ncarts.org).

We are profoundly indebted to each military service and family member who shared their thoughts and creativity, to the USO of North Carolina, Veterans of Foreign War (VFW) Post 2087, Combat Female Veterans Families (CFVF) United, the NC Women MilVets Summit, and Team Rubicon.