

SAVE THE DATES:

- **AT Educational In-Services at McGuire**

- Oct. 21—ECUs
- Nov. 18—Home Safety Technology
- Dec. 16—iCloud/Google Drive

Location: OT Main Clinic

Contact Melissa Oliver x2134 for questions

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Go Outside..... Katina Sokol, SLP and Nicole Shuman, RT

Crisp air, colorful leaves, pumpkin flavored everything...Fall is here! Go outside. The Assistive Technology Team is doing our part to help our Veterans and service members start their outdoor adventure. Here are the steps. First, invite your friends and family. Second, charge up your technology and your back-up power source. Third, pack your bag with water, granola, apples, first aid kit, directions and a cell phone. Fourth, go outside. "Go WHERE outside?" I'm so glad you asked!



The Virginia Capital Trail is perfect for wheelchairs, recumbent bikes and service dogs. This trail opened Oct. 2013 and is paved, scenic, car-free, educational, and starts right here in the River City. Free.

<http://virginiacapitaltrail.org>

Rockwood Park is located at the corner of Hull St. and Court-

house Rd. Paved trails twist and turn through a wooded forest and around an archery range and accessible picnic shelters. Free.

http://www.chesterfield.gov/parks.aspx?id=6442455361#Rockwood_Park

Plan a weekend get together with extended family or a close group of friends at the universally accessible Bear Creek Lake State Park lodge. This well maintained park is a short drive West of Richmond on route 60. As the name suggests, there is a quiet lake that is beside a playground and covered shelter, with a universally accessible fishing pier. So, unplug the t.v., charge up your power chair and get rolling!

http://www.dcr.virginia.gov/state-parks/bear-creek-lake.shtml#general_information

Consider a camping adventure with sticky smore goodness at Pocahontas State Park. Located South of Richmond, this park has multiple accessible camp sites as well as a camp cabin. What is a camp cabin? Great question. According to the friendly park ranger, a camp cabin is a wood frame cabin with a bunk and camp cabin #6 is accessible to wheelchairs. There is also a

paved trail that leads to an accessible floating fishing pier. Bring your recumbent bike and explore the bike trails and look for wildlife.

<http://www.dcr.virginia.gov/state-parks/pocahontas.shtml>

Whether it is a scavenger hunt with your kids, sitting by a fire listening to crickets or enjoying the beauty of nature, going outside is sure to improve your wellness and health. Unless there is a lightning, then stay inside and read.



FY15 ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES through EES

Program Description:

This live – meeting program is designed for Rehabilitation Services physicians and rehabilitation clinicians to address the knowledge gap in providing assistive technology that addresses current health care requirements of Veterans with specific rehabilitative needs. This course will cross many areas of disability including, Polytrauma, Visual impairments, Physical limitations, Cognitive and communication deficits that may limit Activities of Daily Living. There are 5 Assistive Technology (AT) labs located at the Polytrauma Rehabilitation Centers; however, this training would expand that knowledge and skills of providers beyond those 5 AT centers. The training will assist in increasing Veterans' level of function, independence and safe-

ty while providing consistency and care across the VHA system.

Audience: Health care professionals including physicians, speech-language pathologists, occupational therapists and other clinical staff such as physical therapists, recreation therapists, blind rehabilitation specialists and kinesiotherapists.

Topics:

- ◆ November 6, 2015 - Communication or Cognitive Aides
- ◆ December 4, 2015 Blind Rehab

Continuing Education is offered for AOTA and ASHA.

Registration is always through TMS.



Meet McGuire's AT Team ...Erin Brandon, DPT

Erin Brandon earned her Doctorate of Physical Therapy in 2009 from the University of St. Augustine for Health Sciences located in St. Augustine, Florida. In addition, she earned a Manual Therapy Certification (MTC) in 2010 where she is able to provide evaluation and treatment, including manipulation, of spinal dysfunctions, extremity dysfunctions and myofascial manipulation. Dr. Brandon has worked in outpatient orthopedics, neurological inpatient, and skilled nursing facilities.

Here is a little more information about Dr. Brandon:

How long have you been at the VA?

I started working at the VA in 2009 in Jacksonville, Florida in a Community Based Outpatient Clinic. In 2011 I transferred to the Richmond VA Medical Center.

What do you like about working at the VA?

I have extreme gratitude and appreciation for our Service Members and Veterans who have sacrificed their lives for mine and I will gladly serve them in the best way I know how, through my skills as a physical therapist. When I hear their stories, personal experiences, and struggles, I know that even the smallest improvements can have a huge impact on their lives.

What areas of AT are you interested in and like working with?

I enjoy working with the adaptive sports program within the Assistive Technology department. With a significant background in exercise, sport, and health education, I know the importance of maintaining a healthy lifestyle. My goal is to provide alternative methods to exercise and allow everyone the opportunity to find a sport they can enjoy.

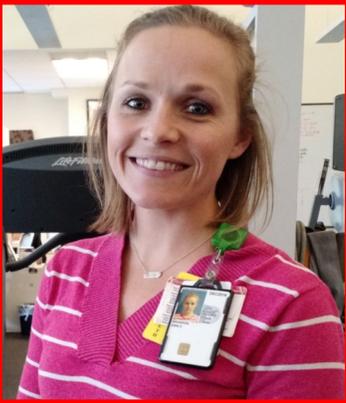
Exercise not only provides benefits physically, but can also improve cognitive and mental abilities as well.

Why are you passionate about AT?

Technology is advancing every day and while it is exciting on a personal level to benefit for recreational purposes, what I feel most passionate about is being able to take these advancements and improve the quality of life for someone else. The possibilities are only limited to one's creativity!

Tell us about other interests outside of the VA.

Whether it is traveling across the country, spending a weekend on the bay, or enjoying a dinner on our deck, my most enjoyable moments are spending time with family and friends. I also love to exercise or do anything active.



**Erin Brandon, DPT
Physical Therapist**

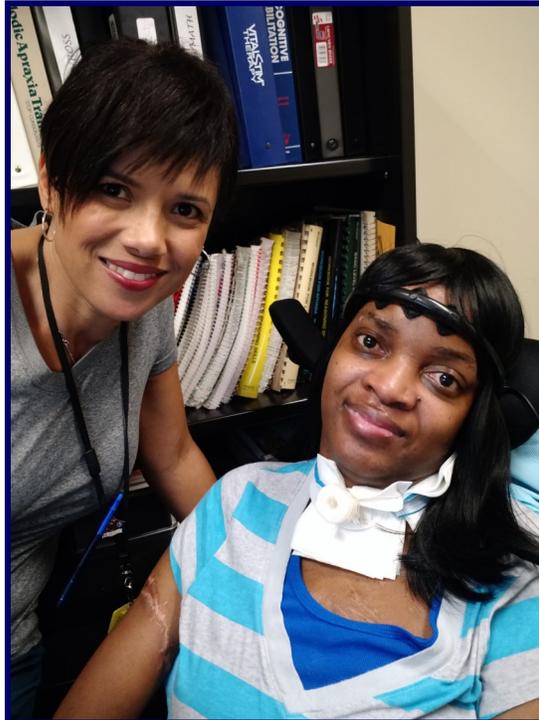
Veteran's Story.....Diana Isidore

Ms. Diana Isidore is a member of the United States Coast Guard. In 2006, she graduated from the United States Coast Guard Academy, becoming the first female from St. Croix to do so. She holds a BS in Operations Research and Computer Analysis, and MS in Operations Research and Computer Analysis from George Mason University and an MBA from North Central University.

In 2015, while traveling on vacation, Ms. Isidore was in a vehicle accident that left her unable to speak and walk. During her rehabilitation at McGuire Veterans Hospital, she worked with speech pathologist Monique Jones who introduced her to communication devices. With the help of the McGuire Assistive Technology Program's clinical rehabilitation engineer Ben Salatin, Ms. Isidore tried out different communication devices until she found one that worked best for her.

She chose a device based on a tablet computer with software allowing her to type out what she wants to say. She chooses letters on the screen with an eye tracking system that makes the computer mouse

from her muscles when she raises her eyebrow. She has become quite adept at operating her system and in addition to communicating, can control her environment via wireless home automation technology and use the tablet computer to do anything you and I would use a computer for.



“I can communicate with you all”

follow her gaze. To click on the letter, she uses a special headband that senses the electrical signal

When asked about her experience with the Assistive Technology Program, here is what she had to say:

Tell us about your experience with the Assistive Technology Program.

I had a good experience. Yes

What challenges were you having that had you referred to the program?

Communication and controlling my environment

Who did you work with?

Monique Jones and Ben Salatin

What device did you get?

A GridPad Pro tablet computer communication device with eye tracking and the Brain Fingers hands free computer control system.

How has the AAC device made your life better?

I can communicate with you all.

What do you like about your communication device?

Easy to use.

What was the hardest thing to learn with the communication device?

Word prediction.

What activities are you doing now that you were not able to do before?

Playing games like Solitaire.

Would you say your quality of life has improved?

Yes



Department of Veterans Affairs
Assistive Technology Center of Excellence

1201 Broad Rock Blvd
 Richmond, VA 23249

Melissa Oliver, OTR/L
 AT Program Coordinator
 Phone: 804-675-5000 x2134
 Fax: 804-675-6134
 E-mail: melissa.oliver@va.gov

Assistive Technology Program Mission

- To enhance the ability of Veterans and Active Duty members with disabilities to fulfill life goals through the coordination and provision of appropriate interdisciplinary assistive technology services.
- To serve as an expert resource to support the application of assistive technology within the VA health care system.

Nuts and Bolts of Rehab Engineering...Recommended Assistive Technology Conferences in USA

...Ben Salatin, AT Rehab Engineering

Annually around the United States, there is a number of assistive technology (AT) themed conferences offering a wealth of information to the AT professional and consumer. Here is a quick overview of the top 4 in my opinion based on my experience.

International Technology & Persons with Disabilities Conference

<http://www.csun.edu/cod/conference/>

- Annually around March in San Diego, CA
- Free to visit vendor exhibits
- About 5,000 people attend
- Large exhibit hall with over 100 vendors
- Main focus
 - ◇ Adults with disabilities
 - ◇ Web Accessibility
 - ◇ Many sessions on web programming standards
 - ◇ Mozilla very involved
 - ◇ Software Accessibility
 - ◇ Sessions and booths by Google, Microsoft, Adobe, Amazon
 - ◇ AAC (hardware and software)
 - ◇ Computer access (hardware and software)
 - ◇ Software for learning assistance (aimed at secondary edu)
 - ◇ Blind and Low Vision technology (hardware and software)
 - ◇ Devices for activities of daily living

- ◇ Smart home equipment

ISS

International Seating Symposium <http://www.iss.pitt.edu>

- Annually in March alternating between Nashville and Vancouver, Canada
- Free to visit vendor exhibits
- About 2,000 people attend
- Large exhibit hall with over 100 vendors
- Main focus
 - Wheelchair seating & mobility and related technologies
 - ◇ Wheelchairs (manual and power)
 - ◇ Standers
 - ◇ Adjustable seating option for people that can't move easily
 - ◇ Cushions
 - ◇ Alternative wheelchair control options
 - ◇ Mounting systems
 - ◇ Adaptive Sports

RESNA

Rehabilitation Engineering and Assistive Technology Society of North America
<http://www.resna.org/news-events/annual-meeting/promoting-access-assistive-technology>

- Annually around June in different cities in US and Canada
- Free to visit vendor exhibits
- About 500 people attend
- Small exhibit hall of vendors
- Main focus

- ◇ Wheelchair mobility & seating
- ◇ RERCs Rehab Engineering Research Centers work
- ◇ Smart home equipment
- ◇ Mounting systems
- ◇ AAC (hardware and software)
- ◇ Computer access (hardware and software)
- ◇ Adaptive driving equipment
- ◇ Home and long-term care medical products (ie. beds, chairs, bathing)
- ◇ Public Policy, Advocacy, and Education
- ◇ Sessions mostly are hands-on focused

ATiA <http://atia.org>

Assistive Technology Industry Association conference

- Annually in January in Orlando
- Free to visit vendor exhibits
- Several thousand people attend
- Large exhibit hall of vendors
- Main focus:
 - ◇ AAC (hardware and software)
 - ◇ Computer access (hardware and software)
 - ◇ Software for learning assistance
 - ◇ Language, Literacy and Learning
 - ◇ Blind and Low Vision technology (hardware and software)
 - ◇ Mounting systems
 - ◇ Special education teachers