

## SAVE THE DATES:

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

- Nov. 19—ECU Apps
- Dec. 17—Alternative Drives for Powered Mobility

Location: OT Main Clinic

Contact Melissa Oliver x2134 for questions

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Assistive  
Technology  
**AT**

## Technology for returning back to school

...Katina Sokol, CCC, SLP, ATP

Fall is here. It is time for jackets, festivals, pumpkins and colorful leaves. It is also time for going back to school, which is what many Veterans are deciding to do. However, some Veterans are surprised to find that returning to school is more challenging than they anticipated.

Why is it challenging? Veterans often say they "can't focus for very long" or "retain information" or that they "space out" while they are in class. These issues often result in poor grades, frustration and feelings of failure. Reasons for these issues are multifaceted and include but are not limited to the following; chronic sleep deprivation, anxiety, brain damage and pain. These Veterans need to succeed in school so they can obtain marketable job skills to support themselves and their families. The Assistive Technology treatment team is doing its part to help by prescribing and training Veterans on the use of the Livescribe Smartpen.

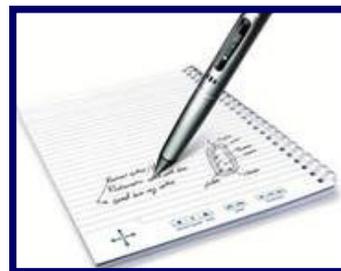


The Livescribe Smartpen is a cost effective (ranging from \$149-250) piece of technology that Veterans can use to record audio and visual infor-

mation presented during class. Being able to record exact information during class eliminates Veterans need to focus for long periods of time. After class Veterans can review verbatim lectures multiple times to learn the information. Unlike traditional digital recorders the livescribe smartpen links audio recordings with written notes. So when a Veteran is ready to review a portion of the lecture he or she can touch the pen to the written notes and the audio will play what was recorded at the time the notes were written. This feature completely eliminates the time consuming rewinding and fast forwarding that is required with traditional recorders. Audio and written notes are also automatically saved online via Evernote app and/or Evernote computer program, depending on what version of the pen is being used. So Veterans can view their notes where ever they have access to the internet.

A limitation of the Smartpen is that the initial set up and learning to navigate the online format to access notes is not intuitive for many users. This barrier to effective use of the smartpen is addressed by the Assistive Technology team. The AT professionals complete an evaluation to determine if this is the most appropriate device, as well as establish treatment goals to assist patient with set up and becoming comfortable and effi-

cient with the use of the device. This process typically takes 2-4 sessions and is crucial to prevent the device from being abandoned and to help Veterans independently use this device to increase their success in school. To learn more about the Livescribe Smartpen and the AT team, please contact Melissa Oliver, AT program coordinator.



## AT Trivia

Win a Prize—Frist to Answer both or just one correctly wins a prize.

1. What was the first true piece of assistive technology ever invented for medical/health use?
2. When was the first speech recognition device invented?

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by Nov. 26, 2014 with correct address

## 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:**

- ◆ December 5, 2014 (1-2pm EST) - Integration of Technology
- ◆ January 9, 2015 (1-2pm EST) - Windows Accessibility for Computer Access
- ◆ February 6, 2015 (1-2pm EST) IOS Accessibility for Computer Access

- ◆ March 6, 2015 (1-2pm EST) Communication Devices
- ◆ April 3, 2015 (1-2pm EST) Adaptive Sports/ Recreation

**Continuing Education is offered for AOTA and ASHA.**

**Registration is always through TMS.**



### Meet McGuire’s AT Team ...Alicia Sullivan, OTR/L



**Alicia Sullivan, MS OTR/L  
Occupational Therapist**

Alicia Sullivan is a graduate of Springfield College in Massachusetts where she earned a Master’s Degree in Occupational Therapy. She completed one of her clinical fieldwork requirements at McGuire VA Medical Center. She received her Wound Care Certification in December 2011. In addition to her work at McGuire VAMC, Ms. Sullivan has worked part time in a long term care facility for 9 years.

Here is a little more information about Mrs. Sullivan:

**How long have you been at the VA?**

13 years total: All in the Community Living Center (including Hospice) -- also helped cover Acute, Outpatient Home Visits, Scooters, Powered Mobility

**What do you like about working at the VA?**

Ease of getting the appropriate equipment for veteran’s w/o any arbitrary restrictions. Ramping is a plus. Having Rehab Engineers to support our efforts also a plus.

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

Wound care & powered mobility seating/positioning. I don’t really know why; I just do.

**Why are you passionate about AT?**

Making someone’s day, “seeing the smile”, improving their quality of life by increasing independence through technology.

**Tell us about other interests outside of the VA.**

My husband of 20 years & our four children (8, 6, 4 & 2)! They are my PASSION!

# Veteran's Story...Michael Hladky

## Powered Mobility...Regaining a feeling of Independence

Mr. Michael Hladky is a 59 year old United States Army Veteran who served from 1982 – 1997. During his enlistment he was a watercraft operator. After his enlistment, Mr. Hladky reports that he had multiple medical issues, which ultimately led to him becoming very weak, unable to walk and eventually bed bound. In the summer of 2014, he was referred to the Assistive Technology (AT) program, for evaluation for powered mobility. When he was asked about his experience about the AT program, this is what he had to say:

### Tell us about your experience with the Assistive Technology Program?

*The program was great. I received very good training for the power wheelchair. The wheelchair gave me a feeling of independence. Alicia Sullivan (Occupational Therapist) was very knowledgeable about the power wheelchair. I felt very comfortable with her. She was very supportive and patient with me, while learning to drive the chair safely.*

### What challenges were you having that resulted in you being referred to the program?

*My legs and upper body were weak and I was bed bound without a wheelchair.*

### Who did you see?

*Alicia Sullivan in the Community Living Center and Susi Warne from Home Based Primary Care (HBPC)*

### What device did you get?

*A brand new power wheelchair. The Quantum Q6 Edge HD.*

### How has the device changed your life or impacted your life?

*The power wheelchair changed my life*

*one hundred percent! Now I'll be able to go to the dinner table to eat dinner with my family, which I haven't done in years. I'll be able to do things that I haven't been able to do.*

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

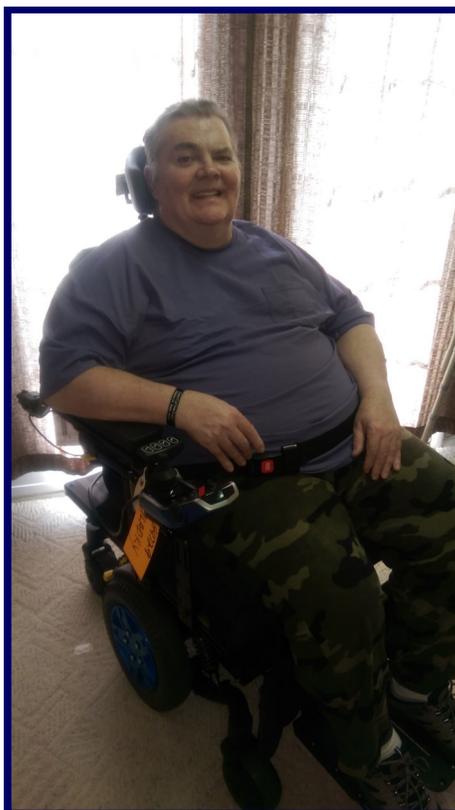
*I can eat dinner with my family. I can go outside of the house or go to the store, or even go up the street for a ride.*

### Would you say your quality of life has improved?

*Yes! One hundred percent!*

### Is there anything we have not covered that you would like to include?

*No*



**“The power wheelchair changed my life one hundred percent! Now I'll be able to go to the dinner table to eat dinner with my family...”**



**Department of Veterans Affairs**  
**Assistive Technology Center of Excellence**

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## 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.... App Trio for Organization (Calendar, Remember the Milk & Evernote)

...Ben Salatin, AT Rehab Engineering

A few months ago, I came to the conclusion that I needed to update the way I was using my smartphone for organization. I was not taking full advantage of the ability to have copies of everything on all my devices (smartphone, tablet, home & work computers). I looked for the top rated organizational apps. This led me to a task app called Remember the Milk (RTM) and a note taking app called Evernote. Since I was already a big user of Google Calendar, I decided to see how easy it would be to integrate RTM and Evernote into my daily life. I was pleasantly surprised. After a little bit of setup the benefit has been worth the learning curve.

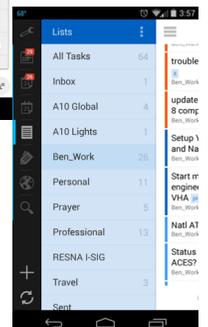
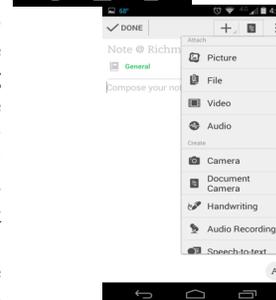
I can view in a variety of ways to help me understand what is the top priority. I can even set tasks that repeat automatically.

thought or an upcoming task. By breaking my responsibilities down into smaller pieces and organizing my thoughts (through lists and notebooks), it has made managing them easier.



Evernote: Used to capture any thought or bit of information that I want to remember. I can create notes through typing, taking a picture, handwriting, voice dictation or audio recording. Through a simple add-on to my computer's web browser, I can "clip" any webpage content I want to save for later. I have multiple "notebooks" to organize my thoughts.

One of the features I have used the most is the ability to share control of calendars, lists and notebooks with other people to allow for better collaboration. I use all three apps personally and professionally. By sharing calendars, lists and notebooks, I can separate the areas of my life and give specific people the ability to collaborate with me in individual areas but maintain privacy in others. For example, my boss can add tasks to my work task list. My coworkers and I can all add idea notes to a work notebook. I give my roommate access to a calendar event so he can add information.



Google or iOS Calendar: Used to record appointments or events that are date specific. I have multiple calendars for every aspect of my life and from multiple Gmail accounts. I can view all of them layered on one calendar on any of my devices.



Remember the Milk: Used to store specific tasks aka a to-do list. I can also add notes to each task and group tasks into lists. I have multiple lists which



The ability to use any device (smartphone, tablet, home & work computers) to access any of these apps increases the chance that I will remember to capture a