

McGuire

Serving Our Nation's Heroes

Monthly

This month:
Social Work Month
3D Printing at McGuire VAMC
Richmond employee aids accident victim

Thank you to our McGuire Social Work Team

March is National Social Work Month, a time to recognize the invaluable service and leadership social workers provide to our Nation, our communities, and our Veterans. Today, there are more than 10,000 social workers throughout the VA system in VA Medical Centers, Vet Centers and Community-Based Outpatient Clinics. Within the VA system, social workers assist Veterans and their families/caregivers in resolving psychosocial, emotional and economic barriers to health and well-being.

HOW SOCIAL WORKERS HELP VETERANS

Do I Need A Social Worker? You will find social workers in all program areas at McGuire VAMC who are ready to help you with most any need. If you have questions or problems, the social worker will be able to help you or can refer you to the right person for help.

Some of the ways that VA social workers can help include:

- Financial or housing assistance
- Getting help from the VA or from community agencies, such as Meals on Wheels, so you can continue to live in your own home
- Applying for benefits from the VA, Social Security and other government and community programs
- Making sure your doctor and other VA staff on your treatment team know your decisions about end-of-life issues, generally called advance directives and living wills. Things like whether you want to be on life

support equipment, whether you are an organ donor, and which family member or other person you have chosen to make decisions on your behalf when you are unable to make those decisions yourself

- Arranging for respite care for your caregiver so she or he can have a break or go on vacation without worrying about who will be caring for you
- If you are having marriage or family problems
- If you would like help with moving to an assisted living facility, a board and care home or a nursing home...CONTINUED ON PAGE 2



Richmond's Social Work Team

Assistive Technology at Richmond VAMC: Creating New Solutions through 3D Printing

3D Printing, a fast growing high tech prototyping and manufacturing system is being applied to new uses daily at Richmond VAMC. The Assistive Technology Program uses the printer for clinical services. Using SolidWorks commercial 3D modeling software and their Stratasys 3D printer, rehabilitation engineers Ben Salatin and Brian Burkhardt are creating custom solutions for Veterans.

"For instance, we may get an urgent request from a speech and language pathologist in need of a key guard for a specific communication app on an iPad to evaluate a Veteran with tremors. The team designed the keyguard and printed it overnight for the Veteran's appointment the next day."

the wheelchair mounting hardware from another company, we redesigned part of the cell phone mount to be compatible with the wheelchair mounting system," says Brian Burkhardt.

In one case, a Veteran with a spinal cord injury could not change the orientation of the smart phone mount on his new wheelchair due to his limited hand function. The team designed a solution for the mount which allowed the Veteran to change orientations with no hand functions.

This solution has been used with multiple Veterans and allowed the... CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

"After discovering that a universal cell phone mount from one company was not compatible with

The team has been able to design and introduce products for Veterans sometimes within 24 hours. *"We are able to save the patient time and the 3D technology also allows us to produce one of a kind items cost effectively as needed,"* says Ben Salatin.



Ben Salatin shows a 3D printer created device

SOCIAL WORK CONTINUED ...

- If someone close to you has passed away and you want to talk about it
- If you have problems with drinking or drug use
- If you feel that someone is taking advantage of you or if you feel mistreated in a relationship
- If you are a parent who feels overwhelmed with child care
- If your parent or spouse is in failing health
- If you are feeling stress because of your health or because your medical condition interferes with your daily activities
- If you are feeling sad, depressed or anxious
- If you really aren't sure what you need, but things just don't feel right

HOW CAN SOCIAL WORKERS HELP VETERANS WITH PROBLEMS AND CONCERNS?

Assessment

The first step is generally for the social worker to meet with you, and often with your family. The social worker will ask questions about your health, your living situation, your family and other support systems, your military experience and the things you think you may need help with. The social worker will then write an assessment that will help you and your

VA health care team make treatment plans.

Crisis intervention

In a crisis situation, social workers can provide counseling services to help you get through the crisis. The social worker will then help you with more long-term needs.

The social worker can help you apply for services and programs in your community and through the VA to meet emergent needs.

High-risk screening

Social workers work particularly closely with those Veterans who are at high risk, such as those who are homeless, those who have been admitted to the hospital several times, and those who cannot care for themselves any longer.

Discharge planning

When you are admitted to a VA hospital, the social worker will help you make plans for your discharge to your home or the community. If you need services in your home or if you can no longer live at home by yourself, the social worker can help you make arrangements for the help you need.

Case management

Social workers often provide long-term case management services to Veterans who are at high risk of being admitted to a hospital, those who have very complex medical problems, and those who need additional help and support. They are



For more information about Social Work services at McGuire VA Medical Center, please call 804-675-5760. Thank you to our McGuire team of dedicated professionals who serve our Nation's Heroes.

available when needed to provide and coordinate a variety of services you may need, including counseling or support services or just helping you figure out what you need and how to get it.

Advocacy

Sometimes it can be hard for a Veteran to speak up for himself or herself. Social workers can advocate for you and support you when you have a hard time doing it by yourself.

Education

Social workers can help educate you and your family about your health care condition, what services and programs are available to you, how you can live a more healthy life, how you can deal with stress and loss, and how you can find support groups and other self-help programs in your community. Social workers also educate other staff in the medical center and in the community about VA programs and services and about the personal challenges Veterans experience may affect their health.

Psychotherapy

Clinical social workers also provide individual therapy, group therapy, and family therapy to address emotional, behavioral and mental health needs.

3D PRINTING CONTINUED ...

team to create a mouthstick holder for a patient, based on Burkhart's design that was compatible with the same wheelchair mounting system. These are a few examples of how the everyday challenges patients experience are reduced by the creation of real time solutions in the Assistive Technology Program.

Additive manufacturing, commonly referred to as 3 Dimensional (3D) Printing is an advanced manufacturing process which allows a 3D physical object to be created directly from a 3D virtual computer model. Developed in the 1980s, this technology has become much less expensive and more robust in the last decade allowing this high tech process to be used in everything from the fashion industry to the medical field. There are several different methods for performing 3D printing based on the precision requirements of the part developed but all the methods create parts in the same general way. A very thin layer of material is deposited one on top of the other like a layer cake until after several hundred layers in most cases, the object is complete. The material being printed is most commonly a type of plastic but can include metals, ceramic, concrete, sugar and chocolate.

Richmond VAMC Assistive Technology Program is pleased to utilize 3D printing in the clinical rehabilitation environment and looks forward to collaborating with Veterans and clinicians to create uniquely suited solutions for Veterans.



Ben helps a spinal cord injury Veteran

Richmond Employee Aids Accident Victim



Recently, Trevor Ballif a Respiratory Therapist and U.S. Army Veteran was on his way to work at the Richmond VA Medical Center when traffic came to a halt. Ballif states he was 1-2 cars back when he witnessed *"an explosion of plastic in the air."* *"I saw a lady dart into the road and I realized someone had been struck, there had been an accident."* Ballif put his car in park, walked up and that's when he witnessed a motorcyclist on the

ground with his bike tossed on its side.

The motorcyclist was non responsive and his skin was blue so Ballif sprang into action directing different bystanders to move the motorcycle that was leaking gasoline, grab an AED, and call EMS while he started CPR. Ballif said, *"I was doing chest compressions while the driver of the car involved in the accident was sitting by his side holding his hand and praying."*

After Ballif's resuscitative efforts the motorcyclist's skin began turning white, then pink and at that point Ballif knew he was getting his heart rate back. He checked his pulse and the victim started to breathe again. Suddenly a rush of relief washed over Ballif. He said, *"I was so glad to see him breathing again."*

Ballif grew up in northern Virginia and after high school went to college and became a Respiratory Therapist. In 1991, during the Gulf War he joined the Army as a tank crew member and eventually switched over to Respiratory Therapy. He spent a combined 6 years in both the active Army and Army Reserve.

Ballif worked in health care for many years before becoming a pilot. He went to ATP flight school in California and was employed by major airlines to fly commercially. He realized that work in the airline industry wasn't very consistent due to frequent furloughs. His last flight job brought him to Dulles airport in Virginia. A downturn in the economy led to another furlough so he returned to respiratory therapy.

Ballif has worked in civilian hospitals and also runs a small farm where he and his family raise special breeds of goats, chickens and rabbits. When he landed a permanent part-time position at the Richmond VAMC he was elated. He stated, *"I'm very blessed to be working at the VA. The staff is wonderful, the equipment is state-of-the-art, and I really enjoy working to help Veterans."*

When asked about how he felt during the accident Ballif said, *"To be honest I was terrified...it was surreal. One minute I was on my way to work at McGuire in my blue scrubs and the next people were looking for me to take the lead in an emergency. And then when it was over I realized I still gotta go to work!"* (he laughed).

Ballif received word that the father of the motorcyclist wanted to speak with him. He spoke with Ballif by phone thanking him and assuring him that his son was in stable condition with no neck, head, or spinal cord injuries.

Many are hailing Ballif as a hero but he confessed that he doesn't like all the attention. Although he is satisfied with the outcome and the motorcyclist's prognosis, he is eager for things to go back to normal.

While Ballif's day began as ordinary and ended extraordinarily he remains humble. He stated, *"I was just in the right place in the right time with the right training. Being a respiratory therapist really is what gave me the knowledge and confidence, and also divine intervention allowed me to be there to help."*

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Nutrition is Key to Healthy Living

We've all heard the saying, "you are what you eat" or "an apple a day keeps the doctor away" but how many patients are aware of how their food choices affect their overall health? Many are unaware of the effects of poor food choices on their health until a life-altering diagnosis is found.

VHA, VA dieticians, and the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics hope to change that by highlighting the relationship between nutrition and Veterans overall health and wellness this March.

In March 1973, the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics (AND) created the week-long National Nutrition Week to educate and bring awareness to the nutri-

tional needs of Americans. The National Nutrition Month campaign focuses attention on the importance of making informed food choices and developing sound eating and physical activity habits.

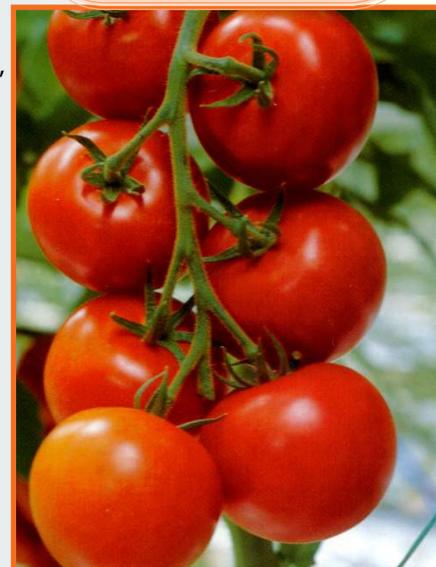
In recent years the focus on making sound nutrition choices seems higher than ever given the wide variety of processed and unhealthy selections that have decreased the vital nutrient intake and expanded the waistlines of many Americans. After leading a very active lifestyle during military service, many Veterans find it difficult to maintain a healthy weight in the years after separation.

Re-learning healthy eating habits is a process that many find

difficult due to the abundance of fast-food restaurants, hectic schedules, and the taste of some healthy foods.

Consumer research confirms that taste tops nutrition as the main reason why one food is purchased over another. While social, emotional and health factors also play a role, the foods people enjoy are likely the ones they eat most. "Enjoy the Taste of Eating Right" is the theme for National Nutrition Month® 2014. This year's key messages for NNM will focus on how to combine taste and nutrition to create healthy meals that follow the Dietary Guidelines recommendations.

How many patients are aware of how their food choices affect their overall health?





February
at McGuire

February Leadership Forum

Service Awards, Years of Service:

- Donna Hannum, 35 years - Medical Service
- Patricia Brown, 30 years - Health Administration
- Margie T. Lastovica, 30 years - Radiation/Oncology
- Anthony J. Minisi, MD, 30 years - Medical Service

Please share your events with us for inclusion in upcoming newsletters. Send an email to: Darlene.Edwards@va.gov