McGuire VA Medical Center (VAMC) held a commemorative program to recognize the 50th anniversary of the Vietnam War and its Veterans, Tuesday, March 29th outside the rotunda entrance near the POW/MIA memorial. Over 150 Vietnam era Veterans and their families were in attendance for the program. Colonel Claude Crisp, Ft. Lee, provided the keynote remarks and the ceremonial wreath was placed on the POW/MIA memorial in remembrance.

McGuire VAMC joined with other VA Medical Centers across the country that held programs to thank and honor Veterans of the Vietnam War, as well as those who served on active duty in the U.S. Armed Forces any time from Nov. 1, 1955 to May 15, 1975, regardless of location.

Vietnam Veterans received a commemorative lapel pin at the conclusion of their program and were celebrated during a closing reception.

Benefits of Total Body Conditioning

The total body conditioning exercise class is a new employee wellness class at the medical center. The focus of the training is on toning and conditioning the whole body. This is accomplished through exercise using body weight, compound movements, and equipment to increase cardiovascular and muscular strength. The exercises change each session to keep people interested and energized. Anyone from any fitness level can participate in the class.

When performing body weight exercises, the compound movements that are performed in the activities involve numerous muscle groups and joints, resulting in an entire body workout.

The workout group meets every Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday evenings, 4:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. To register, employees are invited to report to the class and sign in prior to the start time.

If you have additional questions, please contact Ryan Ballon at 804-675-6210 or ryan.ballon@va.gov.
Service members are taught a plethora of new tasks and skills when they join the military and attend basic training. Typically one of those skills is to learn about firearms—and how to use them. At the McGuire VA Medical Center (VAMC), Veterans with functional limitations are able to connect with the extensive adaptive sports program and participate in many activities to suit their therapy needs. One of the most popular programs amongst Veteran athletes is air rifles.

“I think part of why air rifle is so popular is because it is similar to something they did in the service,” said Nicole Shuman, adaptive sports coordinator at McGuire.

Since 2010, McGuire’s air rifle program has gone from 10 athletes and borrowed equipment to about 25 regular participants who use competition-style air rifles.

The rifles are certainly capable of firing pellets with great precision, said Shuman. And, if the Veterans work hard at their technique they can see the improvements in the results.

Shuman said the program has had three Veterans who have progressed beyond the capabilities of the program and have moved up to practice and compete for a Paralympics-sponsored group. It’s not the actual Paralympic team, but a step beneath, explained Shuman. The athletes moved on to a higher level of competition and coaching.

The program currently has a six lane shooting range in which participants face off at a target about 33 feet away. A sturdy Kevlar curtain acts as a backstop and the paper targets are fashioned to steel traps.

With a crisp “pop” and a dull “thud,” Army Veteran Daniel Harris sends a lead pellet downrange to the target. Harris pulls the bolt to the rear to insert another pellet into the single-shot rifle. He said he plans to compete in air rifles in the upcoming National Veterans Golden Age Games in Detroit, July 10-14. The former infantryman from Erie, Pennsylvania, began the air rifle program in early March of this year.

“It is something I wanted to do,” Harris said, likening the pellet gun to that of his former firearm of choice—the M-16.

Recently, the Paralyzed Veterans of America organization held its regional shooting event at a local gun range in Richmond, and about 20 Veteran athletes attended. Harris said he found the event to be very fun, and there seemed to be a lot of camaraderie amongst the participants.

“The whole event was very professional,” Harris said. One of the benefits, Harris explained, is all the individual instruction given by the recreation therapy staff.

“They’re very patient with me,” he joked. “It’s fun. It really is fun.” Another Army Veteran, Jerry Sovocool, has participated in air rifle for two years at McGuire. The Vietnam Veteran is a self-proclaimed shooter at heart. Sovocool said he enjoys recreation therapy programs because it helps him control his essential tremor.

“I’ve been a shooter since I was a kid,” Sovocool said. McGuire has several adaptive mechanisms to aid those who wish to participate in air rifles, whether it is a special prosthesis, twitch-muscle movement controls, or use of a sip-and-puff.

Air rifle is easy to begin, said Shuman. The program is broken down into beginner and competitive skill groups. Shuman also mentioned air pistols will soon be added to the program.

If you are interested in participating in air rifles, or any of the adaptive sports on offer, Veterans must be cleared by a primary care provider or physical medicine and rehabilitation physician.

Below is a complete list of recreation therapy activities offered at McGuire.

| Air Rifle | Bowling | Horseshoes | Rowing | Strength & Conditioning |
| Archery | Cycling | Kayaking | Shuffleboard | Swimming |
| Basketball | Fishing | Lacrosse | Skiing | Table Tennis |
| Billiards | Field Events | Racing | Softball | Tennis |
| Bocce | Golf | Racquetball | Spinning | |
**Functional Zero Homelessness: WHAT DOES THAT MEAN**

On Veterans Day last year, Virginia Governor Terry McAuliffe declared with pride that the state had systematically ended Veteran homelessness. He was the first governor in the entire country who could say that. Since that time, 20 cities and states have followed in Virginia’s footsteps, including New Orleans, Houston, and Connecticut.

The challenge to end Veteran homelessness or reach “functional zero” was established by First Lady Michelle Obama. The goal was to eradicate Veteran homelessness by the end of 2015. At the time, 850 state, city and county leaders accepted the First Lady's challenge.

However, many have questioned the meaning of “functional zero” and how this term relates to the real world. The criteria for “functional zero” include the following:

1. The community has identified all Veterans experiencing homelessness.
2. The community provides shelter immediately to any Veteran experiencing unsheltered homelessness who wants it.
3. The community only provides service-intensive transitional housing in limited instances.
4. The community has capacity to assist Veterans to swiftly move into permanent housing.
5. The community has resources, plans, and system capacity in place should any Veteran become homeless or be at risk of homelessness in the future.

Overall, the key to successfully ending Veteran homelessness is collaboration between federal, state, and local Veteran services. According to Matt Leslie, Director of Housing Development for Veteran Services, Virginia Department of Veteran Services, “The three key components of the commonwealth action plan were targeting the right resources to the right Veteran, specifically with HUD-VA supportive housing vouchers and services; formalizing coordination among the various parties; and using data to drive our approach. That really set the stage for all of the work in Virginia. We greatly improved service delivery and dramatically lowered barriers to care.”

The Homeless Team at McGuire benefits from the established collaboration between various Veteran organizations and local charitable donations. On May 18 during the annual VA2K, McGuire staff can support local homeless Veterans by donating clothing and toiletries.

For more information about what items are needed, please contact Brooke Pendleton at 804-675-5000, ext. 2438.

**TAIWANESE STUDENTS VISIT McGuIRE**

Each year, students from a foreign medical university located halfway around the earth visit the McGuire VA Medical Center (VAMC), and other medical facilities, as part of a field trip to experience American medicine and healthcare practices.

Approximately 32 students from the Kaohsiung Medical University in Taiwan visited McGuire VAMC to tour several programs and gain a better understanding of Veteran-centric health care.

This year marks the fourth year students from KMU have visited McGuire VAMC, according to Dr. Yazar Ozcan, who organizes the KMU trip. Ozcan serves as the Charles P. Cardwell, Jr. Professor Vice Chair and Director of Master of Science in Health Administration at nearby Virginia Commonwealth University.

“In many countries, including Taiwan, the hospital care is provided by public/government, and private ownership,” Ozcan wrote in an e-mail. “To reflect how the ownership and hospitals provide care, we choose VA as public/government representative.”

During the visit to McGuire, the students toured several programs including Polytrauma, Spinal Cord Injury & Disorder Research, and Prosthetics.

Dr. Hon-Yi Shi, who serves as the chair of the Graduate Institute of Healthcare Administration and Medical Informatics of KMU, attended this year’s trip along with the students. Shi said he, and the students, are greatly appreciative for the opportunity to visit the city of Richmond and McGuire VAMC.

“During the stay in (Virginia), our graduated students not only expressed their thoughts to advance their studies but also explored to enhance their knowledge and abilities in the field,” Shi explained via e-mail.

The relationship between VCU and KMU began approximately 16 years ago, said Ozcan. Since then the event has expanded to include several Central Virginia medical facilities while in the U.S.
McGuire VA Medical Center is a leader in Veterans Health Administration (VHA) with an initiative to identify and treat all Veterans with the hepatitis C virus. To accomplish this goal, the medical center is offering outreach programs which include hepatitis C testing to all Veterans born between 1945 and 1965 (high risk population for hepatitis C), as well as other Veterans who desire testing. Many Veterans are chronically infected with hepatitis C. The infection can cause liver cirrhosis and primary liver cancer, and account for thousands of deaths each year among Veterans.

Expanded treatment programs with weekend hours to ensure anti-viral therapy for hepatitis C is available to all infected Veterans. First released in late 2014, highly effective oral treatments, consisting of pills administered once or twice daily, are capable of curing most patients of hepatitis C infection within 12 weeks. McGuire VAMC hepatitis C initiatives are being implemented by a dedicated hepatitis C treatment team, led by liver specialist Dr. Michael Fuchs. The Richmond team has a continuous goal to identify and provide treatment for at least 75% of all hepatitis C infected Veterans followed at the medical center by December 31, 2016.

We are pleased to announce that Mr. Alan Lombardo has been appointed as the Associate Director of the McGuire VA Medical Center, effective, March 20, 2016. In this role, Mr. Lombardo is responsible for the major administrative functions of the medical center to include facility management, finance, EMS, police services, and healthcare administrative services.

Previously, Mr. Lombardo was appointed as the Assistant Director in 2013. Prior to this appointment he served in numerous roles for the medical center.

Mr. Lombardo received his Bachelor of Science degree from Slippery Rock University in 1998. In 2002, he completed his Master of Science degree in Physical Therapy at Shenandoah University. In 2011, he received both a Master of Healthcare Administration degree and a Master of Business Administration degree from Baylor University. Early in 2014, he achieved the Fellow status for the American College of Healthcare Executives.

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