**Meet Sylvester Coleman**

**What branch of service did you serve in?**
I served in the U.S. Army.

**What were your years of service?**
I was in from 1980 to 1986.

**What was your most memorable experience while serving active duty?**
When I was coming home from West Germany, my jeep almost went off a cliff. I had an emergency call to come back home. The 1st Sgt’s driver took me to Rhein-Main Air Force Base. As we went down a winding road on the side of a cliff, the jeep slid on the ice and almost fell. We had to get out and push the jeep back onto the road.

**What’s your most memorable or enjoyable aspect of participating in the Golden Age Games?**
I’ve participated in the Golden Age Games in Omaha in 2015, Detroit in 2016, and Biloxi in 2017. I won the gold medal each year in the one-mile power walk. In 2016, I also won the bronze medal in horseshoes. It keeps me active, it keeps me competing with Veterans every year. It helps me maintain that caliber of fitness. I also enjoy meeting other Veterans from all over the nation and fellowshipping with them. It’s a beautiful thing.

**What does being a Veteran mean to you?**
It means we’re the main line of security for this country. It’s like a big family.

Cover photo: Army Veteran Herb Jones participates in his first Project Hero Memorial Day Challenge ride.

Back photo: Veteran Ferrero Carroll receives a new bicycle from McGuire VA Medical Center, thanks to a recent donation to the facility. Also pictured are Teresa Morris (left) and Mee Mee Graham.
Veterans and staff lined up to welcome cyclists riding in the Project Hero Memorial Challenge June 1, at the McGuire VA Medical Center. This event marks the second-year more than 100 cyclists stopped here while traveling from Washington D.C. to Virginia Beach.

This year, McGuire had eight Veterans participate in the challenge. Among them was Army Veteran Herb Jones. Jones made it his personal mission to complete his first challenge ride into McGuire, a facility he credits with saving his life.

“It was a little emotional once I got here,” said Jones. “I was tired, but I couldn’t give up! Not this ride, not till I made it here. I had to make it, I had to come here. This place means so much to me. This VA literally saved my life!”

Last August, doctors discovered a serious blood clot when Jones came to the emergency room with shortness of breath. The health scare resulted in an extended stay at McGuire where he recovered.

“I brag to my friends all the time that McGuire is the best VA in the system,” he said. “The doctors, the nurses, the social workers, all the staff, they are wonderful. I’m in so many activities like adaptive sports, creative writing, etc. and it’s all because of them.”

In September, Jones started to take his health more seriously. After the discovery of his health condition he started bicycling to build up strength. Although his health continued to improve, the cycling event was a challenge. A month before the event, he started training nearly every day.

“I’m not in the shape I need to be, but now I know what I’ve got to do for next year,” said Jones.

Although the majority of the cyclists were Veterans, active-duty military, fire fighters, police, and other first responders also joined in.

The 5-day, 500-mile Project Hero Memorial Challenge allowed riders with varying degrees of mobility to build camaraderie as they exchanged daily triumphs and pitfalls.

“It’s an amazing experience,” said Mike Manning, a Marine Corps Veteran. “When you get out of the military, you lose the camaraderie and friendship. Here, you get it back!”

Since 2011, Project Hero has worked to promote an active lifestyle to help Veterans recover from mental health issues and reduce drug-based therapies. The funds raised during events such as Memorial Challenge are used to support clinical research projects for mental health.

“It’s feels great to be a part of this,” said Peter Bylsma, from Project Hero. “I’ve been lucky to be a part of this and serving those who’ve served.”

McGuire VAMC, one of the first local riding hubs for Project Hero, is set to be a model for VAs across the country.
CarMax Cares and American Red Cross joined together to improve the community living center (CLC) garden for geriatric Veterans at the McGuire VA Medical Center, Wednesday, June 14.

Volunteers worked on the garden, which provides therapeutic relief to Veterans residing in the CLC. Each Wednesday, Veterans attend Garden Club to gain dexterity, improve mobility, and build camaraderie while tending to the garden.

“The garden is a place of refuge from the sterility of the hospital,” said Chris Bucket, Garden Coordinator for American Red Cross. “It gives [Veterans] a sense of purpose.”

Veterans in the CLC benefit from the garden in more ways than one. In the summer, they receive produce from the garden a couple of times a week. According to Bucket, the garden provides a sense of calm and is said to improve memory.

“We have a sensory garden towards the back with Lamb’s-Ear for feeling and lavender for smell,” said Bucket. “It improves memory because it helps stimulate the senses and they remember, ‘oh, my mom used to have that.’”

As a master gardener, Bucket opted to not use pesticides so Veterans can benefit from consuming organic produce. Seasonally, the crops are rotated with fresh soil, fertilizer, plants and mulch to ensure optimal growth for produce.

The raised beds are one of the many projects led by the American Red Cross to improve functionality for Veterans. Along with the initial ground leveling funds were used to pave walkways, add a pergola, and build a shed for gardening supplies.

Improvement projects have been covered in part by grants. However, maintenance of the garden relies heavily on donations. Since 2011, American Red Cross has dedicated their services to create and maintain the CLC healing garden. Staff from CarMax are encouraged each year, to participate in local community projects as part of a team building initiative. •
GOLDEN AGE GAMES

More than 800 Veterans over the age of 55 attended the 31st annual Golden Age Games in Biloxi, Mississippi, to compete in eight age categories, and three ability divisions: ambulatory, visually impaired, and wheelchair. Fourteen Veterans from the McGuire VA Medical Center adaptive sports program received a total of 16 medals: eight gold, seven silver, and one bronze. •

Photo left: Ron Richardson receives an award at the end of the competitions. At right, Cynthia McDowell throws the javelin. Listed below are local Veterans who participated in the 2017 Golden Age Games. (VA photo)

AIR RIFLE
Ron Richardson – Silver
Cynthia McDowell – Silver
James Henderson
Rickey Wood

BOCCIA
Greg Bennet – Gold
Ron Richardson – Gold
James Mayo – Silver
Daniel Harris – Gold
Danny Wheeler
Cynthia McDowell
James Henderson
Ralph Hobbs

CYCLING
Daniel Harris – Gold

BOWLING
Cynthia McDowell – Silver
Ron Richardson – Gold
Teresa Brown
Sylvester Coleman
Danny Wheeler
James Mayo
Ralph Hobbs
H. Parker Bey
James Henderson
Martha Harris

FIELD EVENTS
Cynthia McDowell
Rickey Wood
Gloria Booker

HORSESHOES
Danny Wheeler – Silver
Greg Bennet – Bronze
Sylvester Coleman
Gloria Booker
Daniel Harris
James Mayo
Martha Harris
Ralph Hobbs

POWER WALK
Sylvester Coleman – Gold
Danny Wheeler

SHUFFLEBOARD
Martha Harris – Silver
Greg Bennett – Silver
James Mayo
H. Parker Bey
James Henderson
Gloria Booker
Daniel Harris
Rickey Wood

NINE BALL
Ron Richardson – Gold
James Henderson
Teresa Brown
Cynthia McDowell
Sylvester Coleman
Daniel Harris
Ralph Hobbs
H. Parker Bey

TABLE TENNIS
Ron Richardson – Gold
Cynthia McDowell
Daniel Harris
In 2016, the McGuire VA Medical Center became one of 22 sites to join the national VA Center for Innovation as part of its Innovators Network. With the VACI’s investment program, new innovations in Veteran health care transform from concept to reality.

In its first year, McGuire received funding for 10 projects to develop innovative ideas in areas of software applications, process automation, 3-D printed products, and more. A combination of national funding and local training opportunities aim to foster in-house innovation and improve the Veteran experience.

3-D printing workshops and classes in Human-Centered Design (HCD) are some innovation-related competencies offered to designers, many of whom work closely with Veterans at the facility each day. Projects and processes are developed by participants on a small scale with the hope the design can be developed enough to be spread to other VA facilities.

David Chen, Coulter Program Director at the University of Virginia, recently led a two-day class to teach HCD to McGuire staff members who are currently engaged in design projects.

“With HCD, the goal is to not assume you know the solution,” said Natalie Maixner, co-lead for McGuire’s Innovator’s Network. “The design process must involve the user. If you design something for the patient, then the patient needs to be a part of the process and development.”

Chen, who will teach another two-day course on HCD in late August, used a series of interactive exercises to demonstrate how insights from the consumer can be woven into the design process.

John Miller, rehabilitation technician with McGuire’s Assistive Technology team, attended Chen’s workshop on HCD. Miller has worked on a clip to hold a walking cane securely in place when stowed on a mobility scooter.

Miller said throughout the development process, HCD factored into the design as he sought to maximize the simplicity of the device, while expanding its practicality.

“One of the main things I took away from the HCD course was the importance of making designs intuitive,” Miller explained.

Since the HCD class, Miller has tested several iterations of his cane clip, and the design has changed after receiving feedback from Veterans.

“One Veteran suggested adding a second clip head so that the cane was more stable and less wobbly,” Miller explained. “So, I listened to his suggestion and did just that. When I gave him the updated clip to try, it locked the cane in perfectly.”

McGuire VAMC will hold its first ever Demo Day, July 26, to showcase projects currently in the development phase. At the event, a panel of experts will offer feedback to help grow the projects into a design that can possibly be spread across the VA.

For information on submitting a project idea to the Innovators Network or to participate in the August HCD training, contact Melissa Oliver or Natalie Maixner.
As the weather heats up, people start firing up their grills for cookouts and summer parties. It can be a fun time for friends and family to get together with plenty of good food. With that also comes unwanted calories, usually associated with large and sometimes unhealthy selections. However, you can still enjoy a barbeque and keep your calorie count within a healthy range without going overboard, thanks to these healthy tips.

CLEAN YOUR GRILL
Keep the grill clean before cooking to prevent char buildup from transferring onto food. Excess char can make grilled food inedible. Clean your grill off before cooking using a wire brush, and use a wet cloth or paper towel to clear debris.

TRY GRILLED FRUITS AND VEGETABLES
Add variety to your grill with fresh vegetables and fruit. You can add them along with meat on a kabob, or just by themselves with a brush of olive oil and simple seasoning. These can be a delicious and healthy addition to your grilled meal.

ADD HEALTHY SIDE DISHES
Swap traditional sides with a lighter and healthier option, such as a green leafy salad or fresh fruit. Healthy alternatives add variety, rather than the normal potato or macaroni salad.

LEAN MEATS
Don’t limit yourself to high-fat meats when grilling. Try skinless and trimmed meats such as lean chicken breast, fish, or lean ground meat, such as turkey.

MARINATE YOUR MEAT
Marinating meat ahead of time helps add flavor and cuts down on the salt. Try a healthy alternative with homemade marinades or rubs rather than store-bought. A few examples of healthy marinades include chipotle seasoning, vinaigrettes, barbecue sauce, jerk sauce, and Cajun seasoning.

Information for this article was gathered by Ryan Bal-lon, McGuire Wellness Coordinator, from The Cleveland Clinic, the American Heart Association, and Harvard Medical School.