Starbucks

Some believe the best part of waking up is hot coffee in a cup. Thanks to one team at the medical center, achieving this delicious dose of daily fuel is easy and enjoyable. Meet our Starbucks Baristas – a group of five Veterans Canteen Service employees who have mastered the art of the blended beverage. Whether your choice is a creamy caramel macchiato or a fruity ice-cold smoothie, the perfect pick-me-up drink is made to order here.

Starbucks serves more than 300 customers daily. These baristas pride themselves on customer service and a smile with each order.

“The small things make an impact,” shared Darren Banks. “Remembering your regular customers’ drink order really does make them feel special.”

The baristas have likely served most everyone in the medical center at some point.

“Being able to interact with pretty much everyone in the hospital is awesome,” said Katia Paige. “You get to network and really get to know the amazing people in the medical center.”

After construction of the new Starbucks is complete, it will offer more of a café feel with tables and chairs for guests to dine in and order hot food items.

From left: Dennis Smith, Renee Williams, Katia Paige, Mariah Ellis, & Darren Banks
SECOND RICHMOND FISHER HOUSE BREAKS GROUND ON FOUNDER’S BIRTHDAY

(Sydney Dudley contributed to this story)

Since 2008, Richmond Fisher House has provided housing for more than 7,000 families of Veterans receiving treatment at McGuire VA Medical Center. Although the house in Richmond is only 10 years old, the Fisher House program has supported military and Veteran families for nearly 30 years all across the country and overseas.

Zachary and Elizabeth Fisher were avid supporters of the military, though Zachary was unable to serve due to an injury sustained as a young bricklayer. Determined to give back to his nation in other ways, the Fishers established the Fisher House program in 1990. The network of homes has grown tremendously with 78 Fisher Houses, 36 of which are located on VA hospital grounds.

Ten years ago, the Fisher House Foundation funded a house at McGuire. Wayne Walker, manager of the Richmond Fisher House, enthusiastically described how it has evolved since its construction.

“When the house was first built, we had 80 percent occupancy,” Walker said. “Now, we are almost always at capacity and there is sometimes a waiting list.”

Demand for lodging at Richmond Fisher House has increased so much that groundbreaking for a second facility occurred Sept. 26, the 108th birthday of the late Zachary Fisher. Walker, who served for 25 years in the Army, advocated for this date to serve as a symbol of how the Fishers’ legacy continues to provide places of comfort and compassion for Veterans’ families.

A second Fisher House will double the current capacity. Walker said he looks forward to the creation of additional housing, and that he is always trying to provide the best customer service to our Veterans.

The second house is expected to be completed in about 14 months. The Richmond Fisher House Foundation provides invaluable services for the families of Veterans. For more information about house and its mission, visit richmondfisherhouse.org.

The Fisher House Foundation and Richmond VA Medical Center broke ground on a second Fisher House, Sept. 26. From left: Wayne Walker, Richmond Fisher House Manager; David Coker, President of Fisher House Foundation; Leo O’Donnell, Richmond Fisher House Foundation Board Member; Levar Stoney, Richmond City Mayor; Alan Lombardo, Associate Director, Richmond VA Medical Center; and three generous benefactors who support Fisher House and its construction.
Above: An employee signs the border of a McGuire VA Medical Center photograph as a going away gift for John A. Brandecker, medical center director. Brandecker accepted a position to serve as network director for VISN 21. He will lead medical centers in parts of California, Nevada, Hawaii and locations in the Pacific Islands.

Right: Katie Pierce gives an enthusiastic thumbs up while roasting a marshmallow, Oct. 2, as Rebecca Vokes, administrative resident, looks on. Pierce works as the executive assistant to the director.

Nutrition and Food Service at McGuire prepare and serve meals to patients across the hospital each day. Pictured from left to right are five chefs from the service: Eric Jenkins, Gwendolyn Smith, Allen King, Thomas Millican and Lealice Davis.
Logistics Week

Bottom right: McGuire’s annual Suicide Prevention Fair, held Sept. 13, welcomed many community partners and resources to the facility. One activity available to eventgoers was painting rocks with useful messages. Each year, September is recognized as Suicide Prevention Month.

Logistics Week

patients across the hospital each day. Pictured from left to right are five chefs from the service: Eric Jenkins, Gwendolyn Smith, Allen King, Thomas Millican and Lealice Davis.
McGUIRE HOSTS LEGAL CLINIC FOR VETERANS  
**By Sydney Dudley**

On Thursday, Oct. 4, McGuire VA Medical Center collaborated with the 80th Training Command of the Army Reserve and the Greater Richmond Bar Foundation to host its quarterly free legal clinic. The clinic offers Veterans a chance to receive legal assistance free of charge from volunteers around the community.

Lynn Anderson, a licensed clinical social worker at McGuire, helps host the quarterly event, which features more than a dozen legal professionals and can serve up to 40 Veterans and spouses in one day.

“Having these services available for free does so much for our Veterans,” Anderson said. She also helps coordinate smaller clinics on the first Thursday of each month. The monthly clinics serve 6-7 Veterans per day.

Attorneys, paralegals and law students from around the Richmond community volunteer their time to help Veterans with living wills, medical and general powers of attorney, and other basic legal services.

These clinics also benefit Veterans who can’t afford an attorney. This way, they can still get legal services they need.

Anderson said she hopes the medical center can partner with more attorneys to expand legal services at McGuire in the future.

“We are looking for more attorneys, notaries, paralegals and law firms to volunteer,” she said. “We would appreciate anyone with legal abilities who can give their time.”

McGUIRE'S NEW TUG ROBOTS  
**By Sydney Dudley**

When it comes to the latest in robot technology, the McGuire VA Medical Center certainly stays up to date. In June, five new Aethon TUG Mobile Robots entered the VA workforce following the “retirements” of the previous set of robots.

Two of the new robots work in pharmacy while the others are used to run errands for the lab.

Ben Durham, administrative officer for pharmacy service, described the function of the new robots.

“They serve as automated delivery systems,” Durham explained. “[The robots] carry medications that need quick transportation but can’t be sent in tubes.”

McGuire also has a pneumatic tube system to make deliveries to different areas of the hospital.

The TUG robots have many other abilities beyond acting as secure carriers for medications and specimens. All five of the TUG robots can navigate to any location in the hospital on their own. Their spatial awareness capabilities also allow them to detect objects (and people) to avoid running into them.

The robots have held a special place in the hearts of VA staff and patients for years, and employees sometimes adorn them with hats around the holidays. The facility even names them. Past names have included Bert and Ernie from Sesame Street.

TUG robots are just one example of how the VA utilizes cutting-edge technology to provide high-quality healthcare to Veterans.
The barbershop at the McGuire VA Medical Center serves as a place where Veterans can get a quality haircut without leaving hospital grounds.

Will Blake, one of the barbers, shares his insights on the benefits of the barbershop.

“It contributes to the one-stop shop that is the VA,” Blake said. “It is very convenient because Veterans can get their hair, doctors appointments, prescriptions, and more done in the same building.”

Some Veterans are residents at the VA, so the barbershop allows them to get haircuts without having to arrange transportation.

Even patients who can’t leave their hospital room can receive services from the barbershop because the barbers can bring service to them.

Recently, the barbershop moved to a new location near the Community Living Center entrance.

Blake said he and his clients are pleased with the move and appreciate how the new location has windows and natural light.

Steve Cox has been a barber at McGuire for more than 32 years and has seen the positive impacts of the barbershop firsthand.

“I really like the sense of fellowship here, and I tend to become friends with the Vets over time.”

Cox said. “Everyone is welcome to join in conversations. We keep an open dialogue and talk about all kinds of things.”

The barbershop currently serves up to twenty Veterans a day and continues to grow its customer base. Building permanent relationships with clientele can take from six months to a year, and Cox actively works to make more Veterans aware of the barbershops’ presence.

Working as barbers at a Veterans’ hospital has brought joy to both men. “It’s great being able to accommodate Veterans and see the smiles on their faces,” Blake noted. “I am honored to work for those who made sacrifices for our country.”

The barbershop is open on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. and on Wednesdays and Saturdays from 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. with lunch breaks from 1:30-2:30 p.m. The barbers primarily have walk-in appointments on a first-come, first-served basis.