



## MAN'S BEST FRIEND

**A**rmy Veteran David Stemmerich's dog Sarge is more than a best friend. He wakes him up at night when he's having nightmares, helps him from having panic attacks and anxiety in public, and plays with him when he's depressed. Sarge is a post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) service dog.

David served two tours in Iraq, the first as a fire team leader, and the second as a 50-caliber machine gunner. After serving, David got married, had a little girl, and got a job. "I just tried to have a normal life." It was two years before he started having problems. He was diagnosed with PTSD in March 2006 and began treatment at VA Butler Healthcare. PTSD is an anxiety disorder that can occur after you have been through a traumatic event, like that experienced in combat. David has received a variety of PTSD

treatments at VA Butler, as well as VA Pittsburgh and VA Coatesville. "Group therapy helped me to not feel alone anymore and to understand that other guys were going through it too. All the treatments played a huge role in helping me get to where I am today," said David. "I'm almost myself again."

Perhaps the best therapy for David though is Sarge, his German shorthaired pointer PTSD service dog. Sarge is with him 24/7 and can recognize when David's feeling depressed. He'll bring

toys over and initiate play like fetch and frisbee. Sarge also helps David remember medications, avoid panic attacks, and sleep better. Service dogs have been provided to disabled Veterans in the U.S. since WWI, and a growing number are using PTSD service dogs today.

To learn more, visit [www.ptsd.va.gov](http://www.ptsd.va.gov). If you or someone you know is in need of an evaluation for PTSD, contact VA Butler Healthcare's Behavioral Health Department toll-free: 800.362.8262, ext. 5039 or direct dial: 724.477.5039.

“Group therapy helped me to not feel alone anymore and to understand that other guys were going through it [PTSD] too.” *David Stemmerich*

## THIS MONTH IN HISTORY...AUGUST

- 4** The Revenue Cutter Service (now U.S. Coast Guard) is created by Congress [Happy Coast Guard Day!] (1790)
- 7** The "Order of the Purple Heart" is created by President George Washington (1782)
- 7** President Bush orders the organization of Operation Desert Shield in response to Iraq's invasion of Kuwait (1990)
- 14** Japanese forces surrender during World War II [V-J Day] (1945)
- 18** The 19th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution is ratified, granting women the right to vote (1920)
- 28** At the March on Washington, Martin Luther King Jr. delivers his "I Have a Dream" speech (1963)



### August 7-13 is International Assistance Dog Week

International Assistance Dog Week is a time to recognize all the devoted, hardworking assistance dogs, including PTSD service dogs like Sarge. For information about PTSD service dogs for Veterans, contact VA Butler's Center for Behavioral Health, 800.362.8262, ext. 5039 or go online at [va.gov/health/ServiceAndGuideDogs.asp](http://va.gov/health/ServiceAndGuideDogs.asp).



There are more than **500** million active users on Facebook. Are YOU one of them? VA Butler Healthcare is on Facebook. C'mon, "like" us at [www.facebook.com/VAButlerPA](http://www.facebook.com/VAButlerPA) to learn more about VA Butler programs, services, news, and events. *We like you too!*

**WELCOME HOME OPERATION ENDURING FREEDOM, OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM, & OPERATION NEW DAWN VETERANS!**

Join us at the Bantam Jeep Heritage Festival on Saturday, August 13 from 9 am – 5 pm at the Butler County Fairgrounds so we can personally thank you for your service and welcome you home!

Information will be available about VA health care benefits, enrollment and eligibility, VA's programs and services, Veteran education and employment opportunities, and health and wellness news. There will also be a free concert at 5:45 pm! For more information, contact the OEF/OIF/OND Program Coordinator at 800.362.8262, ext. 2493.



We want to hear from you!  
Email [amanda.wilczynski@va.gov](mailto:amanda.wilczynski@va.gov) or [lauren.heiger@va.gov](mailto:lauren.heiger@va.gov) to share your story with us!



**AUGUST IS NATIONAL IMMUNIZATION AWARENESS MONTH**

**B**e wise! Find out about recommended preventive services available to you at VA Butler Healthcare including screening tests and immunizations. Prevention is the best medicine and your PACT team is committed to educating you about your health so that you become proactive in preventing

disease and maintaining good health. Find out which screening tests and immunizations are recommended for your age group, gender, health status, and family history. Talk to your health care team at VA Butler today! And, you can learn more by visiting [www.prevention.va.gov](http://www.prevention.va.gov).

**ENDING HOMELESSNESS**

VA is taking decisive action to end Veteran homelessness this decade. Veterans at risk for homelessness or attempting to exit homelessness must have easy access to programs and services. To help meet this goal, VA Butler Healthcare is partnering with the local community and recognizing August as Homeless Awareness Month. Join us for...

<b>C.H.A.L.E.N.G. Forum</b>	<b>5K Run for Shelter</b>	<b>Poverty Simulation</b>
Tuesday, August 2	Saturday, August 27	Friday, August 12
8 am – 1 pm	t.b.a.	1 – 3 pm
VA Butler Healthcare	VA Butler Healthcare	Trinity Lutheran Church

For information, please contact VA Butler's Homeless Program Coordinator at 800-362-8262, ext. 2439.

**EVENTS**

- 11-6 **31st National Veterans Wheelchair Games**  
Monday, August 1 – Saturday, August 6  
VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System  
[www.pittsburgh.va.gov/NVWG](http://www.pittsburgh.va.gov/NVWG)
- 4 **August Podcast • Social Media**  
Thursday, August 4 • 12-12:30 pm  
Chat link: [talkshoe.com/tc/85029](http://talkshoe.com/tc/85029)  
or Call in: 724.444.7444 (Call ID: 85029)
- 13 **Welcome Home/Bantam Jeep Festival**  
Saturday, August 13 • 9 am-5 pm  
Butler County Fairgrounds



800.362.8262  
724.287.4781



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