

DON'T WAIT

U.S. Army Veteran Angela Buss waited 10 years to seek help and support for Military Sexual Trauma (MST) she experienced while serving her country. One thing she strongly advises to other women Veterans: Don't wait.

Angela started individual counseling at VA Butler Healthcare in 2013, and joined VA Butler's weekly MST Support Group soon after it started last spring. "It [the support group] was very surprising because I have crazy amounts of social anxiety. I was not interested in getting to know people; I was good on my own. I was really expecting it not to go so well, or be as enjoyable as it is," said Angela, who continues to attend weekly.

VA Butler's Center for Behavioral Health (CBH) started offering a weekly women Veterans' MST Support Group

last spring. The group is geared towards support; it is not a trauma processing group. Topics discussed in the group include increasing a sense of safety, shame and guilt, learning to trust others, recognizing possibly unsafe situations, and the cyclical nature of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Women Veterans must be pre-screened prior to attending.

"You hear that there are other people, and you read the statistics, but you think, 'where are they?' The support group helps, knowing you're not the only one," said Angela. "It's also nice to have someone not give you the 'pity look,' like they have no idea what to say to you now that you've shared the worst part of your life."

Before starting counseling at VA Butler, Angela was to the point where she was having stress-induced seizures. She was emotionally and physically drained. Since seeking support, there has been a big (improved) difference

in her stress level.

"My whole family has changed from it too," she shared. "It helped the family pull together, and learn how to manage all the stress and anxiety in our house."

Angela encourages other Veterans to get help immediately. "It does not get better on your own. Reach out and get help. I went 10 years with no help, just managing on my own. It got to the point where I was so bad I couldn't even see the symptoms anymore. Find somebody – a Facebook group, at the VA, some kind of group. Don't go through it by yourself."

For more information about MST, MST Treatment, or the MST Support Group for Women Veterans, Veterans may contact VA Butler's MST Coordinator Rowan Flamm at 800.362.8262, ext. 2498 or send an e-mail to Susannah.Flamm@va.gov.

“You hear that there are other people, and you read the statistics, but you think ‘where are they?’ The [MST] support group helps, knowing you're not the only one.” – Angela Buss, Army Veteran

THIS MONTH IN HISTORY...APRIL

- 1 The U.S. House of Representatives holds its first full meeting. Frederick Muhlenberg of Pennsylvania is elected the first House Speaker (1789)
- 7 *PTSD Coach*, VA's first mobile phone app, is released to the iTunes App Store by the National Center for PTSD and DoD's National Center for Telehealth & Technology (2011)
- 10 During World War II, the Bataan Death March begins as American and Filipino prisoners are forced on a six-day march from an airfield on Bataan to a camp near Cabanatuan (1942)
- 14 The Paralyzed Veterans of America (PVA) is established (1946)
- 17 Bay of Pigs Invasion is launched [55th anniversary] (1961)
- 22 Earth Day is observed for the first time (1970)

Sexual Assault Awareness Month

You CAN recover from trauma. VA Butler can help. Women Veterans, learn more about the weekly Military Sexual Trauma (MST) Support Group and other MST services, by calling VA Butler's MST Coordinator, Rowan Flamm, at 800.362.8262, ext. 2498.

PGA HOPE PROGRAM

VA is partnering with PGA REACH, the philanthropic arm of PGA of America, to bring a specialized golf program to disabled Veterans. The program, PGA HOPE – Helping Our Patriots Everywhere, is a therapeutic program to aid in the rehabilitation process for disabled Veterans.

The purpose of PGA HOPE is to help Veterans assimilate back into their communities through the social interaction the game of golf provides. Led by PGA professionals certified in golf instruction for Veterans with disabilities, Veterans will learn the rules of the game; and for those already familiar with it, the professionals will help them refine their skills.

For more information about VA's adaptive sports program, visit www.va.gov/adaptive_sports/index.asp. For information about PGA REACH or the PGA HOPE program, visit www.pgareach.com.

“VETERAN HOPE”

Women Veterans Empowering Women Veterans

Have you heard about “Veteran X” at VA Butler? This month, VA Butler will introduce a similar program called, “Veteran HOPE.” What is the difference? “Veteran HOPE” is just for female Veterans. “Veteran HOPE” kicks off on April 19, and runs from 6 to 8pm in room 217WS.

In “Veteran HOPE,” female Veterans work with other female Veterans as a treatment team for a fictitious woman Veteran who has challenges similar to their own. These challenges are presented in the form of a scenario and may include things like mental illness, homelessness, family issues, etc. As a group, the female Veterans navigate the many challenging obstacles on the path to recovery, helping each other and ultimately themselves.

Women Veterans interested in learning more about this new recovery group may talk to their VA Butler health care team or call Cary Adkins—724-996-8892 or Nicole Thompson—724-285-2756.



READY TO GIVE BACK?

April 10-16 is National Volunteer Week. This year VA Voluntary Service (VAVS) is celebrating 70 years of volunteer support and philanthropic donations to VAs nationwide! VA Butler is currently seeking individuals to fill volunteer assignments as drivers, transportation schedulers, Community Living Center (CLC) volunteer aides, recreation (Tuesday and Thursday evenings) and My HealthVet assistants.

VA Butler also is accepting applications for its 2016 Summer Youth Volunteer Program. Youth volunteers at VA Butler enjoy many benefits, but none greater than the opportunity to give back to our Veterans! The deadline to apply is April 20. Learn more by visiting www.butler.va.gov/giving.

For more information about volunteering at VA Butler Healthcare, contact VA Butler's Voluntary Services Office at 800.362.8262, ext. 2575.

We want to hear from you! Email amanda.kurtz2@va.gov to share your story with us!

EVENTS



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www.butler.va.gov/news/MediaCenter.asp



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HCC Town Hall Meeting
7 Thursday, April 7 • 5:30pm
VA Butler Healthcare, Room 403C

Behavioral Health Council Meeting
12 Tuesday, April 12 • 10am
VA Butler Healthcare, Room 218WS

National Volunteer Recognition Week
10 Sunday, April 10 - Saturday, April 16, 2016
to Volunteer of the Year Presentation

16 Friday, April 15 • 1pm
For more info., contact Voluntary Services:
800.362.8262 ext. 2575

Save-the-Date – VA2K 2016

Wednesday, May 18 • 11am - 3pm | Outside VA Butler's Auditorium

