

## NOTHING STOPS ME

**R**ichard Elliott served in the U.S. Air Force for four years, and the U.S. Army Reserves for 16. Eight years ago he started having vision problems, and was diagnosed with uncontrolled glaucoma. His one eye has been operated on seven times, the other eye eight. About a year ago, he became legally blind. Support from VA has been helpful, as has the National Veterans TEE Tournament.

“Once I started losing my vision, I told myself I was going to start working out and not let the rest of my body go.

So I joined the gym and worked out three to five times a week,” shared Richard. “All I can tell other Veterans is the way I felt about it – ‘Don’t feel sorry for yourself. Live life the best and fullest you can. I let nothing stop me.’”

Richard certainly does not let anything stop him; in fact, his team placed first in their division at VA’s TEE Tournament his first year participating. This fall in Iowa City he’ll attend for the third year, and he hopes to place high again. The

TEE Tournament is a national event that provides legally blind and eligible disabled Veterans an opportunity to develop new skills and strengthen their self-esteem. The four-day clinic consists of the TEE Golf Tournament, kayaking, horseback riding, and other adaptive sports workshops.

Richard learned about the TEE Tournament through a Veteran who attends VA Butler’s Visual Impairment Services Team (VIST) Support Group. Richard attends the support group

regularly and finds it helpful, “I think everybody needs to sometimes feel that they aren’t fighting this alone.”

Richard has gone to the Cleveland VA’s Blind Rehabilitation Center, a program that helps Veterans adjust to sight loss. “Now I’m able to go on a computer, listen to my music, and feel right at home. Before I went to Cleveland, I didn’t even know how to turn on a computer.”

“The VA has been great, and Jaime Brewer and John Hofmeister helped me step-by-step. I would never have been able to



accomplish what I have, if it was not for them.”

To learn more about VA Butler’s VIST program and support group, call the VIST Coordinator at 724.285.2736 or visit [www.butler.va.gov/services/Visual\\_Impairment\\_Services.asp](http://www.butler.va.gov/services/Visual_Impairment_Services.asp).

“I think everybody needs to sometimes feel that they aren’t fighting this alone.” – Richard Elliott, U.S. Air Force and Army Reserves Veteran

## THIS MONTH IN HISTORY...MAY

- 7 The American Medical Association (AMA) is founded (1847)
- 8 During WWII in the Pacific, the Battle of the Coral Sea begins and Japan suffers its first defeat of the war (1942)
- 14 Congress creates the Women’s Army Auxiliary Corps (WAAC). General Douglas MacArthur called them “my best soldiers,” adding that they worked harder, complained less, and were better disciplined than men (1942)
- 15 The first Peace Officers Memorial Day is recognized to pay tribute to the law enforcement officers who made the ultimate sacrifice for our country and to voice appreciation for all who serve on the front lines of the battle against crime (1963)
- 20 The first Armed Forces Day is celebrated, commemorating the unification of all military forces under one department (1950)



## VA ADAPTIVE SPORTS PROGRAM

The National Veterans TEE Tournament is just one of the many annual VA Adaptive Sports National Events. Review the many sports opportunities available to you by reaching out to your VA health care team and checking out [www.va.gov/adaptivesports](http://www.va.gov/adaptivesports).



## MAY IS NATIONAL STROKE AWARENESS MONTH

Every 40 seconds, someone in the United States has a stroke. When responding to a stroke, **every minute counts**. Use the following:

**FAST** to remember the warning signs of a stroke:

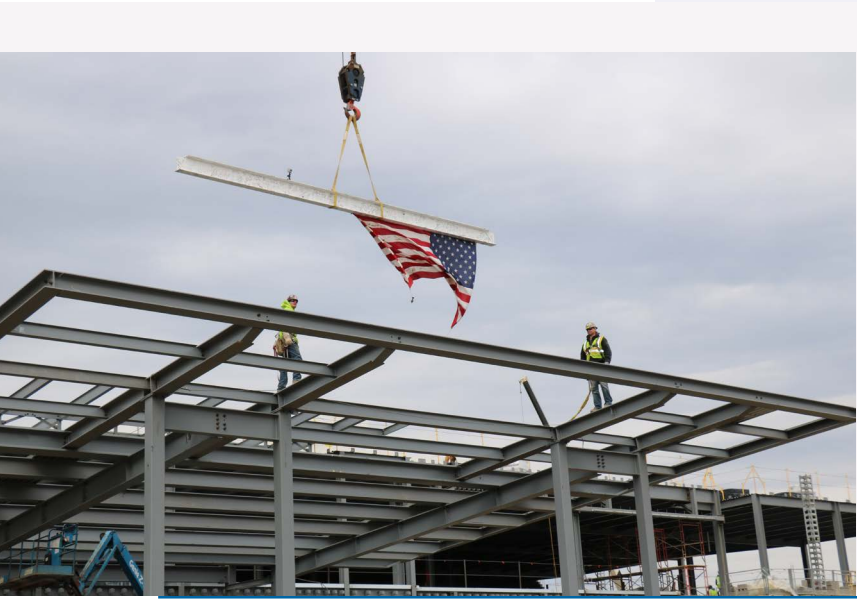
- **FACE:** Ask the person to smile. Does one side of the face droop?
- **ARMS:** Ask the person to raise both arms. Does one arm drift downward?
- **SPEECH:** Ask the person to repeat a simple phrase. Is their speech slurred or strange?
- **TIME:** If you observe any of these signs, call 9-1-1 immediately.

## NEW MINDFULNESS GROUP STARTING THIS MONTH

Mindfulness means paying attention, on purpose, to whatever is going on in the present moment without passing judgment on it. Mindfulness has been shown to be effective for reducing stress, improving emotional balance, increasing self-awareness, helping with anxiety and depression, and coping more effectively with chronic pain.

Starting this month, VA Butler Healthcare will offer a new, introductory group about Mindfulness. The group will be held the second Wednesday of each month and any Veteran enrolled at VA Butler is encouraged to attend. If interested, Veterans should talk to their VA health care team.

VA also has a Mindfulness Coach Mobile Application (App) designed to help Veterans, Servicemembers and others learn how to practice mindfulness. Learn more here: <https://mobile.va.gov/app/mindfulness-coach>.



## HCC PROGRESS

Last month, VA Butler Healthcare hosted a “Topping Out Ceremony” to celebrate the construction progress of our new Health Care Center (HCC). At the ceremony, we placed the final steel beam for this new facility. Check out photos and a video from the event on VA Butler’s Facebook page—[www.facebook.com/VAButlerPA](http://www.facebook.com/VAButlerPA).

Construction remains ahead of schedule, with the new facility anticipated to be open for Veterans in fall 2017. Keep up-to-date with HCC progress by visiting: [www.butler.va.gov/news/Construction/VA\\_Butler\\_Health\\_Care\\_Center.asp](http://www.butler.va.gov/news/Construction/VA_Butler_Health_Care_Center.asp).

We want to hear from you! Email [amanda.kurtz2@va.gov](mailto:amanda.kurtz2@va.gov) to share your story with us!

## EVENTS

- 10 Behavioral Health Council Meeting  
Tuesday, May 10 • 10am  
VA Butler Healthcare, Room 218WS
- 18 VA2K 2016  
Wednesday, May 18 • 11am-3pm  
Outside VA Butler’s Auditorium



800.362.8262  
724.287.4781

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