LIVING Better

A Butler VA Quarterly Magazine

fall 2019

what's inside?

stronger than ever

6
do things together

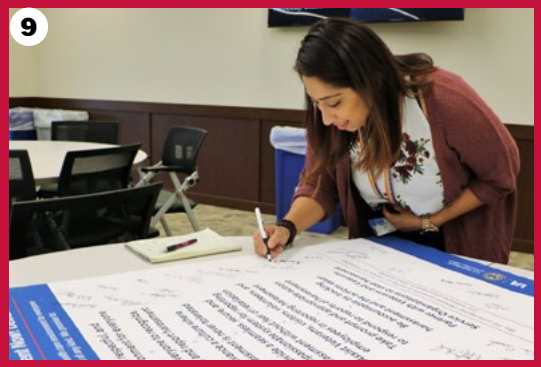
8
a big family

12
vet chat

14
health tech, tips & tastes

BUTLER VA HEALTH CARE SYSTEM'S

FALL HIGHLIGHTS



1 The annual Volunteer Awards Luncheon recognized Butler VA Volunteers with 50 hours of service all the way to 10,000 hours of service! A special congratulations to Joe Lofton who was recognized at the event for volunteering 10,000 hours!

2 The tenth Annual Recovery Recognition Ceremony was held in October to recognize the hard work and gains in mental health recovery by local Veterans. Jay Grassel was one of the local Veterans honored this year.

3 The Butler VA partnered with the local community for the fourth Stand Down event in Butler County. The event provided an opportunity for homeless Veterans to access community resources and receive essential day to day items that many often take for granted.

4 Congratulations to the most recent Guitars for Vets (Butler, PA Chapter) graduates, Richard Leech and Richard Mannas who completed the program this fall. If you are interested in the healing power of music, contact the Guitars for Vets - Butler, PA Chapter Coordinator at 878-271-6484.

5 The Butler VA's eighth annual Healthy Living Recognition Event recognized 57 local Veterans for successes made toward making healthy living choices resulting in positive outcomes.

6 We celebrated National Pharmacy Week in October, acknowledging the invaluable contributions that pharmacists and technicians make to patient care in hospitals, outpatient clinics and other health care settings.

7 Thank you to "The Dominators" for sharing their musical talents with us at one of the fall Music is Medicine Hours. If you are interested in volunteering for one of our monthly Music is Medicine Hours, please call 878-271-6484.

8 In September, the Butler VA honored 10 Veterans for their service, and thanked them for their many sacrifices on behalf of our country at the annual POW/MIA Recognition Ceremony.

9 VHA leaders signed a public declaration as a pledge to stop harassment in VHA. This campaign, "Stand Up to Stop Harassment Now!" is VHA's re-commitment to creating a harassment-free healthcare environment. The Butler VA hosted a local "Stand Up to Stop Harassment Now!" declaration signing led by facility leadership.

cover photo

Butler VA staff participated in "Patriotic Day" in November to celebrate and honor our Veterans and their Families for Veteran and Military Families Month.

Dear Veterans, Family Members, Employees, Volunteers and Friends of the Butler VA,

In honor of National Veterans and Military Families Month celebrated this November, this issue of Living Better *includes special features, some of which have been submitted by Veterans and their families.*

Today, there are 19.6 million living American Veterans—ordinary citizens who did extraordinary things for all of us. I'd like to share my sincere and heartfelt appreciation for our Veterans and their families. Thank you for your service and sacrifice. I look forward to serving and seeing you soon at the Butler VA.

Sharon Coyle,
Interim Director

CONTENTS

Fall 2019

pages 4-5

Stronger than Ever

Dana Craig shares the story of her and her husband, Daniel's military and VA experience, specifically their experience with VA's Cognitive-Behavioral Conjoint Therapy-PTSD Program.

pages 6-7

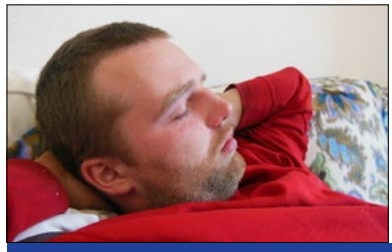
Do Things Together

Terri Hayes shares the story of her and her husband, Don's military and VA experience, specifically their experience with the Butler VA's MOVE! Program, a program they have been doing together at the VA for over four years.

pages 8-9

A Big Family

Susan Pranno shares the story of her father, Wilferd's military and VA experience, specifically his experience and their family's experience with the Sergeant Joseph George Kusick Community Living Center.



pages 14-15

Health Tech, Tips & Tastes

What's new and interesting in VA's health technology? Find out! Also, enjoy a health tip and tasty fall recipe.

and more...

Fall Highlights page **2**

Hot Topics page **10**

Vet Chat page **12**

Veterans Day Quiz page **13**

Who's Who – Andy Pepe page **13**

VA | U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
Veterans Health Administration
Butler VA Health Care System

Editor
Amanda Kurtz
Photographers
Chuck Jennings and Karen Dunn

Stronger Than Ever

VA's Cognitive-Behavioral Conjoint Therapy-PTSD Program

Submitted by Dana Craig for Veteran and Veteran Families Month

The Story of Daniel & Dana Craig
In Honor of Veteran and Military Families Month

My name is Dana Craig. My husband, Daniel Craig, and I have been married for 11 years, and we have three beautiful children. Dan is an Army Veteran who served from 2007 to 2011. He served in the 82nd Airborne, Infantry and was deployed to Afghanistan for a year during his enlistment. Dan and I got married soon after he entered the military. He was stationed at Fort Bragg, and I was attending dental school in West Virginia. It was a challenge to manage a long-distance relationship, but we made it work. We would have "phone dates" where we picked a movie or TV series and then watched it together while we were on the phone with each other. We watched the whole series of "Lost" through our phone dates. We called each other as much as we could, and we would also meet halfway on weekends when we could get the time.

In August of 2009, Dan was deployed to Afghanistan for a year. When he first came home, he seemed to be doing fine for a while. However, a couple years after he left the service, he began struggling with anxiety. He came to the VA and started the

conversation to get help, and was later diagnosed with PTSD. He joined this program called the "STAIR (Skills Training in Affective and Interpersonal Regulation) Group." When he would come home and talk about this program, I was so excited about everything he was learning and impressed by the positive changes he was making. I started wondering if there were therapy options for spouses, and I kept asking Dan to find out what programs were available for couples. He finally asked and that was how we found out about the Cognitive-Behavioral Conjoint Therapy-PTSD Program.

The program was great for us, and the therapist was wonderful and supportive. The therapy was private, and there was no judgment or pressure. It was a safe environment for us to share what we were feeling and why. It helped us realize our vulnerability, and see that vulnerability not as a weakness, but as an opportunity to grow and understand each other – other individuals too. What stood out to both Dan and I was that when a problem arises, we have to face it head on. We can't avoid it and hope it goes away. The program gave us tangible, practical tools to manage the challenges that arise in our relationship, or any relationship. Now, we use those tools almost on a daily basis. One such tool was the "time out." When a discussion gets heated, one of us can call a "time out," and then we revisit the issue when we are calm and ready to do so.

Although we both felt our relationship was already strong prior to completing the program, we knew there is always room for growth and improvement. I am so grateful for this program and what it has done for Dan and me. We are both much happier, and our relationship is stronger than ever. I definitely encourage other couples to take advantage of this and similar programs for couples offered by the VA.

The Cognitive-Behavioral Conjoint Therapy for Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (CBCT for PTSD) is a manualized conjoint therapy with the goals of decreasing individual PTSD symptoms and enhancing relationship functioning. The focus of the intervention is on the interacting thoughts and behaviors that impact PTSD symptoms, other individual problems, and the relationship. It does not involve repeatedly going over the traumatic experience(s); however, there is an emphasis on helping both participants understand how traumatic events affect current thoughts and behaviors. For more information about this program, please contact the Cognitive-Behavioral Conjoint Therapy-PTSD Provider at 898-271-6124.

Do Things Together

The Butler VA's MOVE! Program

The Story of Don & Terri Hayes
In Honor of Veteran and Military Families Month

My name is Teirrah. In honor of Veterans and Military Families Month, I am honored to share my and Don's story. Don and I recently celebrated our 50th wedding anniversary. We have been blessed with two children, seven grandchildren and two great-granddaughters. We have supportive family and friends and have made a wonderful life for ourselves here in Butler. But, our life together did not start off that well. As a matter of fact, shortly after saying "I do," Don was drafted into the Army. I spent the first year as a married woman celebrating all of the holidays, including our first wedding anniversary, alone. So did Don. He spent his 21st birthday fighting in Vietnam. It was a year he and I would never forget.

This experience was good for us. That realization didn't hit us until years later. You see, we both lived with our parents until we got married. Our parents dictated our lives until then. We needed to learn to live on our own. We needed to each become our own person. The trials that life threw at us made us stronger, and made us the people we are today. For that, we are grateful.

One of the things that was difficult was not being able to talk to or see Don. Unlike today's military families, I didn't have the luxury of being able to Skype, use Facebook, or call Don on the phone. Our only communication was via letters. I was not a very good letter writer, but I made sure I sent a couple of letters a week to him. Don couldn't write as often as he wanted, but he wrote every chance he got. He even sent my mother-in-law money so she could buy me flowers and gifts from him. That was so sweet and thoughtful. I did get to see him a couple of times. Once after basic training, and then another time when he was on leave in Hawaii. That was a difficult experience for me. There were several other wives that came to the station in Hawaii. We were all waiting to see our husbands. One of the wives was called back to a room and I could hear her screaming—they told her that her husband had been killed. Another was called back and told her husband had been injured and was being sent to the hospital. The other wife and I were told our husbands were being lifted out of fighting and would be joining us soon. I can't imagine what Don was going through or how he was feeling. The waiting and the not knowing was the hardest part. I will never forget that day and those poor wives.

Submitted by Terri Hayes for Veteran and Veteran Families Month

It was difficult when Don finally came home. He was very angry, and we weren't treated very well. We couldn't get a loan through the local bank at that time for a house because he was a Vietnam Veteran and hadn't been out for a year. I couldn't get a loan because I was a woman. Eating regular food was an ordeal for us both. Don had been living on sea rations for most of the time in Vietnam. He had to learn to eat real food again. Little things that you don't think about, became large issues.

One of the things that we made a promise to do was to do things together. That is how we made it through those difficult times. One of the things that we do together now is the VA's MOVE! program. Don and I have been involved with this program for over four years and we love it. Don has lost 42 pounds and I have lost not as much as him. Don was borderline diabetic, and his primary care doctor recommended the MOVE! program. Don immediately asked if I could attend since I was the one who would be cooking the meals. Since starting this program, Don and I don't argue about meals anymore. We do portion control and mindful eating. We are more active and social with people. Don took the cooking class and loved it, and even made me dinner. This program really has been great for us in more ways than one.

When my husband was serving, I was serving too. I am the proud wife of a United States Army and Vietnam Veteran. I have and will continue to stand with him proudly for another 50 years.

MOVE! *is a weight management, health promotion program designed to improve the lives of Veterans. MOVE!'s core ideas—encouraging healthy eating behavior, increasing physical activity, and promoting even small weight losses—are easy to follow and based on the latest in nutrition science. With the help of a MOVE! care team, Veterans can reduce health risks, prevent or reverse certain diseases, improve quality of life, and even live longer!*

For more information about the MOVE! Program, please contact the Butler VA MOVE! Coordinator, at 724-285-2426 or visit www.move.va.gov.

www.move.va.gov

A Big Family

The Butler VA's Sergeant Joseph George Kusick Community Living Center

The story of Wilferd C. Ifft as told by his daughter, Susan Pranno, In Honor of Veteran and Military Families Month

My name is Susan Pranno. I am the daughter of Wilferd C. Ifft, a WWII Veteran who served in the United States Army from 1941 to 1945. Dad turned 100-years-old on November 8, 2019. He is the second Veteran in the Sgt. Joseph George Kusick Community Living Center at the Butler VA to turn 100 while in residence. Dad has been a resident at the Community Living Center since October 2018 and he greatly enjoys his time there, especially being surrounded by fellow Veterans.

Dad served in the Pacific Theatre and was stationed in the Philippines. Of his assignments there, he said that he helped to build a hospital. For those who are not aware, the Philippines were invaded by Japan in December 1941, shortly after Japan's declaration of war upon the United States of America. The U.S. controlled the Philippines at the time and possessed important military bases. The combined American-Filipino army was defeated by April 1942. Due to the huge number of islands, the Japanese did not occupy them all. Allied forces liberated the islands from Japanese control in 1944, in a naval invasion. And thankfully, the following year Dad was able to come home.

Dad didn't speak too much about his service or the time he spent in the Pacific Theatre, but he often would talk about his uncanny resemblance to a famous celebrity of the time, Frank Sinatra. Dad had a singing voice and he played the trumpet. While he was in the service, he had a little band and he would often impersonate Frank, singing some of his songs.

My family hails from New Brighton, Pennsylvania. Mom and Dad moved to Butler in 1947. Dad worked at Montgomery Wards until his retirement. Mom and Dad had one child, me, and they have six grandchildren and 21 great-grandchildren with another on the way.

With Mom no longer with us, it is even more important for Dad to have his family near him. I try to visit Dad every other week and his grandchildren and great grandchildren visit as often as they can. It feels good that he likes it at the Community Living Center and he seems to like the people there too, which is kind of ironic since he is not a very social person. His main activities are bingo and going to church services.

Dad is very proud of his family and dedicated to them, as we are to him. As evidenced by the attendance at his birthday party that was held on November 2 at the Community Living Center. We had to celebrate a little early so most of the family could attend. For his birthday on the 8th, I'll be back in to visit with him and bring him a root beer float, one of his favorite treats. I don't think he ever thought he would make it to this age. But we are thankful that he has, and we enjoy every minute we have together.

My family and I are thankful that we were able to bring Dad to the Community Living Center. It has been good for him and also for us in that we don't have to worry about him being alone. He has a big family now, us and the VA.

For more information about the Community Living Center including admission criteria, please call 724-285-2234 or visit *www.butler.va.gov/services/Community_Living_Center.asp*.

www.butler.va.gov/services/Community_Living_Center.asp

hot TOPICS

Butler VA Employees wear purple to show support for Domestic Violence Awareness Month in October

Butler VA's Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) Program

Did you know that the Butler VA has an entire program dedicated to providing services to Veterans and employees who have been impacted by relationship violence? VA is committed to ensuring that Veterans, their partners, and VA employees who are directly impacted by intimate partner violence (IPV) are provided with a comprehensive network of services to include education, assessment, and intervention, and that all are treated with dignity and respect.

Please contact our local Intimate Partner Violence Assistance Program Coordinator at 878-271-6124 for more information. Veterans also can ask their providers for help or call the National Domestic Violence (NDV) Hotline at 1-800-799-7233 (SAFE) or 1-800-787-3224 (TTY).

Improvements to VA's Caregiver Support Program

On September 25, 2019, VA announced improvements to the caregiver support program. This announcement put a timeline to expanding the comprehensive assistance to family caregivers. VA is expanding the program in accordance with section 161 of the VA MISSION Act of 2018.

When will the program expand?
VA is not currently accepting applications for the program of comprehensive assistance for family caregivers for Veterans of eras other than post 9/11. The first phase of the program expansion will occur once the Secretary has certified that VA's new caregiver information technology system is fully implemented, which could be as early as the summer of 2020.

What is the timeline for expanding the IT system?
To modernize its caregiver IT system, VA is adopting a three-phased approach and will deploy a new system based on a commercial off-the-shelf product called Caregiver Record Management Application (CARMA) beginning in October 2019. VA will deploy phase two in January 2020 to centralize and automate stipend payment calculations and expects to deploy phase three in the summer of 2020, which will enable caregivers to apply for benefits online. VA will then perform testing and verify that the system has full functionality before expanding the program as required under the MISSION Act.

continued on page 11

www.caregiver.va.gov

Tele-Urgent Care Now Available

Veterans at the Butler VA (and throughout VISN 4) can now obtain certain types of care with the ease of a video appointment. Using VA Video Connect, VISN 4 Tele Urgent Care allows Veterans to connect to their health care team privately and securely in a virtual medical room from anywhere using the camera on a smart phone, computer, or tablet.

VISN 4 Tele-Urgent Care can treat many common conditions including:

- minor cuts, scrapes, rashes and skin irritations, ulcers, wounds, nail disorders
- tick, insect bites, itching
- common cold, cough and flu symptoms
- headaches
- sprains, back pain and joint pain or stiffness
- eye complaints
- urinary tract infections
- upset stomach and constipation
- elevated BP or blood sugars
- medication reviews and checks from recent outside hospital discharge or ER visits

Veterans can dial the main number of their local VA medical center and press option #3 to speak with a nurse. The nurse will review symptoms, provide a care recommendation, and if appropriate, schedule a Tele Urgent Care appointment.

VISN 4 Tele Urgent Care is currently available Monday-Friday from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Additionally, there are no copayments associated with virtual visits!

Warrior to Soul Mate – Coming in January

The Butler VA held its first Warrior to Soul Mate (W2SM) Workshop in August and and another two-day workshop will occur in January.

W2SM is a transformative, interactive, and highly engaging workshop focused on fostering love, happiness, and fulfillment in romantic relationships. The research-based principles provide the couple with a richer understanding of the attitudes, emotional dynamics and behaviors that nurture and sustain healthy relationships. These workshops take an educational approach; they are not therapy, counseling or treatment. The couple can participate and gain the full benefit of the knowledge and skills presented without disclosing any sensitive, personal information to the group.

Who is eligible?

- Any Veteran that is registered and eligible for VA healthcare services (does not have to have to be engaged with Center for Behavioral Health services)
- Couples that are in a committed relationship for at least three months are welcome regardless of their marital status or sexual identity
- No current use of intimate partner violence

Please contact Jackie Cannon at 878-271-6124 or Jackie.Cannon@va.gov with any questions about the program.

NEW Fitness Class - Indoor Cycling

This fall, the Butler VA added a new fitness class to its schedule – indoor cycling. Indoor cycling can reduce stress and increase endurance! All fitness levels are welcome, and it's free for Veterans.

Veterans can reserve a bike by signing up in the Wellness Center or calling the Wellness Center at 878-271-6531. You must sign up before class because space is limited. Learn more about other fitness classes available by calling 878-271-6484.

continued from page 10

What services does VA offer for all caregivers?
VA provides a wide range of services for caregivers including training, education, respite care, a telephone support line, and self-care courses. These are available to caregivers for Veterans enrolled for VA health care, regardless of when or how they were injured.

What does VA offer under the comprehensive assistance program?
Caregivers in this program also may receive a monthly stipend, beneficiary travel, mental health counseling, enhanced respite services and other benefits.

How is VA strengthening the caregiver program?
In recent months, VA has developed or amended 14 standard operating procedures to clarify program requirements for VA staff, increased oversight in each Veterans Integrated Service Network, provided training and education to staff and caregivers, and is boosting operational capacity with the hiring of more than 680 staff.

What else is VA doing for caregivers?
VA is working across the organization to ensure caregivers have a positive experience through program improvements and initiatives to include:

- Establishing a campaign (VA/Elizabeth Dole Foundation collaboration) that aims to integrate caregivers into the health care team, through education modules about topics such as the role and impact of caregivers.
- Expanding telehealth services to enable Veterans and their caregivers to get care in the comfort of their homes.
- Providing a toolkit for caregivers and family members and their role in the prevention of suicide.
- Promoting self-care for caregivers through text messaging.
- Increasing self-care courses for caregivers.
- Providing home and community-based care alternatives through the Choose Home Initiative at 21 VA medical centers.

How can I learn more?
For detailed information on the CSP and the full range of services available to caregivers, visit: www.caregiver.va.gov/ or call the Caregiver Support Line at 1-855-260-3274. For information on the MISSION Act, visit: https://missionact.va.gov/.

National Veterans and Military Families Month

The Butler VA celebrated National Veterans and Military Families Month 2019 with special activities, events, and stories honoring Veterans and their families all month long. The month kicked off with a special poster ceremony honoring eight Veterans:

- Donald Ben Cypher, U.S. Marine Corps Veteran
- Robert "Buck" Rodgers, U.S. Army Veteran
- Elaine Berkowitz, U.S. Army Veteran
- Donald Hayes, U.S. Army Veteran
- Walter R. Patton, U.S. Army Veteran
- Raymond Francis Saracco, Jr., U.S. Marine Corps Veteran
- William George Hartle, U.S. Air Force Veteran
- Dennis Slye, U.S. Army Veteran

Thank You Veterans!

Additionally, a ceremony took place for Veteran residents in the Sergeant Joseph George Kusick Community Living Center (CLC). Special stories were shared by family members. Staff, and local Veterans also participated in the Butler County Veterans Day Parade.

At the VA, every day is Veterans Day. Interested in submitting your military service photo or sharing your story to be honored in a VA publication? Contact the Butler VA Public Affairs Office today at 878-271-6492.

Veterans Serving Veterans

VA operates one of the largest health care systems in the U.S. VA employs highly trained professionals who are dedicated to providing quality health care to Veterans, and many are Veterans themselves! Currently, more than 30% of VA Butler Healthcare's employees are Veterans.

"I choose to work at the VA because I am a Veteran myself who served two tours in Iraq and I understand how important and how much of an impact the VA had on my life while I was a patient. I just wanted to give back a little bit and I know that no matter how small of a part I play in the big VA picture, I can still contribute and make a difference."

IT Specialist and U.S. Marine Corps Veteran
Steven Iman

Hey Veterans! Share your stories with us in Vet Chat.
Email Amanda.Kurtz2@va.gov. We'd love to hear from you!

Veterans Day Quiz:
Test Your Knowledge

What holiday do most Americans confuse with Veterans Day? Why is Veterans Day on November 11? Test your knowledge — from World War I to today — to see how much you know about Veterans Day.

1. Veterans Day was originally called Armistice Day to commemorate the end of which war?

a. World War II b. World War I c. Civil War d. Korean War

2. What federal holiday do most people confuse with Veterans Day?

a. Labor Day b. Independence Day c. Memorial Day d. Columbus Day

3. Because World War I was a multinational effort, many of the Allied nations celebrate their Veterans on November 11, also called Remembrance Day and Armistice Day. Which of these countries doesn't celebrate its Veterans on November 11?

a. Kenya b. Canada c. Australia d. United Kingdom

4. True or False: Veterans Day isn't spelled with an apostrophe in "veterans."

a. True **b.** False

Correct Answers:

1. B Because the signing of the Treaty (or armistice) of Versailles ended World War I — the "war to end all wars" — the day the agreement was signed was dubbed Armistice Day. In 1926, Congress officially recognized November 11 as the end of the war. In 1938, lawmakers made it an official holiday to honor WWI veterans.

2. C Memorial Day became a federal holiday in 1971 to honor the men and women who died while serving in the military. Veterans Day honors those who served in war or peace and who are still alive.

3. A Ceremonies are held in Kenya about two weeks after November 11. This is because word of the armistice took two weeks to reach troops in Africa.

4. A The holiday is not a day that belongs to veterans, which an apostrophe usually indicates. It's a day for honoring all veterans, so no apostrophe needed.

Source: U.S. Department of Defense

Who's Who?

ANDY PEPE
Voluntary Services Coordinator

Give Back

The services Butler VA provides to Veterans and their families are only possible because of dedicated volunteers, many of whom are Veterans and Veteran family members themselves!

Volunteers provide office and clerical support, greet Veterans and guests, transport Veterans to and from VA appointments both from home and within the facility, help with special events, distribute comfort items, and more. Recently, Voluntary Services started a new emergency food pantry to provide short term help to Veterans in need.

The Voluntary Services program benefits from financial donations, which support a variety of Butler VA programs and events including hospice, the Homeless Veterans Program, recreation therapy at the Domiciliary, the Community Living Center, adult day health care, and others.

Volunteers are needed to greet visitors and patients, as well as drive Veterans to and from their VA appointments. For information to volunteer or make a donation, please contact the Voluntary Services Office.

Andy Pepe is the Butler VA Voluntary Services Coordinator. Contact Andy at 878.271.6960 or Andrew.Pepe@va.gov.

VIRTUAL YOGA

Virtual Yoga Nidra Sessions to Help Fight Stress

Every Thursday evening, Veterans all over the United States meet to practice yoga. The Veterans spend an hour together, but they never see one another and likely will never even meet. This yoga class requires no travel. Veterans perform the weekly yoga nidra session in their own space, on their own bed, couch, or favorite chair. These Thursday evening classmates meet over the phone to participate in an hour of yoga nidra that follows the iRest methodology.

Yoga nidra, also called yoga sleep, is an altered state of consciousness in which participants meditate and go into a state on the cusp of the sleep state. Participants must completely relax and rest while the brain remains active and able to hear everything the instructor says, though the person may not be fully aware.

Integrative Restoration (iRest), is a version of yoga nidra developed by Dr. Richard Miller with Walter Reed Army Medical Center and the Department of Defense. This meditation method is very helpful for issues like PTSD and anxiety, sleep problems and chronic pain.

Guided, weekly sessions

VA's War Related Illness and Injury Study Center (WRIISC), located in Palo Alto, California, offers weekly phone meditation sessions. The virtual guided meditation begins Thursdays at 5 p.m. pacific time, and all Veterans are invited to join the class.

"It relaxes my whole mind and body; all stress melts away," said Air Force Veteran Joe Valentino. "A lot of it is sensing your body and quieting your mind. So, while I'm meditating, I'll picture my blood stream running through a coffee filter that's filtering out all the bad stuff that I'll throw away when I'm done."

"I try not to miss a week," Valentino said. "It helps release anxiety, tension, and helps me sleep better. I really enjoy it."

No referral, experience, or prescription needed

Veterans can try yoga nidra any Thursday without referral, prior experience or prescription. They only need a phone, an open mind, and a quiet, safe space to meditate.

"This meditation is all about increasing and enhancing your own sense of awareness, your sense of being a whole person that is perfect just as you are," said Louise Mahoney while teaching a weekly class. "We all have everything we need inside of us. We just are not always aware of it, so this meditation helps us to become aware and to allow that awareness to creep into our daily life more often than it did before. So, whether you're at work, taking care of your kids, with your significant other or by yourself, you will find a way to remain at ease and to navigate stressful situations."

All Veterans are welcome to attend the weekly live sessions over the phone. Just call 800-767-1750 and type in access code 24953#. Learn more about yoga nidra at *www.warrelatedillness.va.gov/WARRELATEDILLNESS/clinical/integrative-health/ca/yoga-nidra-meditation-veteran.pdf*.

Veterans who would rather try a prerecorded eight-session series can find it on the WRIISC website at *www.warrelatedillness.va.gov/WARRELATEDILLNESS/meditation/default.asp*. Learn more about VA's War Related Illness and Injury Study Centers located in California, New Jersey and Washington D.C. at *www.warrelatedillness.va.gov/WARRELATEDILLNESS/index.asp*. The Butler VA has Basic Mindful Yoga and iRest Inspired Meditation classes every Monday at 1 p.m. Call 878-271-6484 for more information.

www.butler.va.gov/services/Health_and_Wellness.asp

Source: VAntage Point Blog

Health Tastes – Sweet Potato Custard

Ingredients

- 1 C mashed cooked sweet potato
- 1/2 C mashed banana (about 2 small)
- 1 C evaporated skim milk
- 2 Tbsp packed brown sugar
- 2 beaten egg yolks (or 1/3 C egg substitute; if using egg substitite, cholesterol will be lower)
- 1/2 tsp salt
- 1/4 C raisins
- 1 Tbsp sugar
- 1 tsp ground cinnamon

Fat: 2g ★ Calories: 144 ★ Cholesterol: 92mg ★ Sodium: 235mg

Directions

Preheat oven to 325 °F. Spray a 1-quart casserole with nonstick cooking spray. In a medium bowl, stir together sweet potato and banana. Add milk, blending well. Add brown sugar, egg yolks, and salt, and mix thoroughly. Transfer sweet potato mixture to casserole dish. Combine raisins, sugar, and cinnamon; sprinkle over the top of the sweet potato mixture. Bake for 40 to 45 minutes, or until a knife inserted near the center comes out clean.

Serving size = ½ cup, makes 6 servings

Source: Department of Health & Human Services

Crossword

Better Brain Health

This month we feature a special Veterans Day crossword puzzle in honor of Veteran and Veteran Families Month held throughout November. Thank you, Veterans! Good luck all with this issue's puzzle.

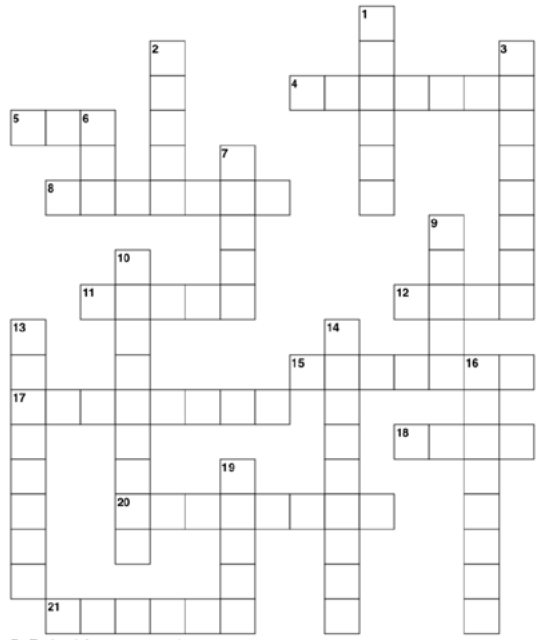
ACROSS

4. Individual who has served in the armed forces
5. United States of America
8. Ability to enjoy civil and political liberty
11. Courage in the face of danger
12. Soldiers trained to fight at sea
15. Guard
17. Armed forces
18. Armed personnel trained to fight on land
20. Service personal injured or killed in military action
21. Fight to protect people, property, or ideals

DOWN

1. Combat between two parties
2. Having or showing courage
3. Soldiers trained to fight on foot
6. _____ Force
7. Treat with respect
9. Absence of war or conflict
10. Suffer loss for sake of a cause
13. To think of someone or something
14. Truce
16. Burial place
19. Coast _____

VETERANS DAY



By Evelyn Johnson - www.qets.com

HEALTH tip

HEALTH TIP— KEEP FOOD SAFE

Food is center stage during the holidays. Be sure to keep it safe by following basic food safety steps. Clean hands and surfaces often. Separate foods to avoid cross-contamination. Cook to proper temperatures. Chill promptly.

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
Veterans Health Administration
Butler VA Health Care System

353 North Duffy Road
Butler, PA 16001
800.362.8262
724.287.4781

butler.va.gov
facebook.com/vabutlerpa
twitter.com/vabutlerpa
www.butler.va.gov/news/MediaCenter.asp

ARMSTRONG COUNTY VA OUTPATIENT CLINIC
11 Hilltop Plaza
Kittanning, PA 16201
724.545.8420

CLARION COUNTY VA OUTPATIENT CLINIC
56 Clarion Plaza, Suite 115
Monroe Township, PA 16214
814.226.3900

CRANBERRY TOWNSHIP VA OUTPATIENT CLINIC
900 Commonwealth Drive, Suite 100
Cranberry Township, PA 16066
724.742.3500 or 724.741.3131

LAWRENCE COUNTY VA OUTPATIENT CLINIC
Ridgewood Professional Centre
1750 New Butler Road
New Castle, PA 16101
724.598.6080

MICHAEL A. MARZANO VA OUTPATIENT CLINIC
295 North Kerrwood Drive, Suite 110
Hermitage, PA 16148
724.346.1569

The Butler VA Health Care System, located in Butler County, Pennsylvania has been attending to Veteran's total care since 1947. We are the health care choice for over 25,000 Veterans throughout Western Pennsylvania and parts of Ohio and are a member of VA Healthcare VISN 4 under the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. The Butler VA provides comprehensive Veteran care including primary, specialty and mental health care – as well as management of chronic conditions and social support services for our nation's finest, America's Veterans.

New!

Bring a Buddy

Know a fellow Veteran not enrolled in VA health care? Bring them with you to your next VA appointment or event. They will need to bring their DD-214 and check in with someone at the reception desk or tell a staff person at an event that your buddy is interested in enrolling for VA health care.

We will take it from there to start the enrollment process.

Meet with a VBA Representative Close to Home

Visit *www.benefits.va.gov/pittsburgh/* to learn about upcoming opportunities to meet with VBA representatives in your local community.

Living Better Magazine is published quarterly for Veterans, employees, volunteers, and friends of Butler VA Health Care System. For content questions, contact Amanda Kurtz at amanda.kurtz2@va.gov.
Copyright Butler VA Health Care System 2020