After many years of struggling with foot fractures and infections, a Marine Corps Veteran knew it was time to seek care at the VA.

“I went 12 and a half years with a bad foot,” said Edward Purcell. “After multiple infections and eight surgeries to repair brittle bone fractures, my cardiologist advised me to do something about it to prevent any ongoing cardiac issues.”

Purcell reached out to the Central Virginia VA Health Care System for support.

“God’s got me here for a reason,” Purcell said, now 57 years old. “I’ve died twice in my life. I’ve had three traumatic brain injuries and I keep going. I don’t quit.”

It’s been one year since Purcell’s amputation. His new goal in life is to complete the Marine Corps Marathon in October of this year.

“Superior mind, superior attitude,” Purcell said, citing his personal mantra. “If you follow these words, you will get where you need to be.”
The VISN 6 Regional Health Care System prides itself on providing our Veterans the best care and service anywhere. Many of you have heard me mention our effort to become a High Reliability Organization (HRO). We are making it our business to get things right the first time; to build trust among staff and with Veterans, and to do it safely and efficiently. HRO is a comprehensive effort to improve the Veteran experience, and increase clinical outcomes with high-functioning teams. I am proud to announce the hiring of Catherine McCrimmon to coordinate our HRO efforts. She brings the expertise to continue our journey, enforcing a culture of safety; managing efficient systems and creating a learning experience from errors. In addition, she will assist us with refining leadership behavior; asserting advocacy and enhancing followership. Recently, we hosted a national team addressing an important initiative, titled “Referral Coordination Initiative (RCI)” RCI’s goal is to inform Veterans about their full range of options for care, from VA healthcare system options, to receiving Specialty or Primary Care in the community. Eligibility for community care does not mean a Veteran prefers community care, nor is it necessarily in the Veteran’s best interest. We want to put the Veteran where the care they receive is best for them, singularly. To accomplish this goal VISN 6 facilities are forming interdisciplinary referral coordination teams, who will discuss value of choosing VA, discuss full-range of care options and modalities, and discuss eligibility as needed. We hope that Veterans will recognize improved satisfaction in their care, improved appointment scheduling, whether VA or in the community, and allowing providers more time to focus on their care. I am always excited when VISN 6 can be on the leading edge of change! On a more urgent note, VA is monitoring the outbreak of Novel Coronavirus (2019-nCoV) with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and other federal partners. The virus is spread predominantly by droplets, much like the flu. Although symptoms are not always apparent, symptoms may vary from mild upper respiratory to severe disease. The number of confirmed U.S. cases has remained low and stable. This is a result of vigilant screening of passengers inbound from foreign countries, especially Asian locations. Although risk of contracting the virus remains very low here, follow healthy habits such as handwashing, wearing a mask when you’re suffering from illness, and seek medical care when you experience symptoms. Updates can be found on VA’s web site or at the CDC web site. Also, this flu season has been quite deadly. If you have not already received a flu shot, please do so, protect yourself and others.

DeAnne M. Seekins
VISN 6 Network Director

Ferguson Joins Greenville HCC Team

The Durham VA Health Care System (DVAHCS) recently announced the appointment of Chris “Eddie” Ferguson as Administrative Director of the Greenville VA Health Care Center. As administrator, Ferguson is responsible for ensuring that Veterans in Eastern North Carolina receive timely access to high-quality, comprehensive health care at the Greenville VA HCC, Morehead City VA Community Based Outpatient Clinic (CBOC) and the State Veterans Home in Kinston, N.C.

Before joining the DVAHCS team, Mr. Ferguson served as acting assistant director of the Charlie Norwood VA Medical Center, until August 2019. Prior to that, he served as Ambulatory Care Operations Director for the VA Southeast Health Care Network (VISN 7) in Atlanta, Ga., overseeing ambulatory operations from June 2016-January 2020. He previously served as Health Systems Specialist to the Chief Medical Officer at the VA South Central VA Health Care Network (VISN 16) in Jackson, Miss.

Mr. Ferguson earned his Bachelor of Radiologic Sciences degree from the University of South Alabama. He earned his Master of Science in Health Administration and Master of Science in Health Informatics, from the University of Alabama at Birmingham.

Mr. Ferguson served in the Army National Guard and was deployed in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom. He is a member of the American College of Healthcare Executives (ACHE), Disabled American Veterans, and the American Legion.

Chris “Eddie” Ferguson, Administrative Director of the Greenville VA Health Care Center
Rutherford County CBOC moves to updated facility

By Vance Janes | CHARLES GEORGE VA MEDICAL CENTER PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICER

RUTHERFORD COUNTY, N.C.—The Rutherford County Community Based Outpatient Clinic staff closed up shop for the last time at their old Charlotte Road location Friday, Feb. 14.

They re-opened their doors in their new location in the Tri-City Mall off U.S. Highway 74 in Forest City, North Carolina, Wednesday morning, Feb. 19. The clinic had to move due to plans by the state of North Carolina to re-route a road through the old building. In preparation for the move, more than 4,000 letters were sent to Veterans in the surrounding area.

“We will continue to strive to provide the best care for our Veterans,” Melissa Edwards, Charles George VA Medical Center’s CBOC and Telehealth chief, wrote in the letter. “Our goals and commitment to you, the Veteran, will not waiver. Thank you for understanding our desire to provide an updated new facility for our nation’s heroes. As always, thank you for your service!”

To complete the move, the clinic only had to shutter its doors from Feb. 14 through 18. During the time of the closure, the clinic continued to have employees answer phones and had nurses on hand to address concerns.


“Support Your Passion” | By Scott Pittillo

Most of us have something that we feel passionately about — something that we devote our time and attention to because we want more of it in the world. They are causes that we support because we want the world to be a better place. For federal workers, the approved method for financially supporting our passions at work is through the Combined Federal Campaign.

Believe it or not, federal workers are a generous group of people, and their combined charitable contributions add up to making the CFC the largest workplace charity in the world, according to the United States Office of Personnel Management. Unfortunately, giving as a whole is down in the United States.

The most common case against giving is from people who say they don’t like giving because they don’t know exactly where the money goes. They are concerned that the money is misspent, or just generally doesn’t make a difference.

However, Vietnam Veteran and VA Travel Clerk Duane Cadotte will vouch for the fact that these contributions do directly impact people’s lives. Through a charity called “Compassion International” that he had heard about at his church, Cadotte sponsored a 14-year-old girl named Kerly in Ecuador who needed support. It also turned out that he could do it through the CFC.

After doing this for several years, Cadotte found out that he could actually meet the girl he had sponsored. So, he took a trip with his wife Becky to Ecuador to meet the family.

“Our trip to Ecuador was a wonderful, very emotional experience. We spent the whole day with Kerly and her mother. Compassion International provided a translator for the day. When Kerly first saw us, she ran and hugged us,” said Cadotte who has been sponsoring Kerly for more than 4 years now and working at the VA since 2011.

During the trip, Cadotte and his wife say they got a firsthand look at how their monthly contribution was helping this family in a country where the average family makes less than $50 dollars a month. They say they were impressed by the love that Kerly showed them, and it drove home to them the importance of giving. They also say their giving provides Kerly with spiritual, medical and educational nourishment.

“We have so much wealth in this country. Giving to the CFC allows you to give to worthy organizations of your choice with simple payroll deductions,” said Cadotte.

“I think, as Americans, we have a responsibility to share the wealth we have with so many less fortunate than we are. You can make a difference in someone’s life.”

Cadotte found his passion, and you can, too. To start donating to any of a long list of CFC-approved charities, go to cfcgiving.opm.gov or talk to your office’s CFC champion.
On Feb. 12, 2020, the Salisbury VA Health Care System’s Police Service hosted a retirement gathering for Lieutenant Storm, a black, female Labrador Retriever who was hired and vigorously trained to become the first K-9 to assist the Salisbury VA Police with finding and retrieving narcotics and missing persons. Lieutenant Storm was nationally certified by the American Police K-9 association for tracking narcotics and evidence recovery. She has been with the Salisbury VA for the past 7 years, which is why her retirement was advertised and executed in the same fashion any other employee’s farewell party would be.

During Storm’s career at the Medical Center, she assisted the Salisbury VA Police in finding and seizing illegal narcotics. There were 15 successful drug busts with 100-percent conviction rates on the charges utilizing Lieutenant Storm’s skill in 2019 alone! She also helped locate a total of four missing persons on or around the VA campus during her career. Additionally, Storm assisted in multiple mutual aid searches for other VA facilities.

For her retirement, there was a beautiful cake and punch served to folks who came to wish Storm well and to give her some last-minute love. Some employees who stopped by even brought gifts for her and expressed how much she will be missed. After leaving VA, Lieutenant Storm will be transitioning to her permanent home with her current handler, Sergeant Jonathan Smith of the Salisbury VA Medical Center Police force. The Police Service is currently recruiting and training the next K-9 to join the team, but it will definitely take a lot to fill the “shoes” of Lieutenant Storm.
ASHEVILLE, N.C. — The Charles George VA Medical Center Campus just got bigger, and Veterans and staff will reap the benefits. The center recently procured about eight acres of land and a 23,000-square-foot building for 18 Substance Abuse Rehabilitation Treatment Program, or SARRTP, beds.

According to Ray Manis, CGVAMC FMS chief, the building was transferred in the '80s to a private owner. The building was then renovated as senior living apartments, but it has been vacant for several years.

“The existing SARRTP program is in a 10,000-square-foot area inside the medical center among inpatient bed wards,” Manis wrote in an email. “This expansion will allow for a more private enhanced-care setting in its own distinct location.”

The site also includes additional parking and a quiet wooded area.

Richmond VA assists Vet in prep for Marine Corps Marathon with new Prosthesis

Purcell found strength at five years old after he was hit by a car; the accident fractured his skull.

“Somehow, I lived through that first night,” Purcell said. “The accident affected my speech. I used to talk slow and was always picked on growing up.”

After discharging from the Marine Corps in 1995, Purcell ran in the Marine Corps Marathon and the L.A. Marathon before settling in Virginia. Now, he wants to run it again, only this time with a prosthesis.

“Running the Marine Corps Marathon again as an amputee means everything to me,” Purcell said. “It means I will have completed my mission.”

John Jacobs, a Certified Prosthetist/Orthotist at CVHCS, approached Purcell’s care from a Whole Health perspective. Jacobs heard of Purcell’s ambition to run again and provided him with a walking-and-running prosthesis.

“Mr. Purcell has been a pleasure to work with,” Jacobs said. “His commitment to prosthetic rehabilitation and returning to normal activities of daily living is amazing.”

The prosthetics team often forms a unique relationship with the Veterans they serve. When Purcell was ready for his final fitting, the team let him choose a design to be placed on his permanent prosthesis.

Despite any of Purcell’s ongoing health issues, he said he keeps moving forward. Everything he has been through reminds him of his mission to never give up.

“I will not quit on God, my wife or my parents,” Purcell said.

Purcell now serves as a mentor to new amputees at the VA.
Salisbury VA Health Care System Hosts Local Creative Arts Competition

By Amanda Reilly | PUBLIC AFFAIRS SPECIALIST, SALISBURY VA HEALTH CARE SYSTEM

On Feb. 8, 2020, the Salisbury VA Health Care System held its 12th Annual Creative Arts Competition. The divisions included in the local competition were Art, Drama, Music, Creative Writing, and Dance. The 2020 competition consisted of 21 Veterans entered in various categories for each division, judged by a panel made up of volunteers from the American Legion Auxiliary. Salisbury VA Health Care System Director, Joseph Vaughn joined a full audience of Recreation Therapists, fellow Veterans and their families, and interested members of the public. “It is easy to see, well … not easy, but evident, that physical wounds can be healed. But it is quite evident by the art displayed around the room today that some wounds are to the soul, and that is being expressed here,” said Director Vaughn, regarding the Veteran artists’ submissions.

Upon entering the event venue, visitors were instantly captivated by heartfelt works of art displayed around the room. Among these were paintings, carvings, drawings, photographs, poetry, and other written pieces submitted by Veterans eager to share a glimpse of their inner emotions through artistic expression. After the welcoming remarks, the audience was gifted with works from talented poets, singers, storytellers and actors in a passionate program that left viewers in tears, laughter and buzzing conversation.

Angel Roberts is a former Coast Guard Veteran who was one of the local winners at the Salisbury VA’s 2019 Creative Arts Competition, which led her to be entered in the National Veteran Creative Arts Festival that same year. There, she took home the 2nd-place medal for her vocal solo rock song “Wild Nights.” Creating poetry and music is an outlet that has helped Ms. Roberts to be able to begin healing from her emotional wounds. In her original song “Inside Fight,” she expresses some of the inner turmoil that she has experienced through this powerful tune that was co-written at a retreat called “Operation Song” in June of 2019. Ms. Roberts stated that art and music has helped her tremendously.

“‘This was one of the best experiences of my life,’” said Roberts regarding her performance in the Creative Arts Competition. “I never talked about my experiences prior to writing and sharing this song. I am in awe and joy, and am much more comfortable talking now. … When I sing —not just songs I’ve written — it helps release things I normally wouldn’t be able to.”

Ms. Roberts took home four 1st-place medals in the local 2020 competition and expressed her hopes to be considered for the National Competition again this year in Saint Petersburg, Fla. from Nov. 28 through Dec. 5. Plans for Salisbury’s 2021 local Creative Arts Competition are also in place. Mark your calendars for the second Saturday in February 2021!
Hands Off! RT uses Theremin to Help Vets be Sonically Creative

By Beverly Bradigan | CGVAMC RECREATION THERAPY SUPERVISOR

CHARLES GEORGE VA MEDICAL CENTER, N.C. — Check out Cedric Carter, Asheville Recreational Therapy Assistant, playing with his Theremin!

The use of a Theremin or an electronic music synthesizer gives our veterans a unique opportunity to explore fascinating ways of new and often (pleasantly!) unpredictable self-expression through the manipulation of sound.

While the use of a keyboard-triggered Moog synthesizer is more familiar to most people as a hands-on device, the Theremin is more often a totally different animal because it is a hands-off device — you actually play a Theremin without physically touching it!

The person playing it moves his or her hands near two metal antennas. The distance from one antenna determines frequency, or pitch, while the distance from the other controls volume.

Since music is perceived by most people as a universal language, and electronic musical instruments can cater to the imagination of the user, the results of experimenting are literally endless.

“I try to introduce and use the electronic instruments that we have been fortunate to acquire from the local Moog Music Company in downtown Asheville to give our hospitalized veterans one more unique way of using their leisure time to be creative sonically,” Carter said.
In the latest installment of NBC’s Today Show special series Honoring Our Military, reporter Natalie Morales profiled Navy veteran Nakisha King, who overcame homelessness and health challenges to launch a successful business that helps her fellow veterans. NBC News and The Today Show teamed up with Progressive Insurance and their Keys 2 Progress campaign to gift deserving Veterans with a brand-new car.

While searching for deserving Veterans, NBC News staff found Ms. King’s story “Hard times couldn't stop Hampton Navy Veteran turned entrepreneur,” on the cover of the “Inside Business” magazine (Link). They decided to feature a segment on her, based on her powerful story of overcoming obstacles. So how is it that she became homeless? King related that a sudden decline in her health forced her out of the workplace, and the rent payment became too much to bear, thus her entire family was forced to live in her car. She simply did not have the resources to afford rent. “No one knew that I was struggling or that I was living in my car,” she said. “But thanks to the Hampton VA Hospital and other Veteran resource programs, she was able to get housing.

Morales interviewed Ms. King January 17 to highlight her activity in her work-study site at the Hampton VA Chapel Support Center; her business office, Gift Opener LLC, as well as her home. Ms. King shared her story on the challenges she faced and how the support of the Hampton VA Medical Center helped her through her toughest moments. Much to King’s surprise, at the end of the segment, she received a huge gift. King was presented with a 2019 Nissan Rogue automobile, sponsored by Progressive Insurance. In King’s story, she stated that her family had lived in their car twice. In responding to the surprise, King said she feels so blessed that someone heard her testimony and decided to not only feature her in a news story, but give her something that will allow her to continue to thrive in her personal and professional life. She expressed that she is extremely thankful for the support from Hampton VA Medical Center during her time of struggle, as well as her time of triumph.
Jose Vazquez was born in Ponce, Puerto Rico November 9th, 1926. “When I was 15, I heard on the radio that the Japanese had bombed Pearl Harbor.” He was captivated by the news. “I remember everyone being scared, but I also remember so many of us were ready to fight.” Like so many Americans, Vazquez, and many of his Puerto Rican neighbors were anxious to help defend America. “I was too young at the time, so I had to wait for my turn.” That turn came in 1944, when Vazquez was drafted into the 565th Infantry Regiment, also known as the Borinqueneers. The Borinqueneers was an Army unit made up of Puerto Ricans. It was segregated at the time, “but that didn’t matter to me, I was proud to do my part.”

After 90-days of training as a Lineman, “we boarded a ship for Curaçao. It was an important base of operations.” German U-boats were still a big presence there. “I learned Morse Code. I taught my daughter some of that, but sadly, I’ve forgotten it now.”

While in Curaçao, he developed fainting spells. “They never seemed serious. I also developed some trouble hearing out of my left ear.” When the war ended and he was being demobilized, discharged as a Private First Class, he underwent a physical. “By that time, I could not hear out of my left ear and the doctor noted that on my paperwork.”

Back in Ponce, Vazquez wanted to be an Electrical Engineer, but he never got the chance. In 1946 or ’47, he took a friend to the local hospital with a section just for Veterans. “Some of the hospital staff noticed that I was walking oddly.” An examination exposed a benign tumor on the left side of his brain. That helped to explain why he couldn’t hear, and he was starting to have trouble seeing. He ended up at a VA hospital in Bronx, NY for surgery. They removed the tumor, “but it left me without a sense of smell, deaf in my left ear and legally blind,” he said. Vazquez received a disability rating and $50 a-month. He was 23 years old.

Not able to work, “because of the tumor,” he depended on his pension.” Later, he got married. “I married in May of 1955. My wife was a nurse at the hospital in Ponce. That’s where we met. We went on to have three children. Two boys and a girl. Sadly, she passed away in 2014.”

In 1960, he joined American Legion Post 56 in Ponce. “Through the American Legion, I was able to serve my country and my fellow Veterans. I’m still a member, 60-years on.” Over the years, Vazquez served as a post Vice Commander and a Veterans Service Officer. His continued service makes him proud. “I’m also a proud member the Blinded Veteran Association,” he adds excitedly.

The Congressional Gold Medal. It’s a bit of a funny story. “When President Obama awarded members of the Borinqueneers the medal, I was very proud, but I didn’t really feel I deserved it. I could have attended the ceremony in D.C.; the medal was fine; I didn’t really need the ceremony. My daughter told me that I did, that I had done more than enough.” At first, they tried to buy the Medal online, but a friend said that wasn’t necessary. Eventually, Sam Rodriguez, the president of the Borinqueneers Congressional Gold Medal Ceremony National Committee got in touch with Vazquez and broke the news that Soldiers from Fort Bragg will come and award me the medal! Rodriguez arranged a small ceremony for him.

“I have always been very proud of my service. Despite my health problems (I have suffered three heart attacks and a few strokes), I will continue to serve if I am able.” February 15 Several Vazquez family members, members of the Borinqueneers motorcycle clubs from NC, VA, and Florida, local members of the community, VA health providers, and newstation were on hand to witness the presentation of the Congressional Gold Medal and honor Mr. Vazquez for his heroism at the Durham VA Medical Center, where he lives.

Link to Ceremony video
I recently told someone that I was in the worst shape of my life. Last year I battled issues with my ankle and pneumonia, and the crazy part is that I am — well, was (and will be again) — a dedicated marathon runner. Not in 2019, but maybe in 2020. But life is like that, an ebb and flow from being healthy, to being not so healthy, to being healthy again.

I am sure you feel like I do, that getting in shape, or trying to get healthier, can seem daunting, but it shouldn’t feel that way. Most of us can feel more empowered when we move our bodies more and manage what we eat better. Not only does that make our overall health better, but we look better and we feel more confident.

Let’s start by looking at exercise. A quick walk through the library or a Google search will drown you in more information than you know what to do with — but it doesn’t have to be that hard. Keep it simple. According to Steve Kamb, author of *How to build your own workout routine: plans, schedules and exercises* (last updated Jan. 1, 2020) a workout should be developed around the rhythm of your schedule. Two or three days a week should suffice. Kamb says the best way to start is the one you can actually stick with. So, make it easy on yourself.

Rest and stretching are important to your success as well. By allowing muscles two days between workouts, you’ll stay injury free and get stronger. Here’s a link on some common mistakes: Eight Worst Mistakes a Beginner Can Make. According to the Harvard Health Letter, “Stretching keeps the muscles flexible, strong, and healthy, and we need that flexibility to maintain a range of motion in the joints. Without it, the muscles shorten and become tight. Then, when you call on the muscles for activity, they are weak and unable to extend all the way. That puts you at risk for joint pain, strains, and muscle damage.”

Even if you’re not exercising, staying flexible as you age is a good idea. It helps you to move better. For example, regular stretching can help keep your hips and hamstrings flexible later in life, says Lynn Millar, Ph.D. She’s a physical therapist and professor at Winston-Salem State University.

**TOP PHOTO:** Exercising can — and should — be enjoyable and easily integrated into your routine.

Stretching a muscle to the full extent of your ability and holding it for 15 to 30 seconds is what’s called a static stretch, and there’s no harm in stretching that way as long you don’t stretch until it hurts. But studies suggest a dynamic stretch is just as effective, and sometimes better, especially before your workout. A dynamic stretch moves a muscle group fluidly through an entire range of motion.

On top of the main exercising benefits to stretching, it can also promote circulation by increasing blood supply to muscles and joints, and it decreases the risk of lower back pain when hamstring and hip flexibility relieve stress on the lumbar spine. For a start, check out the *Bowflex® five-minute full body stretch* video or take a look at the *Flexibility: 8 stretches that will stretch your workout routine* by Vonda Wright, M.D.

Support your efforts on the mat or in the gym with healthier eating. Again, keep it simple! What is the point in changing so many things that it is hard to track or keep pace with, too complicated or detailed that you get frustrated and give up before the plan has a chance to work? Try applying some of these *12 Small Resolutions to Clean Up Your Diet in 2020*. According to an article in *Fast Company* by Lauren Steele: “Doctors and registered dietitians say that a more sustainable approach to managing weight, feeling good, and changing eating habits is to focus on identifying which foods nourish your body and give you the proper fuel you need to live a great life.”

Taking just a few of these ideas and applying them consistently is sure to help you out, so do what you can and add more when you’re comfortable. Live well! Live fully! #takecharge livefully #MyWholeHealth
By Joshua D. Edson  
DURHAM VA HCS PUBLIC AFFAIRS

In 2015, Roger Barnes, an Army Veteran with two tours in Iraq, began his transition out of the military. At that time, Barnes believed that he had the job skills, the courage, and the knowledge he needed to meet the demands of civilian life. The combat Veteran figured that nothing could compare to the challenges he encountered in a normal day in the Army. He also believed that nothing could be as stressful as a couple of tours in a combat zone. To Roger, life as a civilian would be easy.

"Man, was I ever in for a rude awakening," laughs Barnes. "I can joke about it now, but it wasn’t so funny during that first year at ‘Fort Living Room.’ I never realized how hard it was getting back into life as a civilian."

The first challenge he encountered was employment. Despite his six years of honorable service, employers did not seem interested in what he had to offer. Barnes quickly discovered that, in order to compete in the job market, he would need more education. Despite being eligible for the Post-9/11 G.I. Bill, Roger felt too overwhelmed to give it the old college try. The stress of seeking employment began to wear on him mentally and physically. It was during this time that his marriage began to experience problems.

“When you’re in the Army, you’re surrounded by people going through the same issues and routines as you are,” said Barnes. “When I was discharged, I lost that. Despite the stress that Army life brings, there was still a certain comfort in it. I knew my place. It was like I went from hero to zero the minute they handed me my discharge papers.”

Eventually, getting out of bed seemed like an overwhelming task for Barnes. He knew it was time to seek professional help. His journey to recovery, and a healthy lifestyle, began at the Raleigh Veteran Center, a counseling and outreach facility in the Durham VA Healthcare System (DVAHCS). It was through the Raleigh Veteran Center that a counselor suggested Mindfulness as an option to cope with mental stress. Barnes wasn’t sold on the idea.

“I wanted to ask her what essential oils she would suggest,” chuckles Roger. “I got this image of me sitting on the floor in a saffron robe going ‘ohm, ohm, ohm.’ It seemed silly.”

Mindfulness is the act of keeping your mind fully centered on what is happening in the moment, without judgment. Mindfulness has its origins in Buddhist traditions, which involves meditation. Western mental and behavioral health practitioners are increasing the use of Mindfulness in their medical practices and have discovered that it is a beneficial tool in the therapeutic process.

Likewise, the DVAHCS includes Mindfulness in its Whole Health initiative. Whole Health is a program aimed at helping Veterans maintain their best health and wellbeing — mind, body, soul, and spirit. Mindfulness emphasizes enjoying the moment. It includes being aware of any emotions or thoughts that may arise throughout daily activities.

Mindfulness meditation is beneficial for Veterans suffering from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). It is used to help Veterans focus on the good aspects of their present life and assists in avoiding the intrusive and painful memories of the past. For Veterans like Roger Barnes, it provides a sense of balance and a method to deal with negative thoughts.

“I used to get so worked up about the little things in life,” says Roger. “Money problems, job problems — whatever. I used to let these things take over my life. Now, with the help of regular meditation classes at Raleigh Two, as well as meditation on my own, I feel I can breathe a bit easier. Has it solved all my problems? No. But at least I feel that I can manage them.”

For more information on the DVAHCS Mindfulness Program as well as more information on the Whole Health initiative, please visit: https://www.durham.va.gov/DURHAM/LiveWhole.asp or download the Mindfulness Coach App.