Music Therapy a “Life Raft” for Gulf War Veteran

Singing helped Air Force Veteran Rebecca Heissler build lung strength after two open heart surgeries.

Veterans Day at Bay Pines

Thousands attended the annual Veterans Day ceremony at the C.W. Bill Young VA Medical Center.
Welcome to a new year and the first edition of Bay Visions in 2016! Just as the years change, so does the environment of health care and health care delivery. As such, it is important that we continue to transform, innovate and improve the way we deliver care to the men and women we serve across southwest Florida - now and into the future.

We are committed to becoming a 5-star organization in health care quality and customer service. To get there, we must continue to partner with Veterans to provide the very best personalized, proactive, patient-driven care while honoring their service and empowering health. We want to enhance our engagement so we can provide health care based on their needs, values, and how the Veteran wants to live, not only for preventing illness, but also for managing chronic disease and providing acute and end-of-life care. America’s heroes deserve nothing less.

You will read some of what we are doing in this edition of Bay Visions. From providing unique therapies for physical and emotional recovery, to using state-of-the-art technologies to stay on the cutting edge of health care - we are absolutely committed to making available the highest level of quality and accessible health care services to Veterans. Veterans and their families can expect us to continue delivering the highest standards of excellence in service and experience.

Please enjoy Bay Visions and happy new year!

Sincerely,

SUZANNE M. KLINKER
Director, Bay Pines VA Healthcare System
Music Therapy is a “Life Raft” for Gulf War Veteran Rebecca Heissler

Every Thursday, U.S. Air Force Veteran Rebecca Heissler leaves her home in Tampa, Fla., and makes a much anticipated 45-minute drive to the C.W. Bill Young VA Medical Center (VAMC) in Bay Pines, Fla.

She does not make the weekly trip for conventional health care services. It is all about the music. As an active patient in the Bay Pines VA Healthcare System’s (VAHCS) Music Therapy program, Heissler cherishes her weekly, 1-hour group sessions with fellow Veterans, and something she said she cannot live without.

“Music, in some shape or form, has always been part of my life and is a very important part of my health and well-being,” Heissler said. “Whether I am singing, writing music, playing the piano, it is something I really enjoy and has carried me through some pretty difficult times in my life.”

Music Therapy

Music Therapy is the clinical and evidence-based use of music to accomplish individualized physical and emotional goals. Many VA medical centers across the country provide music therapy as part of service offerings under the umbrella of recreation and creative arts. These therapeutic services are often used by Veterans to compliment routine or conventional health care services. Veterans can be referred Music Therapy by their respective primary care providers and other referring medical providers.

The Bay Pines VAHCS’s program is led by a board certified music therapist who uses a variety of musical interventions to help Veterans reach their goals. These interventions include song writing, playing guitar, drumming, listening to music and more.

About 500 Veterans participate in the Music Therapy program at the C.W. Bill Young VAMC every year. Heissler has been involved since 2012 after being referred to the program by the James A. Haley Veterans’ Hospital in Tampa, Fla.

Love at First Note

Heissler first found her love for music when she was five years old singing in her church choir in Tampa, Fla. Even as a young girl, she could feel the power and beauty of music and the intriguing allure that attached itself to every note.

After she joined the U.S. Air Force Reserve in 1989 at the age of 19, Heissler quickly got involved in the U.S. Air Force Choir where she continued to thrive artistically. About a year after joining the Air Force, the former staff sergeant and flight medic was activated for a four month mission in support of Operation Desert Storm.

“We were responsible for stabilizing service members injured in combat and preparing them for transport on C-130s (military aircraft) to Germany,” she said. “It was a pretty important mission, and something I am very proud of.”

Heissler said music took a back seat during her time in the Middle East, but she planned picking it back up when she arrived.

Her plans did not come to fruition. Shortly after returning from the Gulf War, Heissler’s health started to deteriorate which forced her to prematurely exit the Air Force in 1993. It wouldn’t be until almost 12 years later that she would start to enjoy music again.

Using Music to Heal

Heissler enrolled for VA health care services with the James A. Haley Veterans’ Hospital in Tampa in 2001. There, she learned that she had serious heart issues and was diagnosed with several other medical issue affecting her overall health. Heissler’s medical problems culminated with two open heart surgeries – one in 2004 and the other in 2009.

“I was in terrible shape, had difficulty breathing due to the surgery and fought depression almost every day,” Heissler said.

Enduring two major surgeries and struggling to function emotionally was a low point for Heissler, but amidst the despair her passion for music was rekindled.

“Breathing after open heart surgery was extremely difficult, so I started singing one phrase at a time to help strengthen my breathing,” she said reflecting on her recovery.

“Instead of using music simply for enjoyment, I started to see it as a way I could truly improve my physical and emotional health. From there, I never looked back.”

Ongoing Recovery

From her absolute lowest point both physically and mentally, Heissler has made enormous strides. She credits her ongoing recovery largely to Music Therapy services available at the C.W. Bill Young VA Medical Center. Over the last several years, she has competed in the National Veterans Creative Arts Festival – an annual event that recognizes progress and recovery made through creative arts therapy.

The competition includes 51 categories that range from oil painting to leatherwork to creative writing, dance, drama and music. Heissler has thrived in the competition’s music category winning numerous gold medals in solo and group performances.

“Hecky is a great example of a Veteran who truly benefits from Music Therapy and who has used the service to recover from physical and emotional wounds,” said Erin Todd, Board Certified Music Therapist, Bay Pines VAHCS.

“As a provider, my goal is to help my patients improve their health and well-being. I think we’ve helped Becky accomplish that. Her story is inspirational, uplifting and really validates the work we do every day for the Veterans we serve.”

Heissler said she will continue to use Music Therapy as part of her overall health care and plans to enter National Veterans Creative Arts Festival again in 2016.

“If it wasn’t for Music Therapy, I would not be where I am today,” Heissler said. “For me, it is my saving grace…my life raft.”

Veterans interested in learning more about Music Therapy or how to compete in the Creative Arts Festival can call 727-398-6661 extension 15884.
Thousands turnout to honor America’s Veterans during annual ceremony

Nearly 3,000 Veterans, family members, friends, civic leaders, VA employees and volunteers turned out for the annual Veterans Day Ceremony at the C.W. Bill Young VA Medical Center on Wednesday, November 11, 2015.

The keynote speaker for the event was Maj. Gen. Terry Ferrell, Chief of Staff, United States Central Command. U.S. Rep. David W. Jolly, 13th Congressional District of Florida, also provided remarks. VA speakers included Suzanne M. Klinker, Director, Bay Pines VAHCS; Kerrie L. Witty, Director, St. Petersburg VA Regional Office; and Charles “Rudy” Arnold, Assistant Director, Bay Pines National Cemetery.

The event also featured musical performances by The Florida Orchestra and Keswick Christian School Choir; a special parade of colors provided by local Veteran Service Organizations; and traditional military presentations to include the posting and retiring of the U.S. Flag, a firing salute, a taps performance and more.

Local evening news anchor Veronica Cintron, Bay News 9, was the master of ceremonies for the event.

Maj. Gen. Ferrell’s keynote address stirred proud and patriotic emotions as he thanked Veterans in attendance for their service and discussed the importance of honoring America’s Veterans and active duty service members not only on Veterans Day, but everyday.

He also paid special tribute to families of the men and women who served and continue to serve in the U.S. Military.

“While we are here today to honor Veterans, it is just as important that we recognize the service and sacrifice of the family members who served beside them,” he said.

“Without the support of our families, we could not do what we do and for that, thank you for your service.”

Attendance during the 2015 Bay Pines Veterans Day Ceremony was the largest recorded in recent years. To provide feedback about the ceremony and to learn more about upcoming events, please visit www.baypines.va.gov or call the Office of Public Affairs at 727-398-6661 extension 15031.

(Pictured Left) Maj. Gen. Terry Ferrell, Chief of Staff, United States Central Command, leads a group applause while honoring Veterans, active duty service members and their families during the annual Bay Pines Veterans Day Ceremony on Nov. 11, 2015. Maj. Gen. Ferrell provided the keynote speech for the event.

(Pictured Below) Thousands gather at the C.W. Bill Young VA Medical Center prior to the start of the annual Bay Pines Veterans Day Ceremony.

(Pictured on Pg. 6) JROTC cadets from Gibbs High School located in St. Petersburg, Fla. carry the ceremonial wreath during the annual Veterans Day Ceremony at the C.W. Bill Young VA Medical Center. The wreath was donated for the event by the American Legion.
New, state-of-the-art CT scanner improves exams, provides comprehensive diagnostic assessments

Bay Pines VA Healthcare System first government medical facility in the nation to install Revolution CT Scanner

Recently, the Bay Pines VA Healthcare System installed and began using a new Revolution CT scanner at the C.W. Bill Young VA Medical Center.

With a price tag of nearly $2 million, the device delivers state-of-the-art image quality and clinical capabilities through temporal, spatial and coverage resolution. The medical center was the first government medical facility to install this specific piece of equipment.

Thanks to its innovative design, the Revolution CT will improve routine exams and enable breakthrough clinical applications. For example, it has the ability to capture the whole heart in a single beat, in high definition, with motion-free coronary images at any heart rate. Previous technology requires the use of medication to slow the heart rate in order to capture a motion-free cardiac study.

The large detector size allows for whole organ dynamic perfusion studies of the heart, brain, liver, kidneys and other organs and tissues with up to 16cm of coverage with uniform IV contrast (twice the coverage area as most other scanners).

It also delivers rapid and comprehensive trauma assessment thanks to the wide detector, fast table speed and better access to patients through the wide 80 cm bore.

The device features the latest Smart Dose Technologies designed to acquire high quality images using lower doses of radiation. Smart Dose Technologies contribute to a more accurate diagnosis and lower exposure for patients across routine and advanced exams.
Getting to know your PATIENT ALIGNED CARE TEAM

Frequently Asked Questions

1. What is PACT? A Patient Aligned Care Team is a group of health care professionals in Primary Care who work together to give you the best care possible and to help you take part in your own health and wellness.

2. Who is my PACT team? Your Provider, Registered Nurse, LPN or Health Technician, Clerk, Social Worker, Pharmacist, and Dietician. The Veteran is at the center of the team.

3. Who do I call if I have a medical question or problem? Call your PACT RN or send a MHV HealthNet (MHV) Secure Message (www.myhealth.va.gov).

4. Can I just “walk-in” to the clinic? To avoid waiting, contact your PACT clerk to make, cancel or reschedule a PACT appointment, or if you have questions about future appointments.

5. Can I leave a message for my PACT team? Yes, you can call and leave a message on the PACT RN extension, or use MHV Secure Messaging. It may take 72 hours to receive a reply to secure messages. Messages should not be for urgent or emergent medical concerns. If you call, please leave your full name, last 4 numbers of your Social Security number, the reason for the call, your telephone number, and whether it is okay to leave a message on your telephone.

6. If I call one of my PACT members, when can I expect a call back? You should receive a call back within 1-2 business days (Monday-Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.)

7. What do I do if I have a medical emergency such as chest pain or problems breathing? Call 911 or visit the nearest Emergency Room for immediate medical assistance.

8. What if I have concerns about finances, housing, transportation, legal issues, Advance Directives, or community resources? Your PACT Social Worker can help you.

9. Who should I contact if I am depressed or in emotional crisis? The Veterans Crisis Line is available any time - Call 800-273-TALK (8255) and press “1” for Veterans. You may access Primary Care Mental Health Integration staff through your PACT team. Same day assessments are available to determine the most appropriate treatment options.

10. Who should I call if I need a medication refill, renewal, or have questions about my medicine? Select the Pharmacy Line Option from the phone menu and follow the prompts. MHV may also be used to order refills.

11. What do I do if I need a form filled out or need copies of something from my medical record? Call or go to Release of Information. You can also use the MHV Blue Button to look at your medical record.

12. How do I know what numbers to call for my PACT team? Pick up a PACT contact card at the clinic, with the telephone numbers for your team.

For more information about VA’s PACT model, visit www.va.gov/health/services/primarycare/pact/index.asp.

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Important VA Phone Numbers

**Bay Pines VA Healthcare System**
(727) 398-6661 or toll-free 1-888-820-0230

**Lee County Healthcare Center**
(239) 652-1800 or toll-free (888) 513-0045

**Veterans Crisis Line**
1-800-273-8255 press 1
The Veterans Crisis Line connects Veterans in crisis and their families and friends with qualified, caring Department of Veterans Affairs responders through a confidential toll-free hotline.

**Scheduling an Appointment**
(727) 398-6661 or toll-free 1-888-820-0230, press 2
Veterans who need to schedule, cancel or reschedule appointments can call Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

**Prescriptions**
(727) 398-6661 or toll-free 1-888-820-0230, press 1
Veterans who need to request a prescription refill or check the status of refills can call Monday through Friday 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

**Billing Questions**
1-866-793-4591
Veterans who have questions about a bill received from the Bay Pines VAHCS can call the VA Revenue Center.

**Patient Advocate**
(727) 398-6661 or toll-free 1-888-820-0230 ext. 15024
Patient Advocates serve as liaisons between patients and the medical center, act on the patient’s behalf, and help patients understand their rights and responsibilities.

**My HealtheVet**
www.myhealth.va.gov
Veterans can manage their health by logging onto My HealtheVet, which offers access to Veteran health benefits and services.

**VA Benefits (other than health care)**
1-800-827-1000
Veterans who need information on VA benefits including VA compensation and pension, home loans, and education can call the VA Regional Office.

Visit us online at: www.baypines.va.gov or scan the QR Code with a smart phone app.