

# SYRACUSE VET CENTER NEWSLETTER

April 2021—June 2021

## VET Center Call Center: 1-877-WAR-VETS

Is an around the clock confidential call center where combat veterans and their families can call to talk about their military experiences or any other issue they are facing in their readjustment to civilian life. The staff is comprised of combat veterans and family members from several eras.

### ***Our Staff***

#### **Frank Salvatore**

*Director & Licensed Clinical  
Social Worker*

#### **Dr. Laura Hayward**

*Licensed Psychologist*

#### **Dr. Allan Landes**

*Licensed Psychologist*

#### **Stephen Lockwood**

*Office Manager*

#### **Dr. Amber Oliver**

*Licensed Clinical Social  
Worker*

#### **Richard Purcell**

*Veterans Outreach*

#### **Michelle Rossi**

*Licensed Marriage & Family  
Therapist*

#### **Bonita Sur**

*Psychologist Intern*



109 Pine Street  
Syracuse, NY 13210

(315) 478-7127

### ***Our Director's Comments***

I hope this newsletter finds all of you in good health. Recently the SAVES LIVES Act expanded VA's legal authority to provide to all Veterans, and spouses, regardless of VA healthcare enrollment. If you would like to schedule a vaccine through the Syracuse VA, you may call 315-425-4488 seven days a week from 8am to 4pm.

I also would like to take a moment to bid farewell to a couple of people. First is our social work intern, Ashley Dailey. Ashley joined us in September and completed her internship in April. I wish her the best as she begins the next phase of her career.

Lastly we say goodbye to Rich Purcell who retires on June 30, 2021. Rich began with the Syracuse Vet Center in August 2018. Previously, Rich worked with the Syracuse VA Medical Center, Onondaga County Department of Corrections, and retired from active duty Air Force. Although Rich has only been here for just under three years, his service to our Veterans and the Veteran community has been profound. Rich has built relationships with community partners and increased Veteran awareness in Vet Centers leading to an approximate 20% increase in Veterans actively in care. His innovative approaches of engaging Veterans by connecting them with resources to basic needs and is adaptation to doing outreach in a virtual format has reached recognition at the district and national level. Anyone who knows Rich knows he will not spend retirement idly. Whatever his next service to Veterans will be, I know he will do well and with compassion. I know Rich has left a lasting impact on me. Rich, for everything you have done for Veterans, and you simply being you, thank you.

Lastly, we have lost several veterans just this calendar year alone. Given current operations in a virtual format, sharing and discussing these losses has been difficult, and we recognize that grief and loss impacts everyone differently. Please join us for our upcoming ceremony to honor those we have lost.



**Syracuse Vet Center  
Virtual Memorial Day Ceremony  
Friday, May 28, 2021, 1200 PM**

**Streaming live over the  
Syracuse VAMC Facebook Page  
[www.facebook.com/VASyracuse](http://www.facebook.com/VASyracuse)**

**or  
Zoom**

**<https://zoom.us/j/92742730994>**

For more information, contact  
Rich Purcell at (315) 478-7127.

# Services

## Making Your Smart Device Smarter for You

By Dr. Laura Hayward

As a psychologist, I am a big believer in the utility of therapy. I also recognize, though, that not everyone makes the choice to access therapy and there are many times outside of therapy that extra support may be helpful. Enter the use of technology. Whether you begrudgingly own a smart device (i.e., phone or tablet) or you consider yourself a smart device aficionado, there are many ways in which you can make your device a core part of your well-being and not just the platform on which you scroll social media, binge watch your favorite show, or screen your calls.

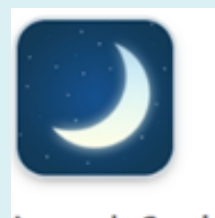
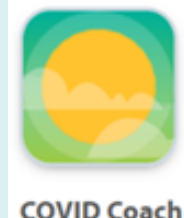
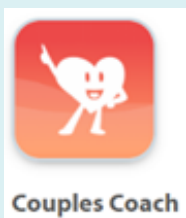
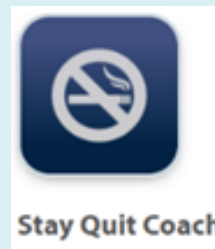
VA, at times in joint venture with DoD, has created a wide array of applications (aka: apps) to help Veterans and Service Members navigate their daily lives. Perhaps you've already looked for a VA app (<https://mobile.va.gov/Appstore>) or you've never considered adding an app to your phone as a means of support for yourself. In either case, there are a few apps that you may find of particular benefit, especially as we navigate the 1-year anniversary of the pandemic.

If you've realized that the pandemic has taken a toll on your emotional health, you are not alone. The COVID Coach is designed to help you monitor your mood, manage stress, access resources, and learn more about ways that you can stay well, balanced, and healthy. With the support of this app, you can practice many forms of self-care – many of which you may not have previously considered.

While some Veterans with PTSD initially shared with me that the pandemic felt like a reprieve, as it gave permission to be more socially isolated, that does not mean that PTSD symptoms have felt fully manageable. Use of the PTSD Coach app and the PTSD Family Coach (for those who love an individual with PTSD) can be a useful addition in our lives, as they build understanding of PTSD symptoms, provide supportive resources, and allow Veterans to track and monitor change across time.

Other physical and emotional health-related apps may also be of use, including those pertaining to improving sleep (Insomnia Coach), considering the role of alcohol use in our lives (VetChange), making the determination to quit smoking (Stay Quit Coach), and helping us cope with anger (AIMS for Anger Management). Finally, the Couples Coach can provide support to our Veterans and partners who are navigating stressors in their relationships.

All apps are freely available for your download. We are here to support you, whether that is through individual or group sessions or your independent (perhaps tech-based) pursuits towards health and well-being.



# Programs

## Central New York– A Great Place for Veterans

After serving in the military, did you ever wonder what services and discounts are available to you? Central New York is a great place to live, especially if you are a Veteran. Did you know that there are over forty organizations that provide everything from free groceries, free legal assistance, rental assistance, therapy dogs, career opportunities, reduced vacation rentals, and so much more? Please join us as we provide an in-depth coverage of all these great organizations. Our Virtual Program Seminar will be held on May 6, 2021 at 1400. To attend, please send an email to [Richard.Purcell@va.gov](mailto:Richard.Purcell@va.gov).



Photo submitted by Jamie M.

## The Exciting World of Photography



Photo submitted by Donald F.



Photo submitted by Peter R.

The Syracuse Vet Center offers a bi-weekly virtual photography group at 10 a.m. on Fridays. We have an array of differing skill levels, making the group fun and educational. Each group explores different aspects of photography and how to integrate them when taking photos. Great news, we are exploring the possibility of having an evening group too. For more information, please contact Dr. Amber Oliver at 315-478-7127.

## Looking For a Therapeutic Experience? Try The Veterans Book Club

Do you love to read and socialize with other Veterans? If so, please consider joining our virtual book club. We meet weekly, every Thursday from 10 to 11 a.m. It is a great time to join as we will start reading a new book. We chose: *The Nature Fix: Why Nature Makes Us Happier, Healthier, and More Creative* by Florence Williams. The title is fairly comprehensive, but it's a non-fiction book focused on our connection with nature looking at examples throughout history as well as current research. We'll start reading it on 4/22 which is, appropriately, Earth Day. For more information please contact Michelle Rossi, (315) 478 -7127.

## Let Your Voice Be Heard

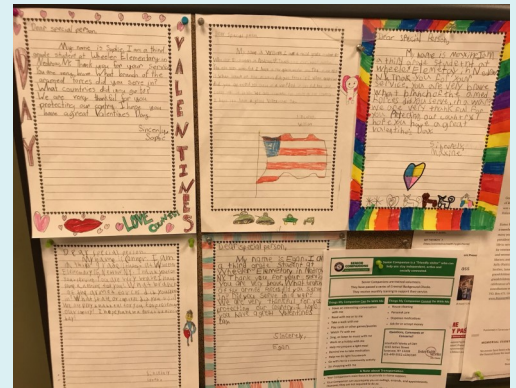
We value your service and would love your input! Please join us as we explore ways to improve services at our Vet Center. Our next Community Engagement Board Meeting will be held virtually via Zoom on June 8, 2021 at 4:00 PM. Please make your reservation by calling us at (315) 478-7127.

## Take Control

If you have noticed that you have felt angrier or more irritable lately, then you are not alone. In contending with the stressors of the pandemic and life, anger often shows up. The Coping with Anger group, which meets virtually for 12, 90 minute, weekly sessions, is offered as a means to understand our anger, how and why it shows up, and what to do with it when we feel it. The next cycle of the group will begin on May 12th at 1630. For more information, please contact Dr. Laura Hayward at 315-478-7127.

## Wheeler Elementary School Appreciates Veterans

A big thank-you goes out to Ms. Fitzgerald's Third Grade Class from Wheeler Elementary School! They took time out of their busy schedule to make our Veterans beautiful Valentine's Day letters and artwork. We are honored to proudly display them on our lobby bulletin board.



## Free Groceries for Veterans

The Feed Our Vets Food Pantry is located at 587 Main Street, New York Mills. The pantry is open every Wednesday from 1445—1745 and on the third Saturday of the month from 0800—1100. Veterans should bring proof of service and bags. Wearing of face mask and social distancing is mandatory. For more information, please call (315) 982-0698.

## Free Legal Assistance for Veterans

Volunteer attorneys, who are Veterans themselves, provide free legal advice and referrals. The Veterans Legal Clinic is currently being conducted virtually via ZOOM on the first Wednesday of the month starting at 1800. For an appointment, please contact the Syracuse Vet Center at (315) 478-7127

## Clear Path for Veterans

Join Clear Path for Veterans this month for the next series of Community Wellness Walks! Clear Path has been having a blast connecting with new and old friends of Clear Path alike. The group meets at the carousel before store openings when the mall is quiet for some light exercise and good conversation. If the weather is nice then the group will head outside to the Creek Walk. Let us know you are coming by email Lynn Fox at [lynn@clearpathforvets.com](mailto:lynn@clearpathforvets.com) or by visiting the link below. <https://www.eventbrite.com/o/clear-path-for-veterans-19827373829> .

