



SCI&D SPIRIT

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CATCH the SPIRIT

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
VA Boston Healthcare System
Spinal Cord Injuries and Disorders

On His Way to The Ball

THE SCI/D Program at VA BOSTON HCS provides acute rehabilitation for SCI/D to active duty service members as well as Veterans. Gunnery Sergeant (GySgt) Timothy Smith, age 32, is a 13-year Crew Chief Mechanic in the United States Marine Corps. He served in Iraq in 2008 and on the Marine One Helicopter under President George W. Bush.

In March of 2011, GySgt Smith was rendered a tetraplegic following a swimming accident in Brazil. He spent a month in a Brazilian hospital where he underwent spinal surgery. He was then transferred back to the United States to a private hospital in Miami, where he remained until he was medically stable for rehabilitation.

GySgt Smith decided to receive his rehabilitation at the VA Boston Healthcare System Spinal Cord Injury Program. He was interested in being closer to family and friends and with his fellow Veterans. At the VA Boston HCS SCI/D Center, GySgt Smith completely focused on therapy and became an instant member of the Veteran community.

His family and friends also became members of the community by staying on campus at the Fisher House at no cost. This provided GySgt Smith the opportunity to have his caregivers learn his care and increased his participation in recreational therapy programs and community integration trips.



Fisher House, VA Boston HCS, West Roxbury Campus

GySgt Smith participated in the rehabilitation program, which is accredited by the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF), from his arrival in June until discharge in November. During GySgt Smith's rehab, he was determined to live an active life by participating in all the rehab programming, going on outings and spending time with loved ones. Each day this marine would start his day learning his care, developing the skills to direct his caretakers, training family and improving his function. "My daily treatment with my therapist was intense; six days a week working on regaining function and improving my skills."

GySgt Smith credits his doctors, therapists and nurses for his success and quality of life after such a traumatic event. "I felt part of the team. I was included in the rehab meetings. My view mattered. The staff on the SCI unit honestly cares. Everyone did so much for me during my rehab."

Before discharge from rehab, GySgt Smith had planned a trip to attend the United States Marine Corps Birthday Ball with his fellow Marines. He wanted to be there not only in spirit but in person.

The weekend of November 10th, less than two weeks after discharge from rehab, GySgt Smith and his girlfriend, Talia Stevens, flew to San Diego, California for the 50th Reunion of the HMM-364 'the world famous purple foxes'.

On November 11, 2011 GySgt Smith and Talia attended The Marine Corps Birthday Ball.



GySgt Smith and Talia Stevens at the Ball

Be Prepared

As winter approaches, please make sure you are prepared for emergencies. When a storm is forecasted, charge your cell phone, batteries, power wheelchair, lift, etc. Keep emergency telephone numbers accessible. Prepare a kit with medications, catheters and other supplies. Team up with a family member or neighbor to assist you as needed. The American Red Cross website "Evacuation Planning for Persons with Disabilities and Caregivers" at www.redcross.org/preparedness/cdc_english/evac_dis-1.html provides excellent guidance for emergency preparedness. At any time you believe you are at risk call 911. For admission to VA Boston HCS, call the SCI Office at 857-203-6574 or after hours come to the emergency department at the West Roxbury Campus. You can also go to your local ER. Planning ahead can make emergencies less stressful.



Sunil Sabharwal, MD
Chief SCI/D Services

A Place to Call Home

The VHA Medical Foster Home Program is often called ‘the program where heroes meet angels’. The program links Veterans with foster caregivers. Medical Foster Homes are private homes in the community owned and operated by a VHA approved caregiver who can provide the Veteran with a range of support and services. Medical Foster Homes are often used as a long term care alternative for Veterans with chronic medical conditions or disabilities that make it difficult to remain in their own home. They can also be used as a transitional placement or for short term respite.

This is a unique collaboration between the Veteran, his/her family, the community caregiver and the VHA. The Veteran receives daily personal assistance, and supervision of his/her medical care by the caregiver. The VHA provides medical care and caregiver education in the Medical Foster Home through the VHA Spinal Cord Injury and Disorders Home Care Team. The caregiver receives monthly compensation from the Veteran based on the level of assistance the Veteran requires. The Veteran’s satisfaction with the home and coordination of services are overseen by the VHA Medical Foster Home Coordinator.

One of the Medical Foster Homes currently available is owned and operated by Mr. Harold Robinson and is located in Orange MA, off Route 2 in central MA. Harold is a caregiver with a long history of experience working with individuals with chronic medical conditions; from providing assistance with activities of daily living such as personal care, grooming, dressing and transfers, to managing the treatment of wounds, and caring for individuals with dementia or chronic mental illnesses. Harold brings a wealth of experience and kindness to a

Veteran in need of his services.

Harold’s home is a three bedroom farm house, with two private bedrooms available for Veterans. The house is handicap accessible including space to park a vehicle. The home is surrounded by gardens, with access to a nearby pond for fishing, and shopping areas nearby.

Harold’s home is one of the Medical Foster Homes that is an alternative housing option for respite services, transitional placement, or long term care in a safe and therapeutic family environment.



A quiet sitting area at the Robinson Medical Foster Home, Orange, MA

For more information about the Robinson home or for questions about the program please contact the Medical Foster Home Coordinator:

Caitlin Oliveira, LISCW at 857-203-5681

New Rehab Gym Opens at West Roxbury

In September, VA Boston HCS opened a new rehab gym, which is available for both inpatients and outpatients. The new gym has a bright open layout and offers many new amenities for patients, including:

- Overhead mounted lifts – Improving patient safety
- Bodyweight supported gait training – Providing patients the opportunity to trial over-ground ambulation in a safe, supported manner
- New waiting area - Increasing patients’ comfort

- New check-in area -Increasing patients’ access to the clinic
- Private treatment room – Providing patient privacy during treatment, if needed
- Wheelchair clinic room
- Wii with flat screen TV

With the updated gym and new layout, group exercise class, run by the rehab staff, is now offered in the afternoons.



SCI Education is Paramount

The comprehensive training our Spinal Cord Injury Team receives and provides is just one example of what sets us apart. We are committed to educating spinal cord injured Veterans, staff and the greater community with the most current information related to the research, care and, rehabilitation of patients with Spinal Cord Injury. We consistently seek out educational programs and willingly share the knowledge learned. It is truly our privilege to continue providing education to spinal cord injured Veterans as well as staff who interface with the SCI Veterans in the inpatient, outpatient and community setting.

<p>2011 Academy of Spinal Cord Injury Professionals Annual Conference and Expo September 5-7, 2011, Las Vegas, NV</p>	<p>Summit 2011 + EXPO: Delivering Excellence Achieving State of the Art Health Care September 16-18 2011, Orlando FL</p>	<p>Spinal Cord Injury Medicine 20th Educational Symposium October 28, 2011, West Roxbury, MA</p>
		
<p>Pictured Left to Right: Vidya Jayawardena, MD, Maggie Budd, PhD, and Melissa Stone, MA</p>	<p>Pictured Left to Right in Back: Christine Azevedo, RN, Jeanine Penzo, LICSW, Kelley Nunes, RN, Nancy Connors, RN, Sunil Sabharwal, MD, Carla Tukis, RN, Ellen Zhan, MD, Kelly Skinner, NP, and Dominic Foo, MD Pictured in Front: Shirley Jackson, LICSW</p>	<p>Pictured Left to Right: Beth Tammaro, RN, Sunil Sabharwal, MD, Tom Cunningham, PA, Fred Kanter, MD, and Michael Lawson, Director, VA BHCS</p>

With High Honors



Barbara Cooper, PhD

Congratulations go out to one of our Clinical Neuropsychologists, Barbara Cooper, PhD. Barbara is the recipient of The Navy's Meritorious Civilian Service Award. This is awarded to civilian employees in the Department of the Navy for meritorious service or contributions resulting in high value or benefits for the Navy or the Marine Corps. This award is the third highest Navy civilian award.

Dr. Cooper worked as a staff psychologist at the Naval Hospital, Great Lakes, Illinois (1994-2007) and as Division Head, Great Lakes Naval Health Clinic (2007-2010).

Currently, Dr. Cooper works at the VA Boston HCS, West Roxbury Campus. In addition to assessing inpatients and outpatients for their annual check-up, she meets with SCI veterans and/or their spouses for individual counseling.

Every Tuesday at 1:00pm, Dr. Cooper leads a group for SCI inpatients and outpatients at the West Roxbury Campus. The group provides a forum for SCI patients to share information and concerns related to living with a disability (e.g., travel, self-advocacy, sleep and energy) and also provides training in using relaxation and imagery to relieve pain and tension and to facilitate sleep.



CAREGIVER TIP - IT IS "OK" TO ASK FOR HELP

The winter months are conducive to caregivers trying to "do it all". In addition to caring for their loved ones, they are also managing holiday celebrations, snowstorms, power outages as well as the season's illnesses.

It is important for a caregiver to remember that accepting offered help or asking for assistance from others is NOT a sign of weakness. It also does NOT make the Veterans and caregivers a burden to friends and family who are very willing to assist with errands, making meals, shoveling snow or anything else that might be needed.

Caregivers must remember to pace themselves as they and their loved ones will benefit in the end.

For caregiver assistance contact: Jeanine Penzo LICSW, Phone: 857-203-6498, email: Jeanine.Penzo@va.gov



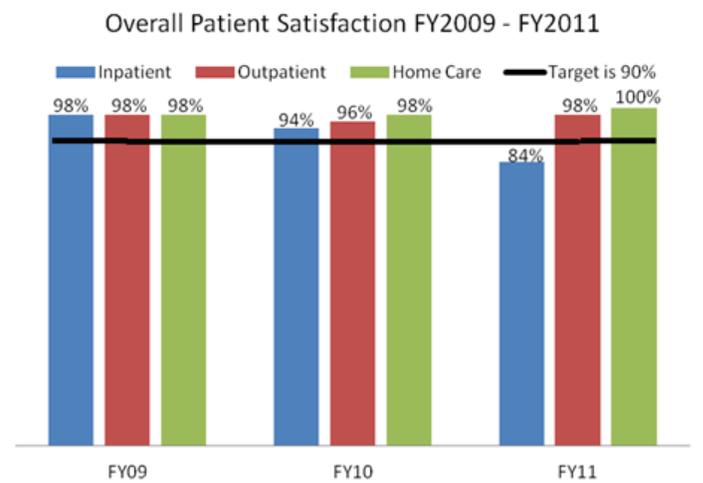
VA Boston Healthcare System
1400 VFW Parkway
West Roxbury, MA 02132
800-865-3384
<http://www.boston.va.gov>
Facebook: VA Boston Healthcare System

Veteran Veteran
1 Veteran Way
Boston, MA 02122

Patient Feedback

The SCI/D Program continuously monitors the satisfaction of our patients with our various programs, Inpatient, Outpatient and Home Care. We certainly appreciate the time our patients take to complete satisfaction surveys because they allow us to see our services through the eyes of our patients.

Shown to the right are the average satisfaction results for each of our programs from FY2009-FY2011. Our goal is to remain over 90%. When answering surveys, patients often provide comments on the care they receive. These comments are used when we evaluate our programs and as we plan for the future.



The VA Boston HCS SCI/D Team Wishes
All of Our Patients and Their Loved Ones
A Happy and Healthy 2012



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