

Volume V III Issue 2

Newsletter Date  
March 31, 2007

# The Beacon

*James A. Haley VA Hospital  
Rehab Quarterly Newsletter*



## JUBILEE SAILING TRUST

Jst.uk.org



For many people with a variety of physical disabilities, the thought of being able to participate in an action packed holiday is just a dream from the past. Many vacation companies and organizations claim they are fully accessible for people in wheelchairs and other disabilities, but they frequently are lacking the most basic needs, facilities, and understanding.

I recently found an organization that understands and was created to serve the needs of the handicapped. Jubilee Sailing Trust is a charity based organization based out of the United Kingdom that currently has two tall sailing schooners' in operation, one's the Lord Nelson and the other's the Tenacious. JST is the only organization in the world that not only welcomes but caters to people with handicaps. These "barefoot cruise" style holidays have 50% of the working crew with a wide variety of handicaps.

The Lord Nelson sails primarily within European waters, but the Tenacious sails the Caribbean. This past February, I decided to put myself to the test and boarded the Tenacious in Antigua for a ten day sailing adventure. I had never set foot on a sail boat, most especially not one 177 feet long, so let's just leave it that I was a tad apprehensive. If you are looking for a sailing cruise like you see advertised where you lay in the sun being served tropical drinks and eating the finest foods in the world, you might want to keep in mind that on this cruise ship you will likely be one of the crew making those drinks and working in the galley preparing the food and serving it to your new mates. You are the crew! Every duty involved sailing a tall ship was carried out by our crew of forty "mates", of which only eight were permanent crew. The rest of us signed up for the challenging holiday.

Our crew included three people with Multiple Sclerosis, one with Cerebral Palsy, one with developmental disabilities, one with a Traumatic Brain Injury, two with Spinal Chord injuries, and one 90 year old legally blind lady that wanted to try her sea legs for her birthday. And yes, these ships are set up for the blind with voice activated equipment. Four mates used manual wheelchairs. There were five wheelchair elevators throughout the ship, and the "heads" were setup with pulley systems for toileting and showering. The only limitations they have on wheelchairs is that they cannot accommodate electric wheelchairs or scooters. All crew members with handicaps were paired up with their own mate whose job was to assist as needed. Now, just because you had one specific mate by no means stopped any of the rest of the crew from jumping in to help anytime.



The duties of sailing a tall ship were varied, but while being assigned to your crew, those with handicaps were never asked to work beyond their abilities. You were not assigned duties that you could not physically carry out, and if you felt it was too much for you, others would assist you in any way needed. It was up to the person with the handicap to decide just how far they wanted to test their own limits. I know that some people with a handicap never like to accept that they do indeed have physical limitations. I speak from experience when I tell you that one day on the trip I pushed myself way to hard trying to do everything. I got to the point that my watch leader made me sit in a wheelchair for the rest of the day for safety. That night I was scheduled for midnight watch duty, and as I was getting ready I was told that my changed duty for the night was sleeping. His not so subtle way of telling me to "back off of myself". Even then, you can not imagine the exhilaration you can experience when you accomplish something you no longer believed possible.

As I said in the beginning, Jubilee Sailing Trust is a registered charity in the U.K. They are funded by private donations as well as from other charities and organizations. The fees charged for the non-handicapped crew are far lower than our American run companies, but for those of us that are handicapped, they offer the chance for additional discounts. The Tena-cious has finished their Caribbean season for this year, but I am already starting plans to sail again when they return next December. Take a few minutes to check out their web site at [www.jst.uk.org](http://www.jst.uk.org). It's an adventure of a lifetime.

Steve Wilson  
Recreation Therapist



## JAHVA and Bioness Inc Partner on Breakthrough Technology For Stroke & Neurological Patients

Occupational Therapists at JAHVA are excited about their participation in the Bioness™ training session. They attended two full days sponsored by the VA facility to master the use of this new prosthesis. Now therapists can use sophisticated technology to help stroke and other neurological patients to regain hand control and to grasp objects. Tasks that some stroke victims believed to be almost impossible.

The prosthesis consists of a soft polymer fitting that rests over the patient's hand and forearm. Embedded in the device are five surface electrodes that stimulate muscles in the hand and wrist. A microprocessor allows the user to program the device with a series of exercises customized for each patient.

Clinical trials have been initiated to facilitate return of function for patients in the acute phase of recovery following stroke and brain injury, as well as for select patients whose injuries are old.

## Brain Injury Rehabilitation Community Outreach Project

**Staff members of the James A. Haley VA Hospital's Traumatic Brain Injury Rehabilitation and Spinal Cord Injury Programs organized a collection of monies for the purchase of bicycle helmets. Twenty bicycle helmets and thirty sport helmets were donated to The Children's Home of Tampa, a local organization that provides care for struggling families and children seeking the comfort of a loving family. The helmets**



Tampa VA rehabilitation staff members Jessica Garrett, on left, and Evelyn Mack, on right, present helmets to Lynn Hoy, Director of Development, for The Children's Home.

**were personally delivered by rehab program team members.**

**This has become an annual donation of bicycle helmets to The Children's Home. This community outreach project began a few years ago in an effort to promote brain injury awareness and prevention. This year's project was embraced by the Spinal Cord Injury team as well. Just another great outcome from the Tampa VA!**

# Amputee Support Group

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**What:** This group is open to Amputees, their family, friends, and interested professionals. Guidelines and structure of the group are aligned with the Amputee Coalition of America.

**Where:** James A. Haley VA Hospital  
Room 2B-258

**When:** The 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday of each month @ 7:00 pm

**Why:** Amputees need fellow amputees with whom to learn and to share experiences. Peer support is a major step in a healthy recovery.



**For more information:  
contact Jim Switzer, Amputee Case Manager  
972 – 2000 x 4576**



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The Beacon

James A. Haley VA Hospital  
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13000 Bruce B. Downs Blvd.



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[WWW1.VA.GOV/VISN8/TAMPA/PMRS](http://WWW1.VA.GOV/VISN8/TAMPA/PMRS)

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