

VOL. 1 ISSUE 2

VASTRA TRibune

The Virginia State Therapeutic Recreation Association Newsletter

Welcome

Welcome to the second edition of the VASTRA Tribune! We are so thankful that the VASTRA community has kept this newsletter a tradition. Within this newsletter you will hear from TR Professionals like Dr. Wayne Pollock, Ms. Kristen Spencer, Ms. Mariellen Mory Combs, and Dr. Ann Bailey. Alongside this, you will be reading about Radford University student's integration with Eastern Montgomery Public schools. This program is amongst many that give our TR Professionals the hands on experience that they need. Additionally, you will be reading about the benefits of Mindfulness Meditation in the TR field. As always, we want this newsletter to have material that can adequately fit ALL areas of the TR community. This edition was written and published by students at Radford University (RU) in the therapeutic recreation program.



From top left: Rachel Millard, Makeda Peace, Kayla Robinson, Kristen Goodman, Angela Cuba, Danny Luu, Alex McPherson, Kate Carpino, Laurel DeChristopher, and Kara Coffey.
From bottom left: Faith Roop, Alexis Barmoh, Mary Thomas, Tara Fanning, and Karla Colina.
Not pictured: Courtney Underwood.

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INSIGHTS FROM TR PROFESSIONALS

BY MAKEDA PEACE, MARY THOMAS, DANNY LUU & COURTNEY UNDERWOOD



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Therapeutic Recreation Services
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What advice do you have to give aspiring Therapeutic Recreation professionals?

"Figure out what you are passionate about, learn as much about that particular subject as possible, and find a way to share it with the people you serve. *If you love you what you do, it will be apparent to your participants and coworkers.* This is why joining an organization like VASTRA is so important for new professionals" -Ms. Spencer.

What made you choose your presentation topic for this year's conference?

I served as a co-chair (2009-2010) and chair (2011-2018) of the ATRA Ethics Committee for the past 9 years. Along with colleague, Nancy Montgomery, I authored/edited Guidelines for the Ethical Practice of Recreational Therapy (2018) and have presented on ethics at numerous state, regional and national recreational therapy conferences. *Ethics is not a sexy topic, but one recreational therapists, students and educators must be vigilant about in our practice*" by Dr. Pollock.

Please tell us about the educational journey you experienced to become a Recreation Therapist.

"I earned my Bachelor of Science Degree in TR from Longwood College and then attended UNC at Chapel Hill. *I had wanted to further my education in a field that complimented TR and earned an MS degree in rehabilitation psychology and counseling.* Through my various internship and work experiences I've had the pleasure of working with a variety of populations." - Ms. Combs

What inspired you to get into this field?

"As a recreation therapist, we can work with diverse groups of clients in a variety of different settings. *I feel the diversity in our field lends itself to opening doors we don't anticipate. Doors that lead to opportunities to advocate for our clients and embark on unexpected personal journeys*" stated Dr. Bailey



EASTERN MONTGOMERY PUBLIC SCHOOLS RECREATION THERAPY WITH RU STUDENT LEARNING

BY KAYLA ROBINSON, RACHEL MILLARD, KRISTEN GOODMAN & ALEX MCPHERSON

The Recreation Therapy program at Radford University partners with Eastern Montgomery Public Schools (EMPS) to give RU students the experience of using what they learn in a hands on environment. Students are offered the opportunity to work one on one with preschool students at Eastern Montgomery Elementary School in Katie Newman’s blended classroom or with an individual who has graduated from Eastern Montgomery High School to help transition from high school to a more independent lifestyle through the On Campus Transition Program (OCTP) offered by RU.

Students plan and implement interventions for their clients and are able to see the outcomes

and improvement from each activity throughout the semester.

Having this opportunity for hands on learning gives the Recreation Therapy students at Radford University an in depth look at the duties and responsibilities of a Recreation Therapist. Practicing these skills helps the students become better prepared to enter the field and advance at a quicker pace. This gives students a real life experience in Recreation Therapy before entering into the work field.

Each Recreation Therapy student is partnered with a student for the semester and is responsible for designing and implementing

educational and therapeutic activities to benefit their student academically, socially, and behaviorally.

This one on one attention is extremely beneficial to the students receiving the assistance as it helps them productively function in the regular classroom setting as well as providing extra academic support.

The student’s parents, teachers, and other school officials have continued to see a positive improvement in their students through the benefits of therapeutic interventions provided by RU’s Recreation Therapy students.



Spotlight: **THE PIONEERS OF EMPS RECREATION THERAPY PROGRAM**

Dr. James Newman and Mrs. Katie Newman provided the ability for RU students to exercise therapeutic recreation in a school setting. Both professors are responsible for introducing Radford University to the Eastern Montgomery Elementary and High School. Dr. James Newman

“*RT students who participate in these programs feel more confident and knowledgeable upon the completion of working with the program*”

is the Recreational Therapy Coordinator at Radford University and handles the “On-Campus Transition Program,” which merges Radford University and EMHS students. Mrs. Katie Newman is responsible for merging Radford University RCPT students with her EMES preschool students.

WHY MINDFULNESS MEDITATION?

BY ALEXIS BARMOH, KATE CARPINO, LAUREL DECHRISTOPHER & TARA FANNING

Mindfulness Meditation is defined as a psychological process that brings an individual's attention in the present. Mindfulness meditation can be used for various populations including individuals with PTSD, substance abuse disorder, ADHD, and a plethora of others. A study called "Mind-Body Therapy" for Military Veterans with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder: A Systematic Review, was conducted on military veterans with PTSD who participated in mindfulness meditation. PTSD is a psychiatric disorder which causes mental, emotional and behavioral disturbances which has an increased impact on those who served in the Middle East. The indicated study "brought to light the invisible wounds that PTSD can cause" (Cushing & Braun, 2017).

The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders version 5, explains the identification of PTSD which includes "a history of traumatic events and the portrayal of symptoms from each of these clusters: re-experiencing symptoms, hyper arousal symptoms and avoidance symptoms"; therefore, horrendous combat events are common occurrences and can trigger symptoms (Cushing & Braun, 2017). Additionally, this study reported barriers that soldiers experience while seeking treatment.

These barriers include "feelings of shame, public stigma and stigma from a service members unit (Cushing & Braun, 2017)."

Mindfulness Meditation can serve as an advantage to individuals who don't want to seek out traditional treatments.

Benefits of Mindfulness Meditation include improvement of well-being, improvement of physical health and improvement of mental health. There are many techniques used to practice meditation but the goal is to achieve a state of alertness and to gain attention to thoughts and sensations. Due to unpleasant thoughts and memories, individuals with PTSD may have a hard time focusing their attention on what matter most in their lives. There are several documented benefits of Mindfulness Meditation some in which include: improvement of awareness, being present and beginner's mind. Improvement of awareness brings an individual's attention on the things around them and inside of them such as sights/sounds or thoughts/feelings. This can bring acknowledgment to a situation or situations in the present rather than past experiences which may cause rumination.

Mindfulness Meditation also brings forth new perspectives on an individual's mental outlook on life. Preconceived notions that may ultimately prevent an individual from seeing true experiences is seemingly drowned out by the component of openness.

This can be referred to as the beginners mind. Thoughts and

emotions from those individuals with PTSD can determine how they perceive and respond to the outside world which can be a distraction from new experiences. One practice includes: finding a comfortable place to lay or sit with your back straightened and tension released from your shoulders, close your eyes, focus attention on breathing, bring attention to the movement of your belly, continue to focus attention on the full experience of breathing, notice the wandering of the mind (pay attention to what it was and gently bring your focus back to breathing), continue as long as needed. The average time for the mind to get settled is around 20 minutes. Mindfulness is seemingly dose-related, which means the more it's done, the better the result.

The results of this study found improvements in PTSD symptoms between control and intervention groups. Mindfulness Meditation seemingly reduced the severity of PTSD symptoms associated with combat. Mindfulness is being used in rehabilitation centers, fitness centers, nursing homes and even universities. Clubs and organizations are being established on college campuses with Mindfulness Meditation as the primary objective. Students with depression, anxiety and addictions are turning to Mindfulness as an alternative. Through this non-conventional technique, many populations are given a chance to examine life through different a lens.

Reference:

Cushing, R.E., & Braun, K.L. (2017) Mind-Body Therapy for Military Veterans with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder: A systematic review, 24(2), 106-114. doi:10.1089/acm.297.0176





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Promoting the profession of
Therapeutic Recreation and
Therapeutic Recreation
professionals in the
Commonwealth of Virginia.

You're Invited

2019 INTERVENTIONS CONFERENCE

**MAY 20- 21, 2019
LONGWOOD UNIVERSITY**

**More information can be found online at
<https://www.trinterventions.com/events>**

**The conference is sponsored by VASTRA and
Longwood University's Therapeutic
Recreation Alumni Practitioner Advisory
Council.**



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