

## Service for Soldiers

### UM-FLINT/VA HELPING AREA VETS

BY J.P. RIBNER ♦ PHOTOGRAPHY BY MIKE NADDEO



LOYD CASE, JASON HAMILTON



Sitting in a chair, Lloyd Case slowly extends his leg out in front of him before bending it back to its starting position. He smiles, proud of the level of mobility he has achieved following recent knee replacement surgery. As a Vietnam veteran, Lloyd is able to receive free physical therapy services at the University of Michigan - Flint and it's helped rid him of pain. His is just one of many success stories that can be attributed to the cooperation between the University and the Veterans Affairs Ann Arbor Healthcare System (VA).

"After my surgery, my doctor said I would need physical therapy," said Lloyd. "I told him that I wanted to be treated by Jason Hamilton at the Urban Health and Wellness Center." Having had sessions with Jason at the Center

before, Lloyd was a firm believer in its services. Cleared by his doctor to return to Jason's care, Lloyd endured two therapy sessions each day and was pain-free in a matter of weeks, able to return to work as a machinist – a job he once had to vacate due to the toll it took on his knee.

"They call me the 'poster boy' for this place because I've done so well!" Lloyd laughed.

Lloyd is one of many Genesee County veterans who

utilize the free physical therapy services at the Urban Health and Wellness Center. "It's extremely valuable for us to have community partners who are dedicated to helping offer the best care for veterans," says Dr. Clinton Greenstone, VA Associate Chief of Staff Ambulatory Care. "While we provide a host of services in Ann Arbor, having affiliates throughout the state means veterans can receive the same quality of care closer to their homes."

Physical therapy services for vets are offered at the Urban Health and Wellness Center located in the University's William S. White Building. Jason Hamilton and Tomika Wiley, both graduates of the UM-Flint's physical therapy program, treat an average of 15-20 area veterans each month. While some of their patients are older veterans who saw action in Vietnam, Korea or World War II, many of their patients are in their 40s and 50s, and there have even been a few younger vets coming home from Afghanistan and Iraq who've sought treatment at the Center.

Jason recently helped an active-duty vet who needed therapy following surgery for an injury sustained in the line of duty. "I didn't ask too many questions," he explained, "but I was able to gather that this patient was in some type of Special Forces unit. After a couple weeks of treatment, he told me that he was feeling about 98 percent better so I probably wouldn't be seeing him again, and that's how we parted."

Whether young or old, Jason and Tomika say there's no better feeling than giving back to those who've put their lives at risk for this country. Tomika added that the Center's patients also are very thankful for the treatment they receive and are willing to go the extra mile to get well. "They know that we care about them," she explained, "and they thank us all the time for the work we do. Just being able to give back is all the thanks we need, but it still feels good to hear it sometimes."

In addition to the services provided at the Urban

Health and Wellness Center, UM-Flint also aids both students and veterans as part of its physical therapy curriculum. Students majoring in PT have the opportunity to visit various community-based outreach centers and VA hospitals around the state. "This provides them with chances to utilize what they've learned by helping veterans with their rehabilitation needs," said Jamie Haines, PT, UM-Flint Associate Director of Clinical Education and Assistant Clinical Professor. "This is just another way we can help veterans by bringing the treatment to them."

If the success of the affiliation between UM-Flint's physical therapy program and the VA is any indication,

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*"We're always looking for ways to expand our services to veterans, and having strong community partners such as the University of Michigan - Flint is a great way to achieve this."*

*Dr. Clinton Greenstone, VA Associate Chief of Staff Ambulatory Care*

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Dr. Clinton Greenstone says he'd like to see more affiliations between the two organizations. The two are currently discussing similar partnerships with UM-Flint's nurse practitioner and physician assistant programs. "We're always looking for ways to expand our services to veterans," Greenstone said, "and having strong community partners such as the University of Michigan - Flint is a great way to achieve this."

Many Americans believe that this country does little to help those who've served to protect it. Lodged in our collective subconscious is the image of a military veteran, shabby and bearded, standing beside the expressway holding a sign that reads, "Anything will help." What we need to notice are all the veterans who are leading happy and productive lives, and those utilizing the services designed to assist them in that goal. If the efforts of UM-Flint and the VA have taught anything, it's that everyone benefits when a community pulls together. It's not only the least we can do, it's also the right thing to do. ♦

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