

SFVAMC Advice Nurse to Compete in Moscow

By night Barry McKeown, RN, is an experienced telephone advice nurse at the San Francisco VA Medical Center (SFVAMC). By day he is a competitive kayaker and canoeist, winning several first places in races—enough to earn him a place on the US Paracanoe Team, where he'll travel to compete next week at the International Canoe Federation (ICF) Paracanoe Sprint World Championship in Moscow.

Barry was raised in Lanikai, Hawaii, and was known for his abilities as a world class surfer, paddler and open ocean swimmer. After a serving in the US Navy for 2 years, and a 20-year career as an EMT paramedic in Hawaii, Barry woke up one day in a hospital room following a severe car accident, finding himself paralyzed from the waist down.

"I pressed the call button and insisted that the nurse get a doctor to tell me how he was going to fix this, take care of this, we have to fix this!" says Barry, only to gradually understand that there could be no "fixing" of what had occurred.

He found solace in the therapy



pool during rehabilitation sessions, immediately feeling the same communion with the water as he had as a child growing up in Hawaii. "I love swimming. Water keeps me in balance, body and soul," says Barry. "It became my most important coping mechanism, allowing me to regain my strength and independence as well as my desire to rebuild my life."

Realizing he could no longer continue his duties as an EMT, he applied for nursing school. "Nothing came easy, as I was turned down at the University of Hawaii in 1999—they said they couldn't make an exception for a paraplegic in the program," says Barry. "Only I didn't want to be an exception, I just wanted a chance."

He then applied to Hawaii Pacific University where he was accepted

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New Bauer's Bus Stops

Effective Friday, August 1, Bauer's will be relocating several of its pick-up and drop-off locations.

These changes include:

Ferry Building: (NO CHANGE) PICK UP/DROP OFF on the south side of the Ferry Building.

Transbay Terminal: New PICK UP/DROP OFF will be Howard Street near Fremont Street.

CalTrain: New PICK UP/DROP OFF will be 4th Street just before Townsend St. (near Walgreens).

Civic Center: New afternoon DROP OFF ONLY will be 8th & Market (near Chase Bank).

Golden Gate: New morning PICK UP ONLY will be the Merchant Ave. parking lot.

The changes are mandated by the City of San Francisco as part of the SFMTA's Commuter Shuttles Pilot Program. We will provide you with updates and changes as they become available.

Burial Payments Automated for Surviving Spouses

New burial regulations will allow VA to automatically pay the maximum amount allowable under law to most surviving spouses more quickly and efficiently, without the need for an application, using information already in VA systems.

The burial allowance for a non-service-connected death is \$300, and \$2,000 for a death connected to military service. For more information visit: www.benefits.va.gov/compentation/claims-special-burial.asp.

August is Hand Hygiene Month

Washing your hands is the simplest, most effective way to reduce the chance of catching infections and also something that SFVAMC staff take seriously.

Don't be afraid to ask about hand hygiene practices in the facility. You have the right to ask for information and to check if best practices are in place. This can help improve health care delivery.

Feel free to thank your doctor, nurse, or other health care worker when you see them cleaning their hands, before touching you or any critical site (e.g., catheter, wound dressing, or drainage tube).

Keeping hands clean through improved hand hygiene is one of the most important steps we can take to avoid getting sick and spreading germs to others.

Tips for effective hand washing:

- Lather your hands by rubbing them together with soap and water.
- Be sure to lather the backs of your hands, between your fingers, and under your nails.
- Scrub your hands for at least 20 seconds.
- Rinse your hands well under clean, running water.
- Dry your hands using a clean towel, or air dry them.



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and fitted with an electric stand-up chair to allow him to complete his pediatric rounds. At his graduation ceremony he was presented with a Persistence Award as one of the few, if not the first, paraplegic nurses in America.

Barry also became a competitive paracanoe and kayak racer. "I was fitted with a one-of-a-kind canoe with a special chair, strapping system and balancing mechanism fashioned from a small surfboard attached to the outrigger canoe I race," he says.

Barry trains and coaches with the Benicia Outrigger Canoe Club in Benicia, California, racing with both disabled and able-bodied competitors. He has placed 1st in many competitions.

Recently he returned from the Team USA canoe/kayak trials in Lake Placid, New York, excelling again and allowing him to represent the United States in the ICF Paracanoe Sprint World Championships in Moscow from August 6-10.

Aside from racing, this Vallejo resident and father of three says he enjoys his job as an SFVAMC Advice Nurse: "I love the VA and I love giving back. The VA has given me a lot. Camaraderie with other Veterans is there for life. Veterans call the Advice Nurse, and once they learn I'm a Veteran, they open up."

He also offers sage advice for others who are injured or have challenges: "You can do anything. Find something you like, and you have to find a way to do it. We're not disabled; we're just injured."

