

THE  
University of Vermont  
MEDICAL CENTER

trauma survivors  
**network**  
provided by **ATS**

# SURVIVOR NEWS

Newsletter for Resilience and Rebuilding

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## SELF-CARE DAY IS JULY 24TH



## Engaging in Self-Care

According to the World Health Organization, July 24th is Self-Care Day because self-care can be practiced ‘7 days a week/24 hours a day.’ Self-care is taking the time to find and do things that help you live well and can improve your physical and mental health. Even small acts of self-care can have a big impact on your daily life! If you need more support to engage in self-care, reach out to your primary care provider for assistance or referral.

What are examples of self-care that can benefit traumatic injury survivors?

- Find healthy outlets for acknowledging and expressing your feelings, such as journaling, creative art, talking with a friend or loved one, attending therapy, or engaging in meditation or mindfulness.
- Eat foods that make you feel good. You can check out previous newsletters for how nutrition can play a role in chronic pain management. You want to find foods that make your mind and body feel better long term and not just in the moment. Avoid using eating or drinking alcohol as a coping mechanism for stress, depression, or boredom.
- Drink plenty of water. Dehydration can cause symptoms that mimic brain injuries or PTSD such as headaches, dizziness, lightheadedness, fatigue, or irritability. Tips for staying hydrated include keeping a water bottle with you at all times or eating foods high in water content such as cucumber, watermelon, and broth.
- Make Sleep a priority! Traumatic injuries can negatively impact your sleep, so creating a routine around good sleep hygiene can be an important part of self-care. This can include avoiding screen time before bed or creating a soothing soundtrack to play before bed.
- Practice gratitude. It can be hard during recovery to think of things you are grateful for, but identifying them and reminding yourself of them daily can retrain your brain to focus on positives and cope better with stress and trauma.
- Do something that brings you joy! Depending on your injury, engaging in your favorite hobby or sport may not be feasible at the moment. Have a friend or family member help you try out new hobbies or activities until you find one that sparks joy for you.

## Trauma Awareness Month!

### An Overview of May

Life After Trauma: Celebrating Survivors is an annual event hosted the University of Vermont Medical Center Trauma Survivors Network to celebrate survivors and all those who supported them during their recovery. The event was hosted hybrid style this year with audience members welcome to attend in-person or virtually on Trauma Survivors Awareness Day, Wednesday, May 17th.

The highlight of the event was the Survivor Stories presented by Dr. Sue Shaffer and Frank Patrick Papillo. I wish I could type out their stories word for word! What I love the most about the presenters is they really pushed the concept of what it means to be a survivor of traumatic injury. There is no one way a survivor should look and what you do after your injury is both a unique and shared experience. If you are an amputee, I highly recommend you check out the support group started by Dr. Shaffer, Vermont Active Amputee, by e-mailing [VTActiveAmputees@Gmail.com](mailto:VTActiveAmputees@Gmail.com).

Part of the event is an award ceremony to recognize Community Champion for Trauma and Excellence in Trauma Care. Both awards are to recognize those individuals who go above and beyond to treat or prevent traumatic injury. This year, three UVMHC nurses were recognized with these awards. Christopher Doran and Jesse Hanson received the Excellence in Trauma Care awards. Christopher's nomination highlighted his work leading the trauma quality assurance program, his support of the Nurse Trauma Fellowship, and his dedication to patients. Jesse's nomination emphasized how his calm demeanor, compassion, and extensive knowledge make him an amazing provider for the neuro trauma patients that come under his care. Allison Whittington received the Community Champion for Trauma award. Her nomination focused on her dedication for advocating for support, education, and opportunity to improve for ED trauma nurses. Despite staff shortages and burnout, Allison rallied those around her. She also was instrumental in bringing Advanced Trauma Care for Nurses to UVMHC. The other winner of the Community Champion for Trauma is Jess Lukas, Aquatics Director at the Greater Burlington YMCA. Jess is passionate about reducing drownings and water-related injuries. She is currently the committee chair for the Vermont Water Safety Action Committee and host the Camp Splash free swim and water safety lesson program for youth in Vermont.

This is the first year where three of the four award winners have all been UVMHC staff! We are grateful to be able to recognize and honor such amazing staff this year at Life After Trauma.

Additionally, our staff participated in the national Walk to Rebuild on Tuesday, May 9th. Staff from across the hospital came together to share their messages of support to survivors before walking laps around the hospital to promote awareness of the program and all we hope to achieve for our survivors over the next year.





## What is Reiki?

Laurel Audy, RN, Reiki Master



Reiki (rei – universal; ki – vital life force energy) is a complementary health approach. This practice is based on an Eastern medicine belief that living beings have energy fields that support their health and vitality. There are numerous types of reiki, but the most popular is Usui Shiki Ryoho, which was founded by Dr. Mikao Usui in the late 1800's in Japan. Reiki is reported as calming and relaxing for the recipient (client) which in turn can contribute to the person's overall sense of wellbeing.

Reiki is delivered by a practitioner who has received at least a Level 1 attunement (out of 3), taught by a Reiki Master Teacher.

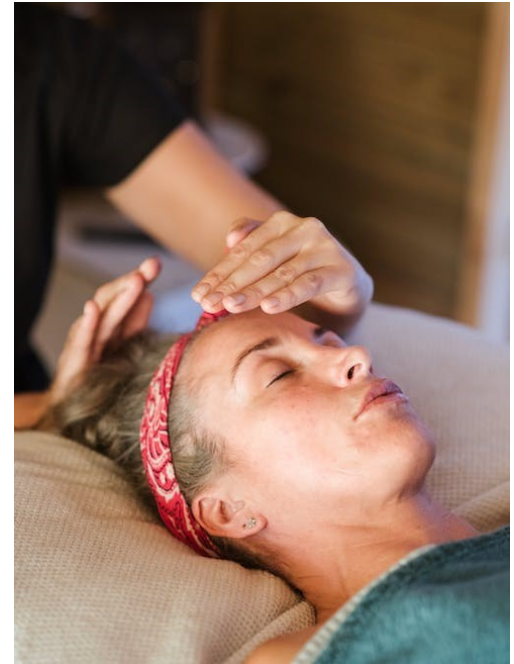
Reiki can be offered in different settings, including offering reiki through space during a *distance reiki session*. But especially pleasing for the client is a session provided in person in a quiet, comfortable environment.

Remaining fully clothed, the client can be in a sitting or a lying position and when lying, can be positioned face up or face down. The practitioner uses various hand placements along the client's body with a light touch or by hovering just over the body. The client often reports feelings of warmth and relaxation. The client can be awake or asleep, and it is common for the client to fall asleep during a session.

For the practitioner during the session, the focus is on the intent of goodness for supporting the client's wellness.

After the session, the client may report feelings of being serene. Sometimes a client will report feeling energized, but in a grounded manner. This feeling can last from minutes to hours. Sessions are often 30-60 minutes.

To learn more or to find a practitioner, check out the Vermont Reiki Association at [www.vermontreikiassociation.org](http://www.vermontreikiassociation.org)



## Meet the Trauma Team:

Jess Langer, BSN, RN-C, Performance Improvement Coordinator

My name is Jess Langer and I recently joined the trauma department as a Performance Improvement Coordinator. I have worked at UVMHC since 1999. I was a medical assistant while in nursing school and then spent my years working on Baird 6, which is a very dynamic med-surg and trauma unit. I was a staff nurse, care coordinator, and most recently the Assistant Nurse Manager on Baird 6. As the PI coordinator I will perform comprehensive audits to develop standards, data sources, and tools. I will provide education to staff and patients, and ensure resolution of issues and participate in quality improvement projects that impact the trauma team. I am looking forward to learning all things trauma and being a part of this team.



## Upcoming Events

### Caregiver Retreat with Brain Injury Alliance of Vermont

Please note this event is open for all caregivers and the person they care for, it is not limited to survivors with brain injuries.



Brain Injury Alliance of Vermont is hosting a Caregiver Retreat on July 14th at Sugarbush Resort. This event is free and includes sign ups for different activities ranging from water sports to cooking classes. This is especially a great event for parents of traumatic injury survivors, such as older children or teens. Discounted hotel rooms are also available if you want to stay over the night before the retreat!

Check out the website and reserve your spot today! <https://give.classy.org/biavtcaregivers>  
Have questions? Reach out to Jess Leal, Director of Brain Injury Alliance of Vermont by e-mail at [Jess@BIAVT.org](mailto:Jess@BIAVT.org)



## Call for Volunteers

### Support the Trauma Survivors Network

The University of Vermont Trauma Survivors Network is looking for volunteers to support a variety of programs. You don't have to be a traumatic injury survivor to volunteer! Examples of positions we are looking to fill include:

- Peer Visitor. Peer Visitors meet with people while they are still inpatient after their injury. Peer visitors listen to their concerns, answer questions about their own experience, and provide a sense of connection for trauma survivors.
- Staff for the Survivor News Newsletter. We are looking for writers to submit articles as well as editors.
- Event planning and day of support. We are hoping to expand the offerings of the Trauma Survivors Network in the coming year and need your help to make them a success!!

E-mail [TraumaSurvivors@UVMHealth.org](mailto:TraumaSurvivors@UVMHealth.org) with questions on how to get involved today!

### SURVIVOR NEWS NEWSLETTER FOR RESILIENCE AND REBUILDING

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## Other Resources

Have you joined our Facebook support group? We are working to build an online community of traumatic injury survivors where you can talk, ask questions, and find support and friendship. No matter where you were treated for your injury, you are welcome to join the group! Join by scanning the QR Code.



The UVM Medical Center TSN Family and Friends Facebook support group is now live! This private Facebook group is a place for family and friends of survivors to connect with other individuals and find support and community. You can join by scanning the QR code!

