

The Mirror's VALUABLE TIPS TO HELP YOU ACHIEVE A HEALTHIER LIFESTYLE Guide To Good Health

Task Force 20 Aids Veterans With Free Gym Memberships

BY KAREN GERHARDINGER
MIRROR REPORTER

Every day, 20 veterans are lost through suicide. Sometimes, it's the result of depression or post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) or the feeling of isolation in returning to civilian life.

Understanding the challenges that veterans face, Army veteran Jason Graven decided to do something about it. In 2016, he founded Task Force 20, a nonprofit that provides funds for veterans to "train, compete and survive together."

"The main objective is to stop the suicide pandemic. There's a direct correlation to mental health and exercise," said Graven, a 1998 Anthony Wayne High School graduate who enlisted in the Army shortly after 9/11.

For some veterans, especially those living on a fixed income, finding the funds to pay for a gym membership is out of the question. Task Force 20 raises those funds and works with fitness facilities to provide free memberships for veterans.

In Maumee's Parkway Plaza, Revitalize Fitness founder Stephen Flory displays a wall of military flags above the weight machines, where veterans and first responders were among those working out on a recent Saturday morning. An Army veteran who ended his service as a corporal in 2012 after six years — with one deployment to Afghanistan — Flory knows how odd it feels to return to civilian life after being told what to do for years. He



Revitalize Fitness owner Stephen Flory, Task Force 20 executive director Jason Graven and Marine veteran Harvey Weiss stand in Flory's Maumee gym. Task Force 20 aims to stop the pandemic of suicides among veterans and alleviate the depression and isolation they may experience through arranging free gym memberships. Exercise is proven to impact mental health.

MIRROR PHOTO BY KAREN GERHARDINGER

also wanted the camaraderie that comes with being in the military.

"When I got back, I kept to myself. I met one veteran and we talked for a half-hour. I got more out of talking to him than I did out of hours of counseling. Talking to another veteran — they get it."

When Marine infantry veteran Harvey Weiss relocated to the area from San Diego late last year, he didn't know anyone. While he used to golf to clear his head, Weiss said physical disabilities and long cancer treatments kept him away from the greens and the gym. Task Force 20 was the first military support group

Weiss found, and he was approved to work out at Revitalize.

"With the gym, it's like a newfound love. It replaces what golf used to be for me — it gets me out of my head. It's a nice mental break," said Weiss. "I now work out with a trainer, and it's easier to get out of my social bubble."

For Weiss, having child-care at Revitalize helps eliminate excuses. At the same time, he wants to stay healthy to be around for his kids, he said.

"The ultimate goal is to promote a healthy and active lifestyle and to find solace in others," Graven said. "The vets keep each

other active and share a camaraderie."

That includes checking up on each other's well-being, Flory said. He told of a Vietnam veteran who came daily but was missing one morning. "I called him up to ask if he was OK," Flory said. "He forgot to tell me he had an appointment that morning. This is a community of brotherhood. We check up on each other."

When Graven returned from serving over three years as a military police officer, he was medically discharged due to breathing issues. He earned his bachelor's degree in history and an MBA from The

University of Toledo and moved to Delaware, Ohio, to work for the American Legion Department of Ohio headquarters as the membership coordinator. He now serves as Bowling Green State University's military program coordinator.

As he worked with veterans, he began forming the idea of a nonprofit organization to link them up with resources to keep exercising. One veteran, for example, was granted just 12 visits to a pool for aquatherapy, but she needed much more. Task Force 20 worked with her local YMCA to get her in so that she can continue several days a week.

Veterans can choose which gym or facility works best for them, considering factors such as child care, a pool and proximity to home or work. When veterans have a choice, they're more likely to stick with the program, Graven said.

Saturday, June 27 is PTSD Awareness Day. While Task Force 20 doesn't ask its clients to disclose any mental health issues, Graven understands that some may be dealing with it.

"PTSD can come in many forms. You didn't necessarily need to be in Iraq or Afghanistan," he said, adding that women who have experienced sexual assault in the military also deal with PTSD.

Initially, Graven planned a Task Force 20 5K and Veterans Resource Fair for Saturday, June 27 in Whitehouse, but due to the pandemic, that's been postponed a year to June 27, 2021. He's gathering veterans' organizations and businesses to be a part of the one-stop resource for vets.

This Saturday won't be wasted, though, as veterans and supporters can still take part in a virtual 5K to raise funds for the organization. Ideally, teams of four will walk, run or roll to the finish line together.

Any funds raised locally remain local, even as Task Force 20 has chapters in Central Ohio and Northeast Indiana as well as Northwest Ohio.

For more information, visit tf20.org, e-mail contact@tf20.org or visit Facebook.

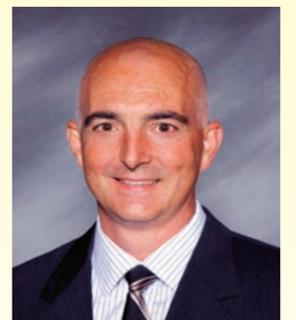



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HEALTH CARE CALENDAR

Alzheimer's Association Offers Virtual Classes

The Alzheimer's Association Northwest Ohio Chapter will present several virtual educational programs to help the community and families impacted by the disease.

These presentations cover a variety of topics and occur at different times during the day via videoconferencing to allow individuals to participate in the convenience of their homes. They will discuss safety issues in the home, communication, COVID-19 challenges, long-distance caregiving and information on the disease itself. The programs run about an hour and are very helpful for anyone experiencing signs of memory loss or their family members who may be concerned.

Scheduled programs include:

Friday, June 26 – Healthy Living for Your Brain & Body, 6:30 p.m.

Monday, June 29 – Simple Communication Tips for Caregivers, 1:00 p.m.

Monday, June 29 – 10 Warning Signs of Alzheimer's, 3:00 p.m.

Tuesday, June 30 – Understanding Alzheimer's and Dementia, 2:00 p.m.

Tuesday, June 30 – Understanding Alzheimer's and Dementia, 3:30 p.m.

Thursday, July 2 – Healthy Living for Your Brain and Body, 3:30 p.m.

All programs are free and open to the public. Registration is required. To register for the program, call (800) 272-3900.

COVID-19 Hotline Answered By Area Nurses

Mercy Health and ProMedica are operating Nurse COVID-19 hotlines to answer medical questions related to the virus from 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. Monday through Friday, in cooperation with the Northwest Ohio Healthcare Emergency Management Coalition and the Lucas County Emergency Operations Center.

The hotline phone numbers are (419) 251-4000 (English only) and (419) 291-5355 (multilingual). After-hours and weekend callers may leave a message, and their calls will be returned on the next business day.

The Ohio Department of Health also operates a COVID-19 hotline. That number is (833) 4-ASK-ODH.

Hospice Offers Virtual Support/Online Resources

Due to the COVID-19 emergency, Hospice of Northwest Ohio is now offering the following virtual and online resources free and open to anyone in the community.

Advance Care Planning – A certified facilitator will assist with completing Advance Directives by guiding participants through a series of questions that consider cultural, spiritual and religious beliefs.

Completed over the phone or by video chat, by appointment only. To make an appointment, call (419) 931-5423 or e-mail acp@sinceracare.org.

Bereavement Services – Virtual bereavement groups and private counseling sessions are available to anyone in the community who is grieving the loss of a loved one.

Contact the hospice bereavement team at (419) 661-4001 to schedule a time for a virtual assessment, which will help determine which group would be most beneficial to you. This will be a time for you to share your story and hear about the bereavement services available at this time.

Caregiver Video Support Series – An educational, easy-to-access series for caregivers who aren't able to follow a schedule or leave home. Each video is less than 10 minutes and is appropriate for professional and family caregivers.

Topics include Stress Management, Advance Care Planning, Busting the Myths of Hospice and Opioids for Shortness of Breath. Request additional topics by e-mailing schambers@hospicenwo.org.

Access videos at www.hospicenwo.org/family-support/caregiverassistance-videos.

Chaplain Chatline – During this challenging time, hospice chaplains are available by phone if you have something on your mind and would like to talk or pray. All phone calls are confidential. Please leave a voicemail message if the call is not answered – include callback number – and a chaplain will return the call the next business day.

The Chaplain Chatline number is (567) 331-2309.

To learn more about Hospice of Northwest Ohio, visit www.hospicenwo.org.



Deadlines are at 5:00 p.m. on each Thursday prior to the following Thursday's publication.



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