

# REHAB CONNECTION

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**Meriter's mission is:**  
to heal this day  
to teach for tomorrow  
to embrace excellence always  
to serve our communities—  
for a lifetime of quality health care.

**NEWS FROM YOUR REHABILITATION PARTNERS**  
**Don't Chill Out on Winter Activities**

Winter is in full swing and with that comes snow, ice and the urge to hibernate. It is important for both your physical and mental health to continue regular exercise during the cold winter months. Here are some ideas to keep you active:

**Find motivators:**

- Get a friend involved with your exercise; join an exercise class; vary your exercise activities; set goals and/or keep a journal to see how you are progressing; exercise to music, listen to a book on tape; or watch favorite TV show.

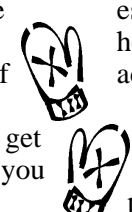
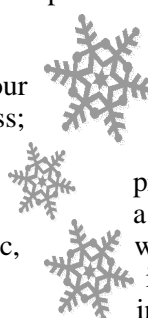
**Join a community group:**

- Many gyms offer short-term memberships for the winter months. You may be able to find a gym that has a warm water pool if the cold weather causes stiffness in your muscles and joints.
- Look for group activities in your community such as Tai chi, dancing or yoga.
- Many local senior centers offer exercise classes at reasonable rates.

**Create your own gym at home:**

- It does not take a lot of money to do simple exercises with basic equipment. Examples include: Use an old milk jug as a weight, filling it with more water to progress the exercise as you become stronger; get a small floor mat to decrease stress on your joints if you are doing exercise involving stepping and especially jumping; get a set of weights or resistance bands.
- Rent exercise videos/DVDs or get books from the library to give you exercise ideas to use at home.

Unfortunately, snow and ice also mean slippery sidewalks and steps. It is important to take extra precautions to




prevent falls and injury. If a vacation to a southern destination is not on your winter schedule, here are some ideas to improve your safety as you stay active in snowy Wisconsin. **1 Wear shoes with good treads.** You can also purchase metal or rubber attachments that Velcro or button onto your shoes or boots. **2 Place non-slip strips on steps and ramps.** **3 Use a cane or walker for additional support.** Metal tip attachments can be connected onto canes to prevent them from slipping. They can be purchased at most medical supply stores or pharmacies. **4 Use good judgment.** Keep sidewalks clean; move slowly; avoid multi-tasking (carrying heavy or large objects when on dangerous or unknown walkways); ask for help. **5 Install handrails in/out of your home.** **6 Use good indoor and outdoor lighting.** **7 Use sand and/or salt on walkways.**


Don't forget to check with your doctor if you are starting a new activity, especially if you have a history of health concerns. As you try new activities or increase the intensity of your workout, remember to listen to your body. It is normal to feel some muscle stiffness, but do not ignore pain or symptoms of health problems. Learn how to monitor your heart rate and be aware of your level of fatigue. Keep your winter active and safe!





## Anticipation is Half the Fun

The winter months can be a time of confinement indoors with little to do but watch TV and dream of spring and summer. Why not stop dreaming and start planning? Planning gives you something to look forward to while helping ensure that your dream trip or hobby actually materializes.

 **If you like nature, fishing, or hiking, reserve a cabin at one of Wisconsin's accessible cabins now for next summer.** Call State Parks of Wisconsin at 608/266-2181 or log on to [www.dnr.state.wi.us/org/land/parks/access/cabin.html](http://www.dnr.state.wi.us/org/land/parks/access/cabin.html) to reserve a State Park cabin. For a catalog of adaptive recreation equipment for the physically challenged, go to [www.AccessTR.com](http://www.AccessTR.com) or call 1-800-634-4351 for [Access to Recreation](#).

 **Start planning your 2006 garden.** [The Able Gardener](#) by Kathleen Yeomans, R.N., is an excellent resource to help overcome the barriers of physical limitation while gardening. Or go online to [www.gonegardening.com](http://www.gonegardening.com) to get ideas geared for disabled gardeners.

 **Try a new hobby, such as scrapbooking or stamping.** Gather your photos and start organizing them into a scrapbook. Take a class at a local scrapbooking store, where you can use equipment for free while you are learning. Keep in touch with friends by "stamping" special pictures and messages on personal greeting cards. Find equipment in department stores that offer craft items, or try a specialty store like *Stamping Jazzy Style* in Madison or *Got 2 Scrap* in Sun Prairie.

 **To stay physically active in the cold weather, join an exercise group geared toward people with physical challenges.** Meriter Hospital offers The Supervised Exercise Program (608/267-6102). Madison School and Community Recreation (608/204-3042) offers a wide range of adult classes from arts and crafts to swimming in the Lapham warm water pool.

**Use your winter to anticipate a busy summer, and be ready for action!**

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## Meriter Sports Medicine - Running, Kicking & Swinging

Meriter's Sports Medicine Physical Therapy Department was very busy in the community in 2004 and 2005 with free public running and soccer clinics, informational golf presentations and orthopedic teaching classes.



Running clinics were offered at Meriter Hospital to the public at no cost. Physicians and physical therapists addressed injury prevention, nutrition and individual evaluations of strength, flexibility and biomechanics for more than 150 participants.

A soccer clinic in August 2005 at Breakaway Sports included three physicians,



one soccer pro and several physical therapists. Nearly 90 participants learned about warm up and cool down activities, goalie skills, childrens' sports injuries, ACL injury prevention, acute knee injury, nutrition and off season training.

The Orthopedic teaching series included 10 weekly talks on the topic of *"What's new in orthopedic and spine care?"* Physical therapists, occupational therapy hand therapists, physicians and pharmacists collaborated to present valuable information on pain prevention, treatment and surgical options.

Look for more events in 2006 that will keep you in top form.



**EMPLOYEES  
OF THE MONTH**

**October**

Mary Wise, Hand Clinic  
Eugene Shvetsky,  
Volunteer

**November**

Beth Kast, Marketing  
Sharon Best, Speech  
Krista Bultmann, PT  
Acute Care  
Stephanie Erickson-  
Brown, PT Neuro  
Carol Harm, OT/Hand  
Clinic  
Louise Joyce, DRC/Stroke  
Karen Mathias,  
Speech/Acute Peds  
Carol Sloniker, PM&R  
Admin.

**Caregiver Appreciation Night**

Caregivers were honored on November 2, 2005 at a National Caregiver Month event held at Meriter Hospital’s Atrium. Sponsors included Dane County Agency on Aging’s “Caring for the Caregiver” program and Meriter Hospital. Dane County funded refreshments and gift certificates for each caregiver. Meriter provided the beautiful facility, the invitations and staff to coordinate the event.

Stroke support group facilitator Louise Joyce opened the event with a welcome. This was followed by a clip from “Thou Shalt Honor”, a video about the role of caregivers produced by PBS. Dr. Gretchen Byfield encouraged the group with a warm and sensitive presentation on being a caregiver. Phil Marklein, a stroke survivor and caregiver for a family member, gave a moving speech from the perspective of someone who has learned to accept as well as provide care. Dr. Byfield and Louise Joyce recognized the 30 caregivers with certificates of appreciation while the stroke survivors cheered on their loved ones. Caregivers also completed a questionnaire to assist Dane County in providing programs to assist the caregiver. Everyone enjoyed appetizers, fresh fruit and a special “Thank You Caregivers” cake.



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**Inpatient Rehab:  
We’re Proud of Our Accomplishments!**

*The Rehab Connection interviewed Dr. William Shannon, Psychiatrist and Kathy Knapp, Therapies Manager for the inpatient Rehab Unit (3North) at Meriter about 2005 accomplishments and 2006 initiatives. These are some of their comments:*

**What would you say are the most important PATIENT SAFETY initiatives that the Rehab Unit undertook in 2005?**

**WS:** We are aligned with the hospital wide initiative of reducing “Level E preventable injuries”. We are proud that we have totally eliminated medication errors related to patient misidentification and we reduced falls significantly.

**KK:** To prevent falls, we have increased the use of the ‘safety net bed’, which allows a patient to turn in bed without restraints or a bed alarm. It also decreases the need for a ‘sitter’, which some patients perceive as threatening. We have installed Velcro belts on all wheelchairs and we tell our patients it is like seatbelts in a moving vehicle.

**How do you feel about the success of these initiatives?**

**WS:** The effort has been very successful. We have improved our awareness of the need to safely manage

the prescription and distribution of medications in the hospital and in the outpatient setting. **KK:** We have seen a decrease in the number of falls that could potentially cause injury. For the last several years, we have had more than 30 falls per year and as of November 2005 we had only 15.

**Tell us about the STAFF SAFETY initiatives that were taken in 2005.**

**KK:** With our aging workforce, we are always looking for ways for staff to work more safely. One physically stressful activity is pulling a patient towards the head of the bed. We have purchased a ‘slider sheet’ to decrease friction and reduce staff back and shoulder injuries. We are joining the other hospital units in looking for assistive devices that improve both staff and patient safety.

*Look for information on orthopedic treatment and the post-stroke Outpatient Clinic in the next issue.*

**REHAB CONNECTION  
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## Patient Revisited Gordon Brigham

Gordon Brigham doesn't remember the first two months of hospitalization for a serious medical condition in February 2005. On ventilation for months, with a feeding tube and a tracheotomy, his condition was serious. His wife, Margaret, prayed every day. "If he can't be better, then please take him home." She feels the medical treatment kept him alive, but she adds, "I believe it was prayers from all over the U.S. that helped make the difference."

Gordon worked hard in therapies. "Physical therapy started out to be the most difficult for me. But as they pushed you, things started to get better." He credits speech therapy with helping him speak again. "I didn't know that the tongue had so much to do with it. But Sharon taught me exercises and I feel I'm talking pretty much the way I used to." Gordon encourages others to "do everything possible" to lead a full life again. "I had the will to get better. I didn't want to be dependent."

"Pops," as his grandson calls him, loves visiting family and friends. He is now able to travel and recently



drove to Iowa. He and Margaret plan to go to Arizona this winter, then on to Acapulco for two weeks.

"I found a book my Mom kept on my life from kindergarten to high school." Gordon's grandson, Jon, was proud to see a picture of "Pops" in his Boy Scout uniform. They look forward to having a picture together with Jon in his own scout uniform.