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| |  | | --- | | **Graphical user interface, website  Description automatically generated**  **Tai Chi Offered at NF/SGVHS Provides Veterans with Unique and Dynamic Experience**  By Melanie L. Thomas, MBA, Public Affairs Officer    ***Pictured in photo:*** *Brian Emery and Shiela Horton practice their Tai Chi  at the Malcom Randall VA Medical Center in Gainesville, Florida.*  For Marine Corps Veterans Shiela Horton and Brian Emery the Tai Chi Anywhere program has made all the difference for their mental and physical health. The duo has become quick friends and says that the program at the Malcom Randall VA Medical Center in Gainesville, Florida has made it convenient for them to connect while also making it possible for them to overcome their own personal health related issues.  “The Tai Chi Anywhere class is important to me because it provides a great social support group. The comradery shared in this class makes coming each week a highlight for me,” said Horton.  For others, Tai Chi has helped significantly improve their physical health. Emery explains that his knee, hip, and back have been problematic for years.  “I was quite shocked to learn how off my balance was during my initial consultation with the physical medicine staff. I had just accepted that I was going to have these issues for the rest of my life and got used to it,” said Emery. “Tai Chi has really helped to improve my strength, balance, concentration, breathing, and overall, I am more cognizant of how my body moves which in turn has minimized my pain.”  Physical Therapists and Tai Chi program coordinators, Steven Fowler and Susan Sims explain that the program offers Veterans a dynamic and unique experience, and has shown to improve aerobic capacity, strength, stress management, quality of life and pain management for those who participate.  “Anyone interested can simply ask their health care provider to place a consult in their record. After the consult is placed, the Veteran will then get screened for safety and to establish their appropriate starting level,” said Sims.  Despite the program being available daily at both the [Malcom Randall](https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.northflorida.va.gov%2FNORTHFLORIDA%2Flocations%2Fgainesville.asp&data=04%7C01%7C%7Ca9d6b8bd022e43c3645308d93737cfbc%7Ce95f1b23abaf45ee821db7ab251ab3bf%7C0%7C0%7C637601535117694124%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C1000&sdata=AR%2BkoGA8K6QozxpTq0WDbmP74yUjsZ48I4tLURDGUCY%3D&reserved=0) and [Lake City VA Medical Center’s](https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.northflorida.va.gov%2FNORTHFLORIDA%2Flocations%2FLakeCity.asp&data=04%7C01%7C%7Ca9d6b8bd022e43c3645308d93737cfbc%7Ce95f1b23abaf45ee821db7ab251ab3bf%7C0%7C0%7C637601535117704080%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C1000&sdata=21S5hYDRzmL0roLFmxtIpyqnGBcLT65kRAoREjqBCRY%3D&reserved=0), Veterans now have the additional option to participate through VA Video Connect (VVC).  “We tested this capability during the COVID-19 pandemic and patients seemed to really be getting a lot out of it,” said Mark Ward, Physical Therapist.  To date, over 1,300 appointments have been scheduled for face to face classes, and over 224 VVC appointments have been provided to Veterans interested in the program.  Additionally, the success of the program and its innovative approach to offering Veterans the class through VVC has led to national recognition as a semifinalist in the [2021 Veterans Health Administration’s Shark Tank Competition](https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.va.gov%2FINNOVATIONECOSYSTEM%2Fviews%2Fsolutions%2FDOE-PP.html&data=04%7C01%7C%7Ca9d6b8bd022e43c3645308d93737cfbc%7Ce95f1b23abaf45ee821db7ab251ab3bf%7C0%7C0%7C637601535117704080%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C1000&sdata=Kshm9maEWjtVnMv4QPXohFeLEb3vKtAEF5PUoiCzI7A%3D&reserved=0). The VHA Shark Tank Competition shines a spotlight on employees passionate about solving some of the toughest challenges across VHA. Winners of the competition will be announced in August 2021.  To learn more about the cutting edge care that supports Veterans health and well-being at the North Florida/South Georgia Veterans Health System, visit [Whole Health - North Florida/South Georgia Veterans Health System (va.gov)](https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.northflorida.va.gov%2FNORTHFLORIDA%2Fservices%2FWhole_Health.asp&data=04%7C01%7C%7Ca9d6b8bd022e43c3645308d93737cfbc%7Ce95f1b23abaf45ee821db7ab251ab3bf%7C0%7C0%7C637601535117714037%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C1000&sdata=ILdMmc4Ah2fWMy5SLAg5NYOphrOM5BQ%2BWpSaeV4%2B4W0%3D&reserved=0).  NF/SGVHS is one of the nation’s leading VA healthcare systems, employing more than 5,800 medical professionals and support staff dedicated to providing high quality care to Veterans residing throughout north Florida and south Georgia. The organization operates 14 facilities to include two medical centers located in Gainesville and Lake City, a domiciliary and clinics located throughout a 50-county catchment area.  **MEDIA CONTACT:** Office of Communication and Outreach North Florida/South Georgia Veterans Health System  352.283.4735 I [vhanflpublicaffairs@va.gov](mailto:vhanflpublicaffairs@va.gov) | | VA Healthcare: Defining Excellence in the 21st Century | | **North Florida/South Georgia Veterans Health System** Malcom Randall and Lake City VA Medical Center’s 1601 Southwest Archer Road | Gainesville, FL 32608-1135 | PH: 352-376-1611  619 South Marion Avenue | Lake City, FL 32025-5808 | PH: 386-755-3016  The North Florida/South Georgia Veterans Health System is one of the nation's leading VA healthcare systems, employing more than 5,600 medical professionals and support staff dedicated to providing high quality care to Veterans residing throughout north Florida and south Georgia. The organization operates fifteen facilities to include two medical centers located in Gainesville and Lake City, and clinics located throughout a 50-county catchment area.  To learn more about the facilities and services offered by the North Florida/South Georgia Veterans Health System, please visit [www.northflorida.va.gov](https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.northflorida.va.gov%2F&data=04%7C01%7C%7Ca9d6b8bd022e43c3645308d93737cfbc%7Ce95f1b23abaf45ee821db7ab251ab3bf%7C0%7C0%7C637601535117714037%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C1000&sdata=XrB184rI2ozaqXHgJ6W4TW61QDmSQfzKd5R2d0%2Bd2Fc%3D&reserved=0) or “like us on Facebook at [https://www.facebook.com/VANFSG](https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.facebook.com%2FVANFSG&data=04%7C01%7C%7Ca9d6b8bd022e43c3645308d93737cfbc%7Ce95f1b23abaf45ee821db7ab251ab3bf%7C0%7C0%7C637601535117714037%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C1000&sdata=gL2T0pfXyC35hcF8nutSKoZmxvf48r9aWEIWvxQcoes%3D&reserved=0), or follow us on Instagram at [https://www.instagram.com/VANFSG/](https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.instagram.com%2FVANFSG%2F&data=04%7C01%7C%7Ca9d6b8bd022e43c3645308d93737cfbc%7Ce95f1b23abaf45ee821db7ab251ab3bf%7C0%7C0%7C637601535117723993%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C1000&sdata=CtDCSgu3QbJIIp2owKGaYzTZTILCgPTre873N%2FitWWI%3D&reserved=0)  For any questions about the content of this message, please contact the North Florida/South Georgia Veterans Health System Office of Public Affairs at 352-348-7130 or email [vhanflpublicaffairs@va.gov](mailto:vhanflpublicaffairs@va.gov). | |