

Healing Hands of Gratitude

sharing Reiki with our Veterans



by Reiki Master Anne Schneider

Kerrville is a small town in Central Texas with a population of about 24,000. Majestic cypress trees line the Guadalupe River running through this area graced by wildlife. Having grown up in Houston's bustling metropolis I am blessed now to call this peaceful place home.

Ever since attending my First Degree Reiki training in 2006, I envisioned using Reiki here at our local Veterans' medical facility. Back then, very few people in Kerrville knew what Reiki was (and was not). I found misunderstanding and even fear about Reiki in the community and so embarked on an educational campaign to bring knowledge of Reiki and its benefits to the Texas Hill Country.

This is an edited excerpt from Anne's article for the 2018 summer issue of Touch magazine in the United Kingdom. To honor confidentiality and to uphold patient and staff privacy in accordance with US laws, names used in this article are fictitious. The local Reiki volunteer program was suspended in March 2020, because of the pandemic. The Healing Hands Unit looks forward to returning for service at the Kerrville campus of South Texas Veterans Health Care System when it is deemed appropriate by the Department of Veterans Affairs to do so.

Healing Hands Unit (HHU)

It was not until a decade later, when the South Texas Veterans Health Care System (STVHCS) received a recreation therapist from New York City's Department of Veterans Affairs, that I was invited to share Reiki as a volunteer with inpatients in Kerrville. Commenting on the effectiveness of Reiki at the VA facility where he previously worked, Frank the new therapist asked a *Yoga for Veterans* instructor at our local VA, "Where are the Reiki volunteers?" The yoga instructor, gratefully a friend of mine, referred me to Frank.

Frank and I met several times as we grew to know each other and share our vision for the Reiki volunteer program at the STVHCS. I followed up with a formal written presentation, introducing the newly created Healing Hands Unit—its mission statement and scope of practice designed specifically for our Kerrville VA. A training period followed for six members of the HHU, along with a three-month application process for each of us to become approved by the VA as official volunteers. The HHU first began seeing patients on April 2, 2017.

Now, four dedicated members of the HHU work in pairs to bring Reiki to Kerrville's inpatient Veterans for an hour once a week. Our current sponsor Robert, a First Degree Reiki practitioner himself, selects recipients who have agreed to receive Reiki. Occasionally a Veteran chooses to tell us their diagnosis and we keep this, along with their identity, in confidence. Because of patient privacy laws, HHU volunteers receive no diagnosis or medical information about the Veterans with whom they share Reiki. Without access to these details there can be no quantifiable patient outcomes.

Research data about Reiki are scarce. Pharmaceutical companies do not fund clinical studies in Reiki. Thankfully, several years ago St. George's Hospital in London began hospital-based research to which future medical professionals can refer. As we await more of these innovative studies, we continue to share our anecdotal stories—stories about individuals we've encountered in our practice of Reiki.

Veteran's Reiki remembrances

James is well into his nineties—one of the few remaining World War II US Air Force pilots. Today his private aide wheels his chair into Frank's office to meet me and my HHU partner for the first time. James wears a dress shirt and stylish v-neck sweater. Freshly shaven and his silver hair neatly combed, the Veteran tells us that he had a stroke four years ago and suffers from debilitating headaches, body tremors, and depression.

Before we can begin the Reiki session, James surprises us with talk about his long ago experiences with Reiki. He says he learned the healing therapy from "a man who was crippled" and mentions being in the state of Oregon in the 1980s. His train of thought fades in and out as periodic tremors unsettle his body.

The Veteran adds he received First and Second Degree Reiki training but that now he does not remember everything. With a shaky finger in the trembling palm of his hand, he attempts to begin a Reiki session for himself. Becoming confused, he shakes his head and drops his hands to his lap.

This remarkable elder stirs my heart. I kneel to hold his hand, to look into his cloudy eyes and ask, "James, do you remember from your past Reiki training you still can place your hands on yourself and receive Reiki?"

He nods his head but does not speak. My partner and I begin the session—I standing behind the wheelchair with my hands on his shoulders, my partner sitting in a nearby chair to place her hands on his upper legs. James sighs and relaxes now with only occasional tremors. As the session progresses he continues to sigh and eventually dozes off, his head bent slightly forward.

Further into the treatment James straightens up and with his eyes still closed, raises his trembling hands to remove his glasses and lay them in his lap. His wobbly hands come up to both sides of his face. The Veteran appears to be giving himself Reiki while my partner and I proceed with our work. From time to time he mumbles "yes, yes, still Reiki."

As we end his session James rouses from the place he's retreated to in his mind. He haltingly recalls for us Reiki experiences from forty years ago with his family and friends. This powerful reconnection to healing blesses us all.

Start your wellness journey today with Anne as your partner. She is the USA-Southwest Local Representative of The Reiki Alliance—an international organization of traditional Reiki Masters—and she's ready to support you in a world of inner balance. Schedule your Reiki session with Anne now.

Interested in learning Reiki as a natural healing therapy to practice on yourself and, if you choose, on others? Anne's ten-hour weekend Reiki I training is simple and practical. Register today for her next class May 28-30 or June 25-27. Anne@ReikiTexas.info or (830)739-5828. Visit her website at ReikiTexas.info.