



Mid America MS Achievement Center News

What is Therapeutic Recreation?

By Jessica Biggar -CTRS (Certified Therapeutic Recreation Specialist)

Those who attend the MSAC participate in occupational and physical therapy and a psychology group every week. They also spend one hour a week in Therapeutic Recreation (TR). Most of us are familiar with what happens in all these sessions except for TR. In a program that focuses on maintaining function and health, it can be a surprise to see this service, and many people don't quite know what benefits TR provides.

TR is the use of recreation services to improve or maintain physical, cognitive, emotional, and/or social functioning to assist individuals in expressing independent leisure lifestyles. TR services include:

- **therapy that uses activities to rehabilitate functional abilities**

- **leisure education that uses recreation to or enhance recreation skills and can be used throughout life and to establish an independent leisure lifestyle;**
- **recreation participation that uses activities to enhance health, development, and independence through rewarding leisure behavior.**

TR is provided in a variety of settings such as hospitals, rehabilitation centers, mental health facilities, residential settings, long-term care facilities, schools, and community recreation agencies.

For the MSAC Recreation groups, TR gives the participants an opportunity to learn new skills and modify old ones to compensate for changes in their physical and cognitive function.

The participants are able to improve or maintain their physical abilities, build confidence and self-esteem by focusing on strengths, enhance their creativity and self-expression, as well as strengthen their interpersonal skills by developing positive relationships with their peers.



Jessica is a Minnesota native and moved to Missouri in July, 2000. She graduated from the University of Minnesota - Minneapolis with a Bachelor of Science degree in Park, Recreation, and Leisure Studies with an emphasis in Therapeutic Recreation. For the past 5 1/2 years, Jessica has been a nationally CTRS (Certified Therapeutic Recreation Specialist). She has worked in a variety of settings such as hospitals, mental health centers, and nursing homes and has been employed at The Rehabilitation Institute of Kansas City since January, 2003. "I have thoroughly enjoyed working with the MSAC groups. My focus has always been to help others achieve their optimal health by improving their quality of life through the use of recreation and leisure activities."

Each MSAC TR group discusses and plans the activities for each month rather than having the therapist plan for them. This way the participants take a more active role in their own leisure lifestyle, and are exposed to activities the other participants are interested in. This builds stronger friendships among the participants along with exposing them to leisure options they may never have considered

TR is important for the MSAC groups because it contributes to a healthier mind and body.

Having an active leisure lifestyle makes life more satisfying and fulfilling, and helps in developing a sense of wellness, and improves quality of life.



before.

So far this year, the MSAC TR groups have participated in a variety of activities such as cognitive and social games, holiday crafts and decorations, card-making, stress management, woodworking, gardening, and social parties.



Also, every month, magicians attend one TR session and work with the participants learning magic tricks to enhance their fine motor skills and cognitive abilities.

PHOTOS:
Making balloon animals during recreational therapy are Jill and Jessica (top left page); Walt gives Mary instruction (top); Judy shows her balloon creation (bottom).