

# 'Every day is a good day'

## Branford Yacht Club pulls out all the stops for veterans at fishing event

By Lisa Reisman

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Witnessing Jocelyne Hudson-Brown's lively demeanor, you could never tell that her head is filled with coils and stents that are keeping an aneurysm from rupturing.

"It's all good," said the Army veteran, seating herself on a bench overlooking the Long Island Sound after spending the morning fishing at a recent annual Take A Vet Fishing celebration hosted by the Branford Yacht Club.

The event, which takes place on the third Saturday of each September, has TAVF volunteers equipping veterans with fishing equipment and Yacht Club members taking veterans out on their boats to fish at dawn followed by a cookout provided by the Yacht Club, awards, and music.

Hudson-Brown said she's been to every TAVF outing since it started in the spring.

"I do it to give me confidence and build my stamina, and also as a way to destress, and it's worked," she said.

That sums up the mission of TAVF, which started as an outreach program by the First Congregational Church of Branford in 2007 as a way to engage and provide fellowship to disabled and recovering veterans.

Hudson-Brown, a New Haven native, said she enlisted in the Army in 1984 when she was 26.

"My younger brother went into the Army straight out of high school and he reeled me in," she said.

After boot camp, she served with the 101st Airborne Division in Fort Campbell, Kentucky, then at Schofield Barracks Army Base in Oahu, Hawaii, working in finance.

She recalled her superiors discouraging her from wearing her uniform when she was off duty.

"It was different back then," she said. "People weren't thanking you for your service like they do now."

After six years of service, she said she landed in Oakland, where she worked for Colossal Pictures, the entertainment company known for its visual effects on "Top Gun," "Back to the Future," and "Bram Stoker's Dracula," among other productions.

"I started out as receptionist, and



Lisa Reisman / For Hearst Connecticut Media

### Army veteran Jocelyne Hudson-Brown

then saved the company \$10,000 in my first year by streamlining their shipping, and they created a new position for me," she said.

She said she also worked with Carol H. Williams, the advertising guru who coined the tagline for Secret deodorant—"strong enough for a man, but made for a woman"—and led the Pillsbury frosting campaign.

Buoyed by her success in Oakland, Hudson-Brown came back to Connecticut in 2000, commuting to New York advertising agency Uniworld as an ad traffic manager, "keeping projects on track and on budget from start to finish," she said.

Then came two years of severe headaches. "I thought it was just the stress and pressure of everything," she said.

In 2007, she suffered a ruptured aneurysm. "It felt like I got shot in my head," she recalled. "It dropped me to my knees."

According to the Brain Aneurysm Foundation, 1 in 50 people have an unruptured brain aneurysm. When a brain aneurysm ruptures, it can cause bleeding into the space around the brain. Women are more likely than men to experience a brain aneurysm, and women over the age of 55 have a higher risk of brain aneurysm rupture than men.

Since the initial rupture, Hudson-Brown has had nine brain surgeries.

She described her condition as a "pothole in my brain. They can't remove it so they fill it with threading coils like a pothole on the road gets filled with asphalt."

The stents, she said, divert the flow of blood away from the catheter.

Hudson-Brown's condition, it seems, hasn't stopped her from living a full life.

At the time of her diagnosis, she was studying at Housatonic Community College toward an associate's degree in business management.

"I've always wanted a college degree," she said.

She kept going, earning a bachelor's at Quinnipiac College in public relations, then a master's in communications at Sacred Heart University, where she did an internship at the New Haven Register.

She recalled going to class after a surgery had given her a stroke. "I couldn't even walk and I still went," she said.

Her life philosophy, she said, is "to find a way."

These days, she's the administrator of the Brain Aneurysm Positive Support Group on Facebook, which she created in December 2016. Currently it has 5,400 members all over the world.

Its mission, it reads, is "to give those diagnosed with brain aneurysms (and their caregivers) a positive place to vent their feelings... There is life after diagnosis."

That's her message, it seems. "We might have a brain aneurysm but we still have to live. We can't just stay home and crawl into ourselves," she said. "I want to show people that every day is a good day."

"That's why I'm here," she said, gesturing at the boats bobbing on the sparkling waters, a veteran looking pleased with his morning catch, the strains of lively music drifting down from the picnicking crowd.

"This is life," she said. "This is living."

For additional information, visit [tavf.org](http://tavf.org), Take A Vet Fishing on Facebook, email [jaarnson@triumph-group.com](mailto:jaarnson@triumph-group.com), or contact Ray Luhn at 203-675-3266. Checks (payable to TAVF) may be sent to Take A Vet Fishing, P.O. Box 664, Branford