



VA MID-ATLANTIC HEALTH CARE NETWORK • VISN SIX

Vol. 3, No.7

“Excellent Care – Earned by Veterans – Delivered Here”

Voices of VISN 6

Official news from around *your* VISN

April 30, 2013

Wilmington VA Health Care Center Open For Business

Right: Betty Goolsby, Fayetteville VAMC director; and Dan Hoffmann, VISN 6 network director, cut the ribbon for VA’s newest Health Care Center April 30. Participating were US Senators Kay Hagan and Richard Burr; Congressmen Mike McIntyre and Walter Jones, Joyce Alexander-Hines Fayetteville VAMC and Wilmington Mayor Mike Saffo. More than 200 people were on hand for the ceremony which included posting of the colors by the Ashley High School Navy Junior ROTC and the singing of the National Anthem by the Coastal Christian High School Honors Ensemble. See story on Pg 4.



Brad Garner

Brandecker To Lead Richmond VAMC

The Department of Veterans Affairs has appointed Mr. John Brandecker as the new director of the Hunter Holmes McGuire VAMC in Richmond.

“We’re thrilled to bring Mr. Brandecker on board as the new director for our flagship medical center in Richmond,” said Daniel F. Hoffmann, Mid-Atlantic Health Care Network (VISN 6) director. “His strong leadership and experience leading complex health care facilities will yield hefty returns for the employees, volunteers, and most importantly, the Veterans we serve. I am confident that under his leadership, the medical center and its staff, as well as all the Veterans who receive care there, will be in excellent hands.”

Brandecker comes to VA from his post as the assistant vice president and chief operating officer at the University of Texas Southwestern University Hospital in Dallas, TX.

He holds a bachelor’s degree from the State University of New York at Stony Brook, a Master’s of Business Administration from St. John’s University and a Master’s in Public Health from Columbia University. Among many personal, professional and philanthropic interests and activities, Brandecker has been a member of the Association of Administrators in Academic Pediatrics, the Medical Group Management Association, and served on the executive board of the American Heart Association’s Greater Midwest Affiliate.

A flagship for VA health care, the 427-bed tertiary care facility operates community based outpatient clinics in Fredericksburg, Charlottesville, and Emporia, Virginia. The center provides a full range of medical, dental and mental health care, hosts one of five Polytrauma units in VA, and is also a national referral center for heart



John Brandecker

and liver transplants and spinal cord injuries and disorders. Additionally, the medical center has been designated as an Epilepsy Center of Excellence and is home to the Parkinson’s Disease Research Education and Clinical Care Center.

The medical center is affiliated with Virginia Commonwealth University School of Medicine and partners with the Department of Defense on initiatives focused on enhancing women’s health.

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From the Director

April has been a great month for this network and the Veterans we care for. VA has approved our proposal for establishing Community Resource and Referral Centers. This authorization includes funding for one in the Charlotte area and one for the Raleigh/Durham area. We will continue to pursue funding for one in the Fayetteville area.

These facilities will be free standing, store front, offices staffed by VA personal and focused on improving access to services for homeless Veterans.

The CRRCs are outreach centers that will provide homeless Veterans the ability to meet with social workers, vocational specialists and medical providers on a walk-in basis. The centers will also be equipped with showers and laundry facilities as well as space for community service providers.

Everywhere I go, I like to talk about the fact that this network has been one of the top three in growth for more than a decade. I know Veterans vote with their feet, and what I'm seeing is that large numbers of Veterans have elected to use our services.

Since October, the network has grown by more than 4 percent overall with Fayetteville leading the way with nearly 8 percent. Looking back at the growth for the past five years reveals that we have grown by more than 17 percent, welcoming more than 43,000 Veterans to our ranks since fiscal year 2009.

To meet their needs now and in the future, we continue to expand access points. Sites like the new Wilmington Health Care Center and those soon to be in Greenville, Fayetteville, Charlotte and Kernersville offer real room for growth. But as I've also mentioned, technology has paved the way for us to extend way beyond bricks and mortar.

The explosive growth in telemedicine is setting the stage for the future where patients and providers can meet and exchange information in local clinics, from the home or even through the internet. This means far greater access to many specialties with reduced need for travel.

Topping off all this great news is the fact that VA has named a new director for our flagship medical center in Richmond. As you read on Page 1, Mr. John Brandecker will lead the Richmond team. John will be a great asset to the network as he brings with him an impressive array of experience and fresh ideas to help us move forward in our endeavors to be on the forefront of delivering quality medical care.

Finally, a small reminder that Memorial Day is May 27. I hope everyone takes a moment to reflect and pay tribute to all who have served to protect and defend this great country.

Sincerely,
Dan Hoffmann



Fayetteville Priority – Provide High Quality, Safe Patient Care

By Betty Goolsby
Director, Fayetteville VAMC

Recent stories in the news have featured information on the care of PTSD patients and prescription practices for those with chronic pain management. Some stories have suggested patients with PTSD should not be prescribed opiates and benzodiazepines and that VA patients are prescribed these at a rate higher than other young adult males. I think it is safe to assume the other young adult males referred to may not have seen combat or experienced the rigors of military service.

It is very difficult to say all Veterans should be medicated the same as non-Veterans when the cause for the PTSD can be very different. Our Veterans with PTSD may have other conditions such as anxiety disorders, panic disorders, phobic disorders in which drug combinations are very appropriate. At times, the use of benzodiazepines is for a short time while awaiting other medications to take effect. The close patient provider relationship our patients enjoy help to determine what is best for each individual.

Chronic pain management is another topic of much discussion with our Veterans. Chronic pain might be considered an occupational hazard for many Veterans due to the nature of their former jobs. Our society, as a whole, has become one of wanting instant relief for all medical problems, especially pain. We look for and often demand a pill to take care of our every need. However, some of our patients have significant pain from terminal illnesses such as cancer or chronic debilitating diseases in which pain medication is the right course of action because it is the only relief though other methods have been tried.

Some suggest that some of our Veterans use their pain medications for purposes other than what was intended. I believe our use of the opiate medication contract with our patients, which outline the appropriate use of the medications and the consequences of not adhering to it, has been effective.

There will always be some who will violate the contract but once identified as doing so, we take the appropriate actions, which may include discontinuing the prescription. It is very possible some of our patients may have obtained pain medications from several sources as there has not been a unified method to prevent this from occurring.

The VA is now piloting the ability to participate in a statewide data sharing system that will allow for reporting and information sharing.

The increased use of opiates may have led to an increase in deaths due to intended or unintended overdoses. Though prescribed opiates may contribute, heroin is also an opiate and not prescribed by our providers.

What is the future for pain management, especially chronic pain, at Fayetteville VAMC?

The Pain Management Committee and Clinic have been active in providing alternative therapies to long-term opiate medications. Some of our strategies include decreased use of opiates supplemented with non-opiates, physical therapy, targeted interventional pain relief, acupuncture (coming soon), relaxation therapies such as yoga and Tai-Chi, as well as focused imagery. Opioid replacement therapies are offered for Veterans who are addicted to opiates, to address addiction and to improve quality of life.

No single formula is effective for all of our patients so trying different combinations are critical for success. Perhaps the most difficult aspect of chronic pain management is finding that right combination which can only be determined by the provider and the patient working together.

We are here to provide safe, high quality, evidenced based care to Veterans and we will continue to do so following the best practices and guidelines available.

Voices of VISN 6 is published monthly by VA Mid-Atlantic Health Care Network.

Questions or comments about the newsletter, e-mail Bruce. Sprecher@va.gov or call 919-956-5541.



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Baker Named Salisbury VAMC Associate Director

Linette L. Baker is the new associate director at the Salisbury VAMC, effective April 8.

Most recently, Baker served, first, as chief, Health Administration Service and then as chief, Human Resources Service at the VA San Diego Healthcare System from February 2009 to April 2013. Prior to her assignment in San Diego, Baker served in several roles at the Carl T. Hayden VA Medical Center in Phoenix, Ariz., from 2004 – 2009, culminating in her selection as the assistant chief, Health Administration Service in 2008. She also worked as program specialist to the VBA Western Area Director from 2002 – 2004.

Baker has served on several national committees in the Chief Business Office related to beneficiary travel. She is an Air Force Veteran, serving for 24 years before her retirement in 2002. She deployed during Operation Desert Storm.

Baker holds a Master of Public Administration degree from the University of Oklahoma and a Bachelor of Vocational Education degree from Southern Illinois University at Carbondale. She is a graduate of VHA Health Care Leadership and Development Program.

She received several military awards during her Air Force career, to include the Meritorious Service Medal and Combat Readiness Medal. She was also the Pacific Air Forces Senior NCO of the Year, Air Mobility Command NCO of the Year and the Air Force Academy Airman of the Year.



Linette L. Baker

Durham VA Appoints Eagerton As New Chief Nurse Executive

Dr. Greg Eagerton was appointed associate director for Patient Care Services/Chief Nurse Executive at the Durham VA Medical Center April 7.

He has served as a nurse in VA for approximately 26 years, serving most recently as associate director for Patient/Nursing Service at the Birmingham VAMC, serving in that capacity from April 2001 until taking his new position at Durham.

Dr. Eagerton received his Bachelor of Science in Nursing from the University of Alabama at Birmingham School of Nursing in 1985.

He continued his education and received his Master of Science in Nursing and certificate in Nursing Service Administration from the University of Alabama at Birmingham in 1991. Dr. Eagerton completed his Doctor of Nursing Practice at Samford University in 2009.

His doctoral studies were in Healthcare Systems Administration. He is board certified in nursing administration, advanced, through the American Nurses Credentialing Center.

After completing his master's degree, Dr. Eagerton worked in the private sector for about two years and then returned to VA. He served as the associate chief nurse at the Cleveland (Ohio) VAMC for about five years and at the Richmond (Va.) VAMC for approximately two years before returning to Birmingham.

Dr. Eagerton has contributed to the advancement of nursing and healthcare administration through peer reviewed publications

and speaking engagements at local, state, and national conferences.

Formally recognized for his accomplishments and contributions, he was one of 60 recipients of the "Recognized Leader" Alumni Award from UAB in 2010.

In 2011, Dr. Eagerton was inducted into the Alabama Nursing Hall of Fame, and in 2012 he was recognized as a recipient of the Ida V. Moffett School of Nursing Living Legacy Award.

Dr. Eagerton is most importantly noted for his ability and personal interest in building relationships with staff at all levels of the organization. His leadership style is one that encourages full participation by staff, leaders, labor partners & community stakeholders.

His passion for Veteran centered healthcare is demonstrated through his dedication to his patients, their families, and to those who serve them.



Dr. Greg Eagerton

May is Asian American & Pacific Islander Heritage Month

By Eric K. Shinseki
Secretary of Veterans Affairs

Our country's cultural richness stems from the many immigrant and native legacies which bind us as one Nation from many peoples. Our strength as a nation resides in the hearts and minds and spirit of our people, united in preserving freedom and justice, and in our willingness to work hard to earn our own way. Asian and Pacific Islander Americans have contributed enormously through language, the arts, music, literature, science, and medicine, adding their own hopes and dreams to the countless threads that give color and resilience to the fabric that is America.

Asian and Pacific Islander American Heritage Month commemorates both the arrival of the first immigrant Japanese to the United States on May 7, 1843, and the completion of the transcontinental railroad on May 10, 1869, linking our nation's east and west coasts. So many Chinese immigrants were instrumental to this uniting of the continent. And so many Asian and Pacific Islander Americans since have likewise served and sacrificed for our

country. More than 292,000 of them have defended this Nation. Over 67,000 men and women of Asian and Pacific Islander descent currently serve in our Armed Forces.

America is safer, and our democracy is stronger, because of their service in uniform. These Asian and Pacific Islander Americans, from the first brave immigrants to today's generation of vibrant Americans, have made positive and lasting contributions to the greater good of our society.

Their impact has been truly significant—from operating small businesses to leading multinational corporations; from teaching in our most rural classrooms to lecturing in our greatest universities; from volunteering to care for the sick and homeless to commanding the formations which defend us, preserving peace in a dangerous world. Asian and Pacific Islander Americans are fully interwoven into every aspect of American life, bringing with them the hopes and dreams to build an ever-greater America.

On behalf of the Department of Veterans Affairs, it is a privilege to celebrate the rich histories of all Asian and Pacific Islander Americans.

VA To Expedite Claims Decisions For Those Waiting 1+ Years

WASHINGTON – VA is implementing an initiative to expedite compensation claims decisions for Veterans who have waited one year or longer. Effective April 19, VA claims raters will make provisional decisions on the oldest claims in inventory, allowing eligible Veterans to begin collecting compensation benefits more quickly. Veterans will be able to submit additional evidence for consideration a full year after the provisional rating, before VA issues a final decision.

“Too many Veterans wait too long for a decision, and this has never been acceptable,” said VA Secretary Eric Shinseki. “That is why we are implementing an aggressive plan to eliminate the backlog in 2015. This initiative is the right thing to do now for Veterans who have waited the longest.”

Provisional decisions will be based on all evidence provided to date by the Veteran or obtained on their behalf by VA. If a VA medical examination is needed to decide the claim, it will be ordered and expedited.

“Issuing provisional decisions not only provides Veterans with applicable benefits much more quickly, but also gives them an additional one-year safety net to submit further evidence should it become available. Our door will remain open and if a Veteran has additional evidence, their case will be fast tracked,” said Allison Hickey, Undersecretary for Benefits.

If any increase is determined to be warranted based on the additional evidence received, benefits will be retroactive to the date the claim was initially filed. The initiative protects the Veteran’s right to appeal the decision. If no further evidence is received within that year, VBA will inform the Veteran that their rating is final and provide information on the standard appeals process, which can be found at www.bva.va.gov/

Throughout this initiative, VA will continue to prioritize claims for homeless Veterans and those claiming financial hard-

ship, the terminally ill, former Prisoners of War, Medal of Honor recipients, and Veterans filing Fully Developed Claims. More information about filing Fully Developed Claims is available at www.benefits.va.gov/transformation/fastclaims/.

Claims for Wounded Warriors separating from the military for medical reasons will continue to be handled separately and on a priority basis with the Department of Defense through the Integrated Disability Evaluation System (IDES). Wounded Warriors separating through IDES currently receive VA compensation benefits in an average of 61 days following their separation from service.

VA officials say as a result of this initiative, metrics used to track benefits claims will experience significant fluctuations. The focus on processing the oldest claims will cause the overall measure of the average length of time to complete a claim - currently 286 days - to skew, rising significantly in the near term because of the number of old claims that will be completed. Over time, as the backlog of oldest claims is cleared and more of the incoming claims are processed electronically through VA’s new paperless processing system, VA’s average time to complete claims will significantly improve. In addition, the average days pending metric - or the average age of a claim in the inventory - will decrease, since the oldest claims will no longer be part of the inventory.

While compensation claims are pending, eligible Veterans are able to receive healthcare and other benefits from VA. Veterans who have served in recent conflicts are eligible for five years of free healthcare from VA. Currently, over 55 percent of returning Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans are using VA health care, a rate of use greater than previous generations of Veterans.

Veterans can learn more about disability benefits on the joint Department of Defense—VA web portal eBenefits at www.ebenefits.va.gov/ebenefits-portal/ebenefits.portal.



New Wilmington Clinic To Satisfy Growing Veteran Population

Keeping pace with VA’s primary goals for Veteran access to care, VISN 6 and legislative leaders joined recently to celebrate a new health care facility.

Senators Richard Burr and Kay Hagan, along with Congressmen Walter Jones and Mike McIntyre, were among officials in Wilmington, N.C. April 30 to dedicate the Wilmington Health Care Center, an 80,742 square foot facility, that opened in March.

VISN 6 Director Dan Hoffmann told guests, “We have appropriately equipped this facility with the finest diagnostic capabilities to make sure the layout is maximally Veteran centric.” He added that VA and Congress’ aggressive efforts have met the ever-expanding regional Veteran population by increasing the VISN’s sites of care from 10 to 34 in 13 years.

Representative Mike McIntyre said the facility is the culmination of several years of work behind the scenes to fill the needs of a growing Veteran community. In agreement with the congressman, Rep. Walter Jones and Senators Hagan and Burr chimed in respectively that the facility represents money well spent at home, a firm commitment to America’s military and VA’s effort to meet Veteran needs by improving quality and expanding access to care.

Additional services will include women’s health, day surgery, imaging services (radiology, ultrasound, CT scan, bone density, magnetic resonance Imaging and mammography), medical specialties (cardiology, dermatology, gastrointestinal, pulmonary and neurology) and surgical specialties (gynecology, urology, orthopedics and general surgery).



Durham Marks 60th Anniversary With Week-Long Celebration

Veterans and staff participated in a week-long celebration of the Durham VAMC's 60th anniversary April 15 to April 19. The theme of the celebration was 60 years of caring for Veterans with Integrity, Commitment, Advocacy, Respect and Excellence.

The week began with "1950's Flashback Day"

as staff donned retro garb ranging from poodle skirts to leather jackets. A lobby display set the tone for a week of information sharing and remembrance. April 16's main activity was a Veterans art exhibit that showed the talent of local Veterans using art as therapy. Veterans enjoyed a community resource fair featuring adaptive sports April 17. Thursday, everyone was able to enjoy the vintage car show that was followed by a performance by the VA choir on the community living center patio. Dr. John Shelburne, chief of staff, capped the weeklong celebration, delivering the keynote address for the Durham VAMC 60th anniversary program, April 19.

The Durham hospital was authorized by Congress in 1946 as a 500-bed general medical and surgical hospital as part of VA Administrator General Omar Bradley's efforts to modernize the Veterans Administration and accommodate the influx of returning World War II Veterans.

Durham opened April 6, 1953, when World War II veteran Robert A. Wheeler was admitted as its first patient. The hospital was formally dedicated two weeks later by VA Administrator General Carl R. Gray, Jr., April 19, 1953. The hospital opened with 120



Linnie Skidmore
A vintage car show was but one of the activities that took place to mark Durham VAMC's weeklong 60th anniversary celebration, April 15 to 19.

Durham Nursing Assistant Named White House Champion Of Change

By Pete Tillman
Durham VAMC public affairs

Michael Graham, formerly a flight medical technician for 12 years in the Air Force Reserve, now serves Veterans at the Durham VAMC in his position as a nursing assistant on Unit 6A. His dedication to the education of children with special needs has gained the attention of our county's top leaders, including President Barack Obama.

In February, the loving husband and father of three, one of whom has Down's Syndrome, travelled to Washington, D.C. to accept the White House Champions of Change for Educational Excellence for African Americans Award. The former med tech was one of 10 people across the nation singled out for working to ensure African American students in their communities receive an education that prepares them for high school graduation, college completion, and productive careers.

"I am truly honored and feel very blessed to be selected as a White House Champion of Change for my advocacy of children with disabilities and special needs that learn differently and who are, truly inspirational," said Graham. A tireless advocate for more than 10 years, Graham believes in helping parents of special needs children get the best education possible for their children. He also wants them to be informed of what they need to know as parents.

President Barack Obama and others celebrated the exceptional work done by the Champion of Change recipients. "From the early-



Courtesy Photo
Michael Graham, center, with other White House Champions of Change for Educational Excellence for African Americans award recipients at the ceremony that took place at the White House.

est days of our founding, our Nation has been shaped by ordinary people who have dared to dream and used their unique skills to do extraordinary things. American like you help carry this tradition forward by reaching for new ideas that will help our country win the future," President Obama penned in a letter of support.

Former basketball player Magic Johnson, Attorney General Eric Holder, actresses Vivica A. Fox and Phylicia Rashad, Reverend Al Sharpton, and U.S. Representative John Lewis were among the other dignitaries and celebrities who congratulated Graham and his fellow Champions of Change.

Richmond VAMC Embraces New Orthotics Technology

By Darlene Edwards
Richmond VAMC public affairs

Veterans with diagnoses like incomplete spinal cord injury, weakness, incomplete or partial paralysis of the quadriceps, and post-polio syndrome may now benefit from a new technology.

Richmond VA Prosthetic Treatment Center may now fit patients with a new C-Brace system that uses microprocessors and real time sensors to help them walk. This new technology was introduced in the United States just a few months ago and is currently being used by only 30 patients across the country.

C-Brace was demonstrated for the first time at the Richmond VAMC recently and, according to Orthotics and Prosthetics Lab Chief John Fox, is being considered for several suitable candidates.

“The Veterans that demonstrated the brace were most impressed with the C-Brace’s ability to control knee stability on ramps as well as stairs,” Fox said. “The technology involves the combination of a microprocessor knee which is normally used for an above knee amputee’s prosthesis and a Knee Ankle Foot Orthotic or KAFO.”

The Richmond orthotics team said among the many benefits the Veteran using the C-Brace enjoys are the ability to change speeds, to walk with controlled flexing of the knee, and to move more efficiently. The C-Brace will also support the Veteran on all types of terrain. The device also provides stumble control by resisting uncontrolled knee movement when sensors read a moment of instability, providing the time necessary to recover.

This new system combines real-time gait analysis, the energy redistributing properties of carbon fiber, and the ability to use software to customize the knee joints response creating the ideal situation for the patient.

Everyday life demands the ability to walk on uneven ground, to descend stairs and ramps, and to tackle slopes. Depending on the Veteran’s abilities, all of these obstacles become surmountable, with less energy, all while reducing wear and tear.

“We are pleased that this new device will help our patients to move about on all types of terrain, which will certainly en-



Fernandez (Dez)Scott

A Veteran practices using the new C-Brace technology at the Richmond VAMC.

hance their mobility in their communities and give our Veterans increased independence, the ability to return to an active lifestyle, better quality of life and renewed hope,” Fox said.

Symposium Helps Veterans Cope With Epilepsy

By Steve Wilkins
VISN 6 public affairs

Active duty service members and Veterans suffering from neurologic trauma heard from experts about their conditions and ways they might cope with them during a recent conference at the Durham VAMC.

The Conquering Boundaries Epilepsy Symposium brought speakers from around the state together with service members and Veterans April 13 to discuss issues affecting the development, treatment and quality of life associated with epilepsy and traumatic brain injuries.

According to Pamela Kelly, director of the Southeast Region Epilepsy Center of Excellence, the event was well attended. Family members and care givers from around the VISN were also invited to attend the free sessions sponsored by the Epilepsy Foundation of North Carolina and the Epilepsy Center of Excellence Southeast Region.

Specialists and subject matter experts from the Durham and Asheville VAMCs, Duke University, The North Carolina Division of Veterans Affairs, and Wake Forest University School of Medicine were on hand to share information covering topics suggesting how to understand epilepsy diagnoses and cope day-to-day with the effect of TBI on Epilepsy, possible connections between seizures and mental health, new drugs and protocols, telemedicine treatment and finding support. Kelly said the event was “a won-

derful collaborative community event,” that not only educated attendees, but offered a platform for support among colleagues.

Christopher Maddox, an Army Veteran living in Gaston, S.C. who is receiving specialized care in VA for his traumatic brain injury and post-traumatic epilepsy sustained in a fall, spoke to attendees about how VA support groups help Veterans get the care they need and live the most productive lives possible.

The VA Epilepsy Centers of excellence were established to provide support for Veterans with epilepsy, needing specialized care. Its mission is to provide exceptional healthcare that improves the health and well-being of Veteran patients with epilepsy and other seizure disorders through the integration of research, education and clinical care.

Sixteen Epilepsy Centers of Excellence are spread across the nation and coordinated through four regional centers. The Durham VA hosts the VA Southeast Epilepsy Center of Excellence. Other centers in the Southeast Region are in Miami, Tampa and Gainesville.

Toward the end of the program a Veteran remarked that “[the program] is a reminder that ‘we’ need a full life and you can do that even if you are epileptic!”

Kelly hopes that the event will be continued at the other centers in the coming years. For information about eligibility, future events or other programs sponsored by the Southeast Epilepsy Center of Excellence call 919-416-5982. The epilepsy foundation of North Carolina can be reached at 800-642-0500.

Durham's Dockus Honored As VA Police Chief Of The Year

By Pete Tillman,
Durham VAMC public affairs

Every year, more than 152 VA sites of care throughout the country are invited to nominate their chief of police for the annual VA Police Chief of the Year Award. This year, the most deserving among them was Durham VAMC's Chief Dean Dockus.

An Army Veteran, Chief Dockus is a dedicated and committed leader responsible for the safety and well being of thousands of staff and Veterans every day.

"This coveted honor is well deserved. Providing for the safety and security of 60,000 Veterans, more than 2,500 staff, and countless visitors at nine unique sites of care is a big job. Chief Dockus rises to the occasion every day and works diligently to ensure the most professional of standards are met," said Durham VAMC Director DeAnne Seekins. "Chief Dockus adheres to the highest level of professional standards and acts with high moral principle. He exemplifies each of the I CARE values: Integrity, Commitment, Advocacy, Respect, and Excellent. We are lucky to have him and his team diligently working both publically and behind the scenes for our best interest."

Dockus attributes his success, and the Chief of the Year Award, to his team within police service. "I am honored and humbled to have been given this honor. This award has been made possible by the team of people at the Durham VA and those individuals I work with that are dedicated to law enforcement. I am proud to be a part of this team, and the VA organization," he said.

Among the accomplishments credited to Dockus during his tenure as Durham's top cop are his work with VISN 6, engineering service, and the executive leadership team to secure funding for security enhancements to make the Durham VA a safer place for Veterans and employees and his creation of a Patient Assistance



Pete Tillman

Durham VAMC Chief of Police Dean Dockus reviews law enforcement documents with Deputy Chief of Police Joseph Scunziano.

Program to help better serve our nation's Veterans. He has been recognized by his colleagues in nursing service for his support of clinical programs. Additionally, he has improved community relations with other law enforcements agencies throughout eastern North Carolina.

Selected as the Durham VAMC police chief in June 2009, Dockus has re-energized police service and advanced its reputation as a respected service through training, discipline, and accountability, stimulating creativity and growth while earning a Chief of the Year award in the process.



Scott Pittillo

Senator Kay Hagan shares a laugh with Asheville VAMC Veteran Dockie Brendle after a ceremony at the medical center April 12, where Brendle received his third Purple Heart. Brendle returned home from Vietnam fully disabled from injuries to his head and chest from a rocket-propelled grenade attack, as well as two previous injuries to his legs. He should have received his third Purple Heart award for the head and chest injuries but his paperwork got misplaced. Hagan's office worked with Brendle to secure the medal. Speaking about the presentation, Brendle, who wears an eye patch over his right eye and uses a cane to walk, said "It means everything. I earned it, and it's an honor to accept a medal like this."

VA Celebrates National Nurses Week May 6-12

Mid-Atlantic Health Care Network (VISN 6) joins the American Nurses Association in honoring America's nurses dedicated to saving lives and maintaining the health of millions of individuals during National Nurses Week, May 6-12.



This year's Nurses Week theme is "Nurses: Delivering Quality & Innovation in Patient Care" and VA health care facilities throughout the country will pay tribute to their 80,000 nurses who Network Director Daniel Hoffmann describes "as the compassionate backbone of VA's world-class health care system."

Annually, National Nurses Week begins on May 6, marked as Nurse Recognition Day, and ends on May 12, the birthday of Florence Nightingale, founder of nursing as a modern profession. During this week, nurses around the VISN will be honored with rallies, recognition ceremonies, receptions, dinners, essay contests, photo displays, "Retro" Days, etc.

National Nurses Week is devoted to highlighting the diverse ways in which registered nurses, the largest health care profession, work to improve health care. From bedside nursing in hospitals and long-term care facilities to the halls of research institutions, state legislatures, and Congress, the depth and breadth of the nursing profession is meeting the expanding health care needs of American society and its Veterans.

Please join the celebration of VA Nursing's excellence in providing health care and thank a VA Nurse for their continuous efforts on advocating, leading, and caring for those who have served America.

For more about VA nurses visit www.va.gov/nursing/.

Field Of Honor For Triad's Veterans Closer To Reality

The Greensboro-based War Memorial Foundation is inching closer to realizing plans to build North Carolina's largest Veterans memorial at Triad Park in Kernersville. The park spans more than 400 acres between Kernersville and Colfax and is run jointly by Forsyth and Guilford Counties.

The Carolina Field of Honor, situated on 8.5-acre site, will honor our nation's Veterans from every war. The memorial's design features an amphitheater, a 50-foot tall obelisk, small granite monuments, a fountain and a memorial brick walkway.

"Very unique and very beautiful," is how Marine Corps Veteran Rob O'Hanlon, War Memorial Foundations chairman, describes the planned memorial.

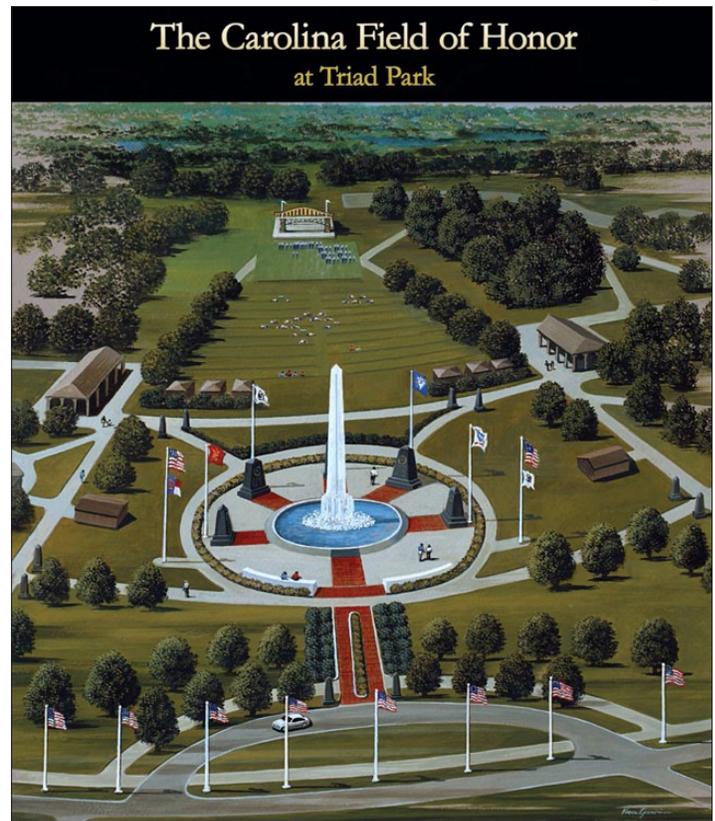
According to organizers, more than 150,000 Veterans live in the Triad, making it the largest concentration of Veterans in the state.

"The memorial will be centered between Guilford and Forsyth counties and will serve as an uplifting retreat for Veterans, families and tourists," said Guilford County Commissioner Bruce Davis.

The Carolina Field of Honor will cost about \$5.5 million dollars to complete. But before construction can begin the North Carolina War Memorial Foundation still has about \$1 million dollars left to raise. So they are taking donations and selling flagpoles and engraved bricks.

Those interested in contributing to make the Carolina Field of Honor a reality should visit www.ncwmf.org to securely donate with a credit card or mail their contribution to: The War Memorial Foundation, 600 N. Regional Road Greensboro, NC, 27409, 336-851-0999.

The War Memorial Foundation, federal identification number 26-2187703, is a non-profit, tax exempt civilian organization.



Memorial Day, which is observed on the last Monday of May, commemorates the men and women who died while in the military service. In observance of the holiday, many people visit cemeteries and memorials, and volunteers often place American flags on each grave site at national cemeteries. Pay tribute by observing a minute of silence May 27 at 3 p.m., local time.

Poster created by Virginia Reyes and Tech. Sgt. Cecilio M. Ricardo Jr.

Laundry Overhaul To Offer Greater Capacity, Energy Savings

By Darlene Edwards
Richmond VAMC public affairs

Ms. Sylvia Small, production work leader for the Richmond VAMC, knows laundry. She leads a team of almost 40 employees who have been washing, drying, folding and sorting linens and other items for the medical center and community partners for more than 25 years.

In early April, you might say Small and her team's load got lighter when VA contracted with Western State Design from Hayward, Calif. for new laundry equipment for the medical center. The \$7.8 million contract will provide a steamless system, resulting in a more efficient, energy saving laundry. This latest in design is the first of its kind for VA medical centers.

"This will provide our team an opportunity to produce



Darlene Edwards

Sylvia Small prepares a cart filled with clean blankets.

more poundage and serve more customers," said Small, who started in the laundry area in 1987 and has seen the increase in community partners using

the medical center's laundry service.

The Richmond VAMC laundry facility handles more than four million pounds of

laundry each year. The laundry equipment has been well maintained; however, as newer technologies became available, renovations to the facility became necessary.

The laundry serves the Richmond, Hampton and Fayetteville VAMCs, Fort Lee, Camp Perry, Fort Eustis and Langley AFB military installations.

With the new equipment, the laundry's utility usage is projected to decrease by 20 percent and the medical center and community partners can expect to benefit from enhanced capacity and potential additional services.

The new features are expected to be installed, tested and in use by fall.

"Our team is looking forward to the new laundry equipment that will allow us to produce even more," Small said.

Shared Experiences Connect Va. Veterans, Families, Specialists

By Roger Schlimbach
Virginia Wounded Warrior Program

Providing quality behavioral health, rehabilitative and support services for Veterans of all eras since 2008, the Virginia Wounded Warrior Program (VWWP) places a special emphasis on those with stress related injuries resulting from their military service and traumatic brain injuries. Employing Veteran peer specialists and resource specialists allows VWWP staff to connect directly with their target population, often through shared military background and experiences.

These specialists facilitate support groups for Veterans and family members across the Commonwealth of Virginia. While the groups may go by different names, their purposes are the same: to provide a stress free environment where Veterans help one another ease the stress of transition and exchange helpful tips for keeping the stress manageable.

One OIF Veteran commented, "I don't know where I would be today without the combat support group." The groups provide valuable peer support networks, connection to resources and offer a plethora of resource information.

Region 1, the northwestern region of the state, offers combat support groups and VetLink for service members previously deployed in any combat theater or who have issues relating to their military service.

These groups meet in Winchester, Fredericksburg, King George, Charlottesville, Harrisonburg, Staunton, Lynchburg, Amherst and Bedford. The groups are run by five Veterans: Mahlon Johnson (OIF Veteran, Navy corpsman), Jimmy Brinkley (OIF Veteran, combat engineer, National Guard), Tom Forrest (OIF Veteran, Army Reserve), Ben Shaw (OEF/OIF Veteran, Marine infantryman), and Louis Alvey (OIF Veteran, National Guard).

Suzanna Erlichman (spouse of OIF Veteran) runs two Family Support Groups in Stafford and Fredericksburg with more to come in the near future.

Region 2, the northern region of the state, offers three different support groups called VetNet. VetNet meet in Fairfax on the Alexandria Campus of Northern Virginia Community College (NVCC), the Springfield Campus of NVCC and the Annandale Campus of NVCC. Veteran peer specialist David Galloway (OIF Veteran, Marine infantryman) runs these groups.

Region 3, the southwestern region of the state, offers five different Veterans networking groups. The groups meet in Wytheville, Galax, Radford, Jonesville and Tazewell County. Military spouses Megan Davis and Leanne Craig, Veteran resource specialists Jan Blankenship and Karen Smith, and OIF Veteran Teri Herron are the facilitators.

Region 4, the central region of the state, offers two separate support groups. Region 4 Coordinator Ed McIntosh (U.S. Army Veteran) and resource specialist Kerri Gerke (military spouse) facilitate groups in Richmond and Prince George County.

Regular attendance for these groups ranges from five to 20. McIntosh said the primary purpose of the support groups is to provide social support and positive reinforcement that are essential for recovery from service connected trauma or any other threat to health and wellness, as any of these can affect the Veteran and their significant others. Two new support groups are expected to start in the coming months – one in Chesterfield and one in the South Boston area.

More information about VWWP and specific locations of support groups within the Commonwealth can be found on our website at www.wearevirginiaveterans.org under the tab, "Find Support."



Library Of Congress Collecting Veterans' Personal Stories

The Library of Congress' Veterans History Project of the American Folklife Center collects, preserves, and makes accessible the personal accounts of American war Veterans so that future generations may hear directly from Veterans and better understand the realities of war.

This national preservation effort, which includes voices from World War I to current conflicts, began in the backyard of U.S. Rep. Ron Kind (D-Wis.). As his relatives recounted stories of service at a family gathering, Kind thought to film these narratives so that their experiences would be known to later generations.

Congress created the Veterans History Project in 2000. Since inception the Veterans History Project has collected, preserved, and made available more than 86,000 individual narratives of wartime service of the men and women among our armed forces. The Veterans History Project also accepts stories and materials from U.S. civilians who were professionally involved in supporting war efforts (such as war industry workers, USO workers, flight instructors, medical volunteers, defense contractors, etc.).

The American Folklife Center collects and preserves audio and video recorded histories, along with documentary materials such as memoirs, letters, diaries, maps, photographs and home movies. The material will be available to Veterans, their families, researchers, historians and future generations of Americans at the Library of Congress, with representative samples also online at the Veterans History Project web site.

Each week, the Veterans History Project receives approximately 100-150 Veterans' collections, with contributing partners including the Veterans' Administration, American Red Cross, Eagle Scouts, and universities and high schools, said Owen Rogers, liaison specialist, Veterans History Project - Library of Congress.

To participate in the Project, you must be a Veteran, an interviewer, or person donating a Veteran's collection. Students in the 10th grade and above may also participate and there are special resources for educators and students.

To learn more, donate a collection or register online, visit the Veterans History Project web site at www.loc.gov/vets.



Veteran Athletes Prepare For National Veterans Wheelchair Games

WASHINGTON – Across the nation, Veterans are preparing for the 33rd National Veterans Wheelchair Games. The Games, representing the largest annual wheelchair sports event in the world, are presented by VA and the Paralyzed Veterans of America. More than 500 Veterans from across the United States, Puerto Rico and Great Britain are expected to compete in the event, taking place July 13-18, 2013, in Tampa, Fla.

The games are open to all U.S. military Veterans who use wheelchairs for sports competition due to spinal cord injuries, neurological conditions, amputations or other mobility impairments.

The 33rd Games will be co-hosted by the James A. Haley VA Medical Center and the Paralyzed Veterans of America, Florida Gulf Coast Chapter.

"Participating in the Games is a truly life-changing experience for seriously injured Veterans of every generation," said Bill Lawson, U.S. Army Veteran and national president of Paralyzed Veterans of America. "Please take a moment to tell disabled Veterans

in your neighborhood about the Games. Encourage them to get involved. We can't wait to welcome them to the 33rd National Veterans Wheelchair Games in Tampa this summer."

The 33rd Games will include competitions in 18 different events such as swimming, basketball, table tennis, archery, and wheelchair slalom, which is a timed obstacle course. The athletes compete in all events against others with similar athletic ability, competitive experience or age.

In addition to the competitions and the opening and closing ceremonies, the Games will include a "Kids Day at the Games" Monday, July 15, at Jefferson High School. Local children with disabilities will have the opportunity to interact with the athletes, participate in sporting events, and watch the Veterans compete.

The public is invited to attend any of the sports competitions throughout the week of the Games, and admission is free. Up-to-date information is available on the official National Veterans Wheelchair Games website, www.wheelchairgames.va.gov.

Valor Games Southeast Coming To RDU Area In May

Valor Games Southeast, a three-day competition in adapted sports for wounded and injured Veterans and active-duty service members is coming to the Raleigh-Durham area May 21-23. Other host sites for 2013 are San Jose, Calif., June 11-13; Chicago, Aug. 12-14; and San Antonio, Texas, Sept. 24-26.

The Valor Games introduce Veterans and service members to a variety of adaptive sports with the goal of inspiring them to new heights of physical activity and wellness.

The Games are funded by the VA National Veterans Sports Programs & Special Events and the U.S. Paralympics.

Veterans or service members of any era qualify to participate in the Valor Games. Physical disabilities may fall into various categories, including: amputation/limb loss; post-traumatic stress; spinal cord injuries; stroke; traumatic brain injuries; visual disabilities and any disability rating from VA.

Bridge II Sports, an adaptive sports organization that works with the Durham



VAMC, will host the Southeast Valor Games.

Events including rowing, archery, cycling, air rifle and volleyball will be played in Cameron Indoor Stadium at Duke University, the Dean E. Smith Center at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and in the Reynolds Coliseum area at N.C. State University.

Contestants can register at www.valor-games-southeast.bridge2sports.org/index.php/register.

The public is welcome, and admission is free.



VA For Vets News At-A-Glance

Enhance your VA for Vets experience by taking advantage of the Virtual Collaboration Workspace (<http://vaforvets.va.gov/servicemembers/coachingcenter/pages/virtual-collaboration-tool.aspx>). This Web-based environment is available 24 hours a day/7 days a week for Veterans and military service members. You can:

- Chat with a Vet Rep, who can provide a needs-assessment, conduct a pre-coaching session orientation, and schedule a coaching session.
- Meet with a Veteran employment coordinator to learn more about the VA hiring process and receive guidance about finding non-competitive

jobs, completing federal job applications, and preparing for interviews.

- Attend live or on-demand training webinars. Training resources are coming soon.
- Download helpful materials related to the deployment lifecycle, job search and federal application process.

The Veteran Employment Services Office (VESO) oversees VA for Vets, a comprehensive career management program that enables Veterans to successfully join the civilian workforce. To learn more, visit www.VAforVets.VA.gov.

Get the latest VA for Vets news by joining the conversation on LinkedIn and Facebook.

VHA Enrolled Veterans Asked To Participate In National Survey

The 2013 national VHA Survey of Enrollees began April 14 and continues for 16 weeks.

The purpose of the survey is to provide critical and essential information on Veteran use of health services. This information supports annual VHA projections of enrollment, usage, and expenditures, as well as into a variety of high level VHA budget and policy related analyses.

Approximately 2,000 enrolled Veterans in each Veterans Integrated Service Network (VISN) will be surveyed. In total, the survey will collect information on a random sample of 42,000 Veterans enrolled in the VA system, who

choose to participate in an approximately 15-30 minute telephone call. Veterans in the sample may also complete the survey by mail or web.

Enrolled Veterans selected for the survey will receive a letter that provides information about the survey and the contractor conducting the survey on behalf of VA.

Veterans' participation in the survey will help ensure VA provides the best care possible for our enrollees, where it is needed, and when it is needed.

Previous survey reports are available on the VHA's Office of the ADUSH for Policy and Planning internet Web site at www.va.gov/healthpolicy-planning/reports1.asp.



VA Launches Womens' Health Care & Benefits Hotline

WASHINGTON – VA launched a new hotline April 23 — 1-855-VA-WOMEN — to receive and respond to questions from Veterans, their families and caregivers about the many VA services and resources available to women Veterans.

The hotline is staffed by knowledgeable VA employees who can provide information about benefits including health care services for women. Callers can be linked to information on claims, education or health care appointments as well as information about VA cemeteries and memorial benefits. Staff can answer urgent questions and provide referrals to homeless and mental health services as well as provide Vet Center information.

Women make up nearly 15 percent of today's active duty military and 18 percent of National Guard and Reserve forces. The population of women Veterans using VA benefits including health care is growing rapidly. Since 2000, the number of women using VA health care more than doubled, from nearly 160,000 in 2000 to more than 354,000 in 2012. Based on the upward trend of women in all branches of service, the number of women Veterans—and female VA users—will keep climbing.

VA officials say they are committed to making improvements for the growing population of women Veterans, including the way it communicates with them. In 2010, VA established an outbound call center to contact women Veterans and encourage them to enroll in VA health care.

"In VA health care alone, women constitute only 6 percent of VA patients, but those Veterans have a high perception of the quality care they are receiving," said Irene Trowell-Harris, director of VA's Center for Women Veterans.

"Many women who served don't self-identify as Veterans and therefore don't think they qualify for VA benefits. We need to correct existing misinformation and misperceptions so we can serve more women Veterans with the benefits they've earned."

Women Veterans are entitled to apply for the same benefits as their male counterparts, which include health care and pharmacy benefits as well as education benefits, disability compensation, home loans, employment assistance and more.

The hotline (1-855-VA-WOMEN) joins numerous other VA hotlines that provide critical information and assistance to Veterans, such as those for Veterans in crisis and in danger of becoming homeless. Veterans can also receive information and apply for benefits online at VA's www.eBenefits.va.gov and manage their health care at MyHealthVet.va.gov.

EXCELLENT SERVICE
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Defining **EXCELLENCE** in the 21st Century

VISN 6 Sites of Care & VA Vet Centers

Albemarle POC
1845 W City Drive
Elizabeth City, NC
252-331-2191

Asheville VAMC
1100 Tunnel Road
Asheville, NC 28805
828-298-7911, 800-932-6408
www.asheville.va.gov/

Beckley VAMC
200 Veterans Avenue
Beckley, WV 25801
304-255-2121, 877-902-5142
www.beckley.va.gov/

Brunswick Outreach Clinic
20 Medical Campus Drive
Supply, NC 28462
910-754-6141

Charlotte CBOC
8601 University East Drive
Charlotte, NC 28213
704-597-3500

Charlottesville CBOC
650 Peter Jefferson Pkwy
Charlottesville, VA 22911
434-293-3890

Danville CBOC
705 Piney Forest Rd.
Danville, VA 24540
434-710-4210

Durham VAMC
508 Fulton St.
Durham, NC 27705
919-286-0411, 888-878-6890
www.durham.va.gov/

Emporia CBOC
1746 East Atlantic Street
Emporia, VA 23847
434-348-1500

Fayetteville VAMC
2300 Ramsey St.
Fayetteville, NC 28301
910-488-2120, 800-771-6106
www.fayettevillenc.va.gov

Franklin CBOC
647 Wayah St.
Franklin, NC 28734-3390
828-369-1781

Fredricksburg CBOC
130 Executive Center Pkwy
Fredericksburg, VA 22401
540-370-4468

Greenbrier County CBOC
804 Industrial Park Rd.
Maxwelton, WV 24957
304-497-3900

Greenville CBOC
800 Moye Blvd.
Greenville, NC 27858
252-830-2149

Hamlet CBOC
100 Jefferson Street
Hamlet, NC 28345
910-582-3536

Hampton VAMC
100 Emancipation Dr.
Hampton, VA 23667
757-722-9961, 866-544-9961
www.hampton.va.gov/

Hickory CBOC
2440 Century Place, SE
Hickory, NC 28602
828-431-5600

Hillandale Rd. Annex
1824 Hillandale Road
Durham, North Carolina 27705
919-383-6107

Jacksonville CBOC
241 Freedom Way
Midway Park, NC 28544
910-353-6406

Lynchburg CBOC
1600 Lakeside Drive
Lynchburg, VA 24501
434-316-5000

Morehead City CBOC
5420 U.S. 70
Morehead City, NC 28557
252-240-2349

Raleigh CBOC
3305 Sungate Blvd.
Raleigh, NC 27610
919-212-0129

Raleigh II Annex
3040 Hammond Business Place
Raleigh, NC 27603
919-899-6259

Richmond VAMC
1201 Broad Rock Blvd.
Richmond, VA 23249
804-675-5000, 800-784-8381
www.richmond.va.gov/

Robeson County CBOC
139 Three Hunts Drive
Pembroke, NC 28372
910-521-8452

Rutherford County CBOC
374 Charlotte Rd.
Rutherfordton, NC 28139
828-288-2780

Salem VAMC
1970 Roanoke Blvd.
Salem, VA 24153
540-982-2463, 888-982-2463
www.salem.va.gov/

Salisbury VAMC
1601 Brenner Ave.
Salisbury, NC 28144
704-638-9000, 800-469-8262
www.salisbury.va.gov/

Staunton CBOC
102 Business Way
Staunton, VA 24401
540-886-5777

Tazewell CBOC
123 Ben Bolt Ave.
Tazewell, VA 24651
276-988-2526

Virginia Beach CBOC
244 Clearfield Avenue
Virginia Beach, VA
757-722-9961, ext. 1900

Wilmington HCC
1705 Gardner Rd.
Wilmington, NC 28405
910-343-5300

Winston-Salem CBOC
190 Kimel Park Drive
Winston-Salem, NC 27103
336-768-3296

Winston-Salem Annex
2101 Peters Creek Parkway
Winston-Salem, NC 27127
336-761-5300

Wytheville CBOC
165 Peppers Ferry Rd.
Wytheville, VA 24382-2363
276-223-5400

Beckley Vet Center
1000 Johnstown Road
Beckley, WV 25801
304-252-8220

Charlotte Vet Center
2114 Ben Craig Dr.
Charlotte, NC 28262
704-549-8025

Fayetteville Vet Center
4140 Ramsey St.
Fayetteville, NC 28311
910-488-6252

Greensboro Vet Center
2009 S. Elm-Eugene St.
Greensboro, NC 27406
336-333-5366

Greenville Vet Center
1021 W.H. Smith Blvd.
Greenville, NC 27834
252-355-7920

Jacksonville, N.C. Vet Center
110-A Branchwood Drive
Jacksonville, NC 28546
910-577-1100

Norfolk Vet Center
1711 Church Street
Norfolk, VA 23504
757-623-7584

Princeton Vet Center
905 Mercer Street
Princeton, WV 24740
304-425-5653

Raleigh Vet Center
1649 Old Louisville Rd.
Raleigh, NC 27604
919-856-4616

Roanoke Vet Center
350 Albemarle Ave., SW
Roanoke, VA 24016
540-342-9726

Virginia Beach Vet Center
324 Southport Circle, Suite 102
Virginia Beach, VA, 23452
757-248-3665

