



VA MID-ATLANTIC HEALTH CARE NETWORK • VISN SIX

Vol. 4, No. 10

“Excellent Care – Earned by Veterans – Delivered Here”

# Voices of VISN 6

Official news from around *your* VISN

July 31, 2014

## Exoskeleton Suit Gets Vets On Their Feet Again

By Steve Goetsch  
Richmond VAMC  
public affairs

Spinal cord injury (SCI) patients at Richmond VAMC will now benefit from an exoskeleton suit donated to the medical center.

The Exo Gait Trainer (GT) provided by Ekso Bionics was donated to the medical center on July 2, and has since provided additional therapeutic use for Veterans suffering from SCI or other disabili-

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Steve Goetsch

*Left: Army Veteran Dan Rose, steadies himself prior to being lifted by the Exo GT. Right: The Exo GT suit enables Veterans to stand and walk, helping to prevent muscle and bone density loss.*



Courtesy Ekso Bionics

## McDonald Becomes New VA Secretary

Robert McDonald was confirmed as Secretary of the Department of Veterans Affairs on July 29 by the Senate, making him the eighth Secretary since the establishment of the VA as a cabinet-level department. Prior to this appointment, he served as CEO of Proctor and Gamble (P&G) where he worked for over 30 years until his retirement in June 2013.

“I am grateful to President Obama and to Congress for entrusting me with this opportunity to lead the Department of Veterans Affairs,” McDonald said of his appointment. We are all immensely fortunate to work



Courtesy Photo

*Robert McDonald was confirmed as Secretary of the Department of Veterans Affairs July 29 by the Senate.*

in an organization chartered with serving our Nation’s Veterans.”

McDonald is a US Army Veteran and West

Point graduate coming from a family of Veterans who served during various

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## From The Director

During July, I spent a lot of time on the road in listening mode, visiting medical centers and clinics throughout the VISN in an effort to flush out the strengths and weaknesses of our scheduling system.

I met with dozens of schedulers, and I can tell you that schedulers have a tough job balancing the needs of Veterans against available appointment times, and doing so by working their way through the various electronic systems required to make it work. I'll also tell you that each and every one I met is committed to doing the best job possible.

We had open and frank discussions. I listened to the many challenges they face daily getting each Veteran the right appointment at the right time. I learned about

some issues that are easily remedied by local leadership, and some that can only be addressed at a national level. Those we can fix locally, we will. With regard to the system as a whole, VA is working on a replacement and we will share more about the new system as information becomes available.

While in the field, I was troubled to learn about reminder cards that were inaccurate and sometimes not as timely as they should be. The same goes for the content of audio reminders that can certainly be improved. We are forming a team to look into how to make these products the best they can be and we will look into how other non-governmental facilities accomplish these tasks with the intent of incorporating best practices for all.

In the meantime, the leadership teams at each facility, as well as here at the VISN, are focused on filling every available appointment as quickly as possible. As a team, we have been performing a daily review of wait times by clinic, and in doing so, we've made huge strides in moving people off wait lists and into appointments.

As always, timely appointments are really the outcome of having enough capacity. But appointments are not the end goal – seeing your clinician on a date and time convenient for you is our ultimate goal.

We continue to make great strides in building our capacity, and I am thrilled to announce that VISN 6 has just been approved for four additional clinics that will allow us to create additional capacity in areas where our clinics are bursting at the seams.

VA has approved additional CBOCs for Fredericksburg, Va., Charlottesville, Va., Raleigh, N.C., and the Hampton Roads area.

Long-term plans include consolidating the two clinics in Fredericksburg; the three clinics in Raleigh; and the Hampton Roads and Virginia Beach clinics into much larger Health Care Centers.

On a smaller scale, yet just as important to those who will use our services, I was happy to take part in a ribbon cutting for a Psychosocial Rehabilitation and Recovery Center in Asheville. This facility will play a pivotal role in Veterans' recovery.

Our physical medicine and rehabilitation efforts took on a whole new meaning recently with some major breakthroughs in science and technology. I'm sure the Exoskeleton article on Page 1 caught your attention.

Witnessing a person, who has been confined to a wheelchair, stand up and walk, is an emotional experience. I want to thank all those involved, from the manufacturer who developed the Exoskeleton, to the wonderful benefactor who donated it to the medical center for their roles. They are paving the way for recovery tin

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**Brad Garner**

*Mr. William Hubbard, Fayetteville Health Administration Service, shows Network Director Dan Hoffmann how Veterans check in using the new kiosks.*

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

“Excellent Care – Earned by Veterans – Delivered Here”  
**Voices of VISN 6**  
Official news from around your VISN

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# New Secretary Of Veterans Affairs Confirmed By Senate

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conflicts. He graduated in the top 2 percent of the Class of 1975, served as the Brigade Adjutant for the Corps of Cadets and was recognized by The Royal Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufacturing, and Commerce as the most distinguished graduate in academics, leadership, and physical education. He earned an MBA from the University of Utah in 1978.

## Exo GT continued from Pg 1

ties affecting their mobility.

The Exo GT is a wearable robotic suit containing several small motors that can be activated by a therapist manually or by the user shifting their weight. It replicates a normal gait pattern so patients can slow or stop adverse effects that result from immobility, such as muscle and bone density loss.

Through national fundraising efforts by the Soldier-Socks Foundation, Richmond VAMC became one of 10 VHA medical centers to receive an exoskeleton.

According to Chris Meek, co-founder of the SoldierSocks foundation, the Exo GT will be well-utilized by the medical center. "Richmond is the leader in spinal cord injury research. That and the fact that they serve the largest population of spinal cord injuries was just icing on the cake," said Meeks.

The Exo GT will allow the medical center to provide immediate, critical therapy to combat warriors returning from deployments. Richmond has around 60 inpatient and nearly 500 outpatient Veterans in the sub-acute stages of their therapy who will benefit from the Exo GT. In addition, the data and information collected from Richmond's SCI clinic will be gathered and used to further spinal cord research.

In preparation for the delivery of the exoskeleton, the SCI clinic has been busy developing rehabilitation and use protocols for Veterans. "We must develop these protocols because Veterans' safety is our number one priority," said Dr. Ashraf Gorgey, chief of Spinal Cord Research.

"Some patients have been confined to wheelchairs for a long time and have developed stiffening in the joints," Gorgey said. "They also have other issues like cardiovascular disease, spasms and hypertension that will have to be considered when developing training," he added.

Although the technology is cutting-edge, Gorgey has been following its development for the past three years. "I have been to many conferences, and in 2012 I attended a symposium on spinal cord injuries where

The recipient of numerous leadership awards and honorary degrees, in 2014, McDonald was awarded the Public Service Star by the President of the Republic of Singapore for his work in helping to shape Singapore's development as an international hub for connecting global companies with Asian firms and enterprises.

McDonald succeeds Acting VA Secretary Sloan D. Gibson who will resume his position as Deputy Secretary of Veterans Affairs.



**Steve Goetsch**  
*Army Veteran Dan Rose and Ekso bionics demonstrate the Exo GT for Richmond VAMC's SCI Service.*

this technology was featured," Gorgey said. "We knew Richmond could benefit from this technology and the staff has been very supportive in obtaining it."

U.S. Army Veteran Sgt. Dan Rose, who has an exoskeleton at home, provided a demonstration of the Exo GT and its capabilities. Rose, who was injured in Afghanistan and is paralyzed from the chest down, received training with a physical therapist and two spotters. "I worked with therapists at home, and between their communication and my follow through, we made the suit work seamlessly."

The Richmond SCI clinic will be sending four of its own therapists to attend the exoskeleton suit training provided by Ekso Bionics so that more therapists can prepare for home use of the suits by Veterans.

Initial use of the suit is scheduled to begin at Richmond in August. According to Mike Magill of Ekso Technologies, the EXO GT model donated to Richmond is built specifically as a therapeutic tool for hospital use and in the future the goal is to develop a home-use version.

### Moye Appointed Associate Director At Beckley VAMC



Allen Moye

#### West Va. Native Was Chief Of Health Administration Service

Allen Moye has been appointed associate director for the Beckley VAMC. Prior to this assignment, Moye served as Chief of Health Administration Service where he was responsible for Non-VA Care Coordination, Health Information Management, Patient Health Benefits, and Ambulatory Care Miscellaneous services.

Associate directors serve in key roles for the VISN – Moye will be a member of the executive leadership team and responsible for oversight and direction for the administrative services at the Beckley VAMC.

As a native of southern West Virginia, Moye received his undergraduate degree from the College of West Virginia and a Master of Science degree in Strategic Leadership from Mountain State University, Beckley, W.Va.

He is a member of the American College of Healthcare Executives. A U.S. Army Veteran, Moye joined the VA in May 1995 after six years of military service. He succeeds Brian Nimmo, who is currently serving as director for the Huntington VA Medical Center.

### Bazemore Appointed Chief Of Staff At Asheville VAMC

Dr. W. Carl Bazemore, has been appointed chief of staff at the Asheville VAMC where he has been serving as interim chief of staff since February. Prior to this assignment, Bazemore served as the director of the medical center's Medical Intensive Care Unit.

The chief of staff has direct responsibility for all clinical and patient care activities at the medical center and two community based outpatient clinics located in Franklin and Rutherfordton, N.C.

Bazemore earned his undergraduate degree at Duke University and his medical degree from Emory University School of Medicine in Atlanta. He completed his internship studies at Naval Medical Center Portsmouth. His residency and fellowship training were completed at Naval Medical Center San Diego. He is board certified in internal and critical care medicine, and pul-

monary disease by the American Board of Internal Medicine.

Bazemore, a U.S. Navy Veteran, came to Asheville in 1989 from the Naval Medical Center San Diego and entered private practice. He was a consultant to the VAMC beginning in 1997 and joined the full-time staff in 2008.

Dr. Bazemore is succeeding Dr. James Wells who accepted a position at the San Antonio VAMC.



Dr. W. Carl Bazemore

### Emporia CBOC Welcomes New Addition To Team

By Steve Goetsch  
Richmond VAMC public affairs

The Emporia, Va., CBOC received a second primary physician in June. Dr. Michael Neylon joined the team coming from Fort Lee where he worked with active duty soldiers for six years.

The Emporia clinic is popular with local Veterans, providing almost 8,400 appointments annually. Adding a second primary care physician is part of a larger effort to increase services to Veterans in the area. "We added Dr. Neylon because our patient population has grown and is still growing," said Dr. Isaac Amoako, Emporia primary care physician.

James Glenn, a Vietnam Army Veteran who just en-

rolled into the VA Healthcare System had his first appointment at Emporia and is relieved they are so close.

"I have ALS, and driving long distances in the car is very painful for me," said Glenn. "I waited to come here specifically because I live right down the road."

Although Emporia specializes in primary care, the facility offers many other services to include mental health, prescription and lab services as well as services that can be completed through telehealth.

Emporia delivers care by being responsive to changing patient needs. With many of Emporia's patients being Vietnam Era Veterans, offered services are targeted toward the greatest need like teleretinal imaging and the Warfarin clinic. The facility has also recently added a Women's Health Clinic.

# Hepatitis Treatment Option Available To Veterans

By Stephen Coombs  
VISN 6 Pharmacy Executive

Veterans in VISN 6 who suffer from the Hepatitis C virus (HCV) infection now have a new treatment option that may help cure their condition. Sovaldi, or more commonly known as sofosbuvir, is the first drug that has demonstrated safety and efficacy to treat certain types of HCV infections without the need for co-administration of interferon. Prior to the release of sofosbuvir, past HCV therapies included interferon which is often times poorly tolerated or contraindicated in many patients whereby limiting treatment options.

Prior to the drugs approval by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) in December 2013, sofosbuvir was only the third breakthrough therapy drug designated by the FDA. This designation indicated the drug would likely demonstrate a substantial improvement over other available therapies for patients with serious or life-threatening diseases and also provided the drug a priority and expedited review by the FDA.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, about 3.2 million Americans are infected with HCV. Hepatitis C is a viral disease that causes inflammation of the liver that can lead to diminished liver function or liver failure. Most people infected with HCV have no symptoms of the disease until liver damage becomes apparent, which may take several years.

Some people with chronic HCV infection develop scarring and poor liver function (cirrhosis) over many years, which can lead to complications such as bleeding, jaundice (yellowish eyes or skin), fluid accumulation in the abdomen, infections or liver cancer.

Sofosbuvir comes in an oral tablet and is dosed once per day. It is prescribed in conjunction with other HCV

medication(s) but again offers the significant advantage of an interferon free therapy in certain types of HCV while maintaining a high efficacy rate. The length of therapy is determined by the type of HCV being treated but for many patients treatment can be as short as 12 weeks. Veterans who have HCV and are enrolled in VA health care should contact their primary care provider or HCV treatment specialist to determine if sofosbuvir may be an appropriate treatment option.

For more information about sofosbuvir, visit [www.fda.gov/forconsumers/byaudience/forpatientadvocates/ucm377920.htm](http://www.fda.gov/forconsumers/byaudience/forpatientadvocates/ucm377920.htm).



## Psychosocial Care Expands In Asheville

*(L-R) Network Director Dan Hoffmann, National Advisory Committee Female Volunteer of the Year and Chairperson of the Buncombe County Veterans Council Alyce Knafllich, Asheville VAMC Director Cynthia Breyfogle, and Assistant Chief of Mental Health Services Dr. Laura Tugman cut the ribbon on the medical center's new Psychosocial Rehabilitation and Recovery Center July 9. The 5,040 sq. ft. building, includes a working kitchen, administrative and clinical offices for medication management, individual and group psychotherapy, social skills training, peer support and recovery programming. PRRCs provide intensive outpatient mental health services for VA medical centers with large Veteran populations with serious mental illness, including but not limited to schizophrenia, major depression, bi-polar disorder, and severe PTSD. The center will also house the medical center's Compensated Work Therapy and Peer Support training programs and administration.*

**Dennis Mehring**



## Oncology Clinic Makes Big Impact On Veterans

By Michael Maddox  
Salisbury VAMC public affairs

Battling a serious illness like cancer can be overwhelming, but the Oncology staff at the Salisbury VAMC is doing everything possible to ease the treatment process by partnering with Veterans.

That partnership shows through in the attention to detail and caring spirit of the staff in the Oncology Department, said Norde Wilson, who receives care in the clinic. He and his wife appreciate the way the staff treats patients.

“The people who work here are just as upright and pleasant at the end of the day as they are when they start. They’re always ready to accommodate us in any way they can – they take good care of me – and we’ll miss it when we don’t have to come,” said Wilson.

Dr. Jimmy Ruiz, chief of Oncology, said great customer service and compassion are a must for providing care to patients who are dealing with cancer diagnoses and treatment.

“Everyone here has this same sense of trying to



**Michael Maddox**  
*Lisa Kester, a pharmacist with the Salisbury VAMC Oncology clinic, prepares to mix a chemotherapy treatment for a patient.*



**Michael Maddox**  
*Christy Mullinax, an oncology certified nurse, chats with Veteran Norde Wilson while taking his vital signs before his chemotherapy treatment.*

make this experience the best that it can be for the Veteran, especially during troubling and difficult times that come with cancer diagnoses. We work to foster an environment where patients feel at home,” he added.

Something else that makes the department unique is the ability to provide as many services in one spot as possible.

“Infusion, oral chemo, dedicated pharmacists; everything is handled here at this facility,” said Ruiz.

The Oncology clinic treats patients who have both blood cancers and benign hematological problems, as well as standard oncology treatment for cancer patients with solid tumors.

Maeghan Iddings, a clinical program specialist in Oncology, said one of the services the clinic provides is thoroughly explaining the treatment to Veterans. “We have a nursing education clinic where our nurses thoroughly explain the treatment plan to each Veteran. It’s a huge component that makes the Veteran feel a little more at ease,” she said.

Salisbury is one of three facilities in VISN 6 that provide oncology care. Their Oncology clinic staff of 20 treated 900 Veterans in fiscal year 2012, and 1,062 in fiscal year 2013. With more than 1,100 Veterans already treated this fiscal year, the medical center’s oncology clinic is set to outpace the number of Veterans it saw last year.

While the staff sees more and more Veterans each year, they strive to create a welcoming, positive and personalized experience for each.



### **Former Asheville Employee Now CLC Resident**

Network Director Dan Hoffmann (left) and Asheville VAMC Director Cynthia Breyfogle (right) stand beside Army Veteran and former Asheville employee Jim Russell.

Russell is a 75-year-old retired Army Staff Sgt. and Vietnam War Veteran who now resides in the Asheville VAMC Community Living Center. Russell is also a former employee who worked in the medical center's Environmental Management Service before retiring from the VA.

Linda Burrell, chief nurse of Geriatrics and Extended Care, said Jim is well known for the signs that he tapes to the back of his wheel chair each day. "Everyone looks for the sign of the day," she said. "He either makes a point, like rating the food served that day or some sort of funny message."

**Dennis Mehring**



### **50th Anniversary Of The Gulf Of Tonkin Resolution Events**

#### **Haywood Vietnam Veterans Memorial**

Haywood County Courthouse

POC is Brandon Wilson, 828-646-6937, [Wilson@DoA.NC.Gov](mailto:Wilson@DoA.NC.Gov)

#### **North Carolina Vietnam Veterans Memorial**

I-85 Davidson County

POC is Barry West, 336-766-1496, [Barry.west@DoA.NC.Gov](mailto:Barry.west@DoA.NC.Gov)

#### **Vietnam Memorial of Mecklenburg County**

Thompson Park, Charlotte

POC is Joe Rapley, 704-563-2037, [Joe.Rapley@Bellsouth.NET](mailto:Joe.Rapley@Bellsouth.NET)

#### **North Carolina Veteran's Park, Fayetteville**

POC is Charles Sanchez, 910-486-1551, [Charles.Sanchez@DoA.NC.Gov](mailto:Charles.Sanchez@DoA.NC.Gov)

#### **Jacksonville Vietnam Veterans Memorial**

POC is Phil Daniels, 910-251-5704, [Phil.Daniels@DoA.NC.GoV](mailto:Phil.Daniels@DoA.NC.GoV)

The North Carolina Division of Veterans Affairs will host five events throughout the state in recognition of the 50th Anniversary of the Tonkin Gulf Resolution.

All events will take place **Sunday, Aug. 10, from 2 p.m. to 3 p.m.**

Memorial observation locations and points of contact listed.

# Fayetteville, Cumberland County Combat Homelessness

By Jeff Melvin  
Fayetteville VAMC Public Affairs Officer

More than 300 Veterans received information, VA and community services during the Community Homeless Stand Down at Festival Park in Fayetteville, N.C., July 24 and 25.

This year's event was highly successful due to greater collaboration and co-sponsoring by Fayetteville VAMC and the Cumberland County Continuum of Care on Homelessness – an umbrella organization responsible for the planning and coordination of homeless activities in Cumberland County.

“Through events like homeless stand downs and other programs, we are able to partner with the community and provide invaluable resources to homeless Veterans or those who are at risk of becoming homeless – to get them back on their feet and to provide them with the care they earned through their service,” said Medical Center Director Elizabeth Goolsby.

Fayetteville VAMC's Ennit Bryant said partnering with local communities has streamlined access to homeless programs and resources, and reduced barriers to these services.

Services include mental health, substance abuse treatment, employment, housing, medical and dental, legal, and simple needs such as food, clothing and supplies. Bryant is the program support assistant, for the medical center's Health Care for Homeless Veterans Program.

Another benefit of the partnership, Bryant said, is greater capability to reach larger numbers of Veterans and Veterans' families experiencing the challenges of homelessness.

Goolsby noted that the community's outpouring to help one another was incredible, citing a change in focus.

“Our focus over time has always been on the homeless,” said Goolsby in her welcoming remarks. “But now we are also focusing on the near homeless because



**Jeff Melvin**

*Fayetteville VAMC employees staff a table at the Community Homeless Stand Down July 24 and 25 at Festival Park in Fayetteville, N.C.*

some are just a breath away from being homeless.”

Cumberland County Continuum of Care on Homelessness representative Dee Taylor said the event wasn't just about bringing awareness to the community. Taylor, community services manager for the county's Community Development office, said the Community Homeless Stand Down is important because it also educates the community, connects the homeless to services and helps address unmet needs.

“Every year we have volunteers that are connected to homeless persons in a personal way that gives them a better understanding of the causes of homeless,” Taylor says. “Not everyone is aware of the services and programs available. Not everyone who needs help knows where to go for help. They come to these events to obtain information and services from agencies that will help them transition to a stabilization.”

In addition to Veterans, more than 600 other people in Cumberland County received services during the two-day event.

## Director's Column continued from Pg 2

ways that have only been a dream until now.

Focusing on the more traditional subject of medicine, I want to ensure that those we care for are aware that we are able to provide new drugs for Veterans suffering from Hepatitis C. These new drugs were approved by the FDA in December and have proven to be very successful. Please see the story on Page 5 for more details on our use of these drugs.

As always, I want to thank all those in VISN 6 who

work every day to provide the best health care possible to every eligible Veteran who seeks our service.

I'll close for this month by saying that our commitment to the mission of caring for America's Veterans is stronger than ever.

Sincerely,

Dan Hoffmann

### Richmond Expands Dialysis Unit

On Aug. 1, the Richmond VAMC held a groundbreaking ceremony for the dialysis unit expansion. The expansion increases the dialysis unit to nearly 18,000 square feet and will increase the number of chronic dialysis outpatients the medical center can treat from approximately 45 to 85.

The development increases the number of treatment spaces from 13 to 30. The new spaces are also larger, giving Veterans more privacy. New equipment such as an automated reserve water supply is part of the project and is a critical element of dialysis treatment. Phase one of the construction is slated to begin by the end of August.



Courtesy Photo

This artwork shows the floor layout containing an additional 9,500 feet and increases the number of treatment spaces from 13 to 30. The additional spaces are also larger, giving Veterans more privacy.

### Richmond VAMC public affairs

(Above from left) Cathy Bishop, Richmond VAMC hemodialysis nurse manager; Nkechi George-Winkler, legislative assistant to Representative Bobby Scott; John Brandecker, Richmond VAMC director; Dr. Julie Beales, Richmond VAMC chief of staff; Dr. George Feldman, chief of nephrology at Richmond VAMC and Paul Galanti, commissioner of the Virginia Department of Veterans Service.

### MyHealthVet Reaches Milestone

More Veterans are using the advanced features of VA's MyHealthVet (MHV) system to better access their medical teams. According to a June 20 report, over 1 million Veterans have opted in to MHV's secure messaging service.

On VISN 6's role in helping VA to reach this milestone, VISN 6 MHV Coordinator Tanara Harms credits the hard work of the VISN's MHV coordinators. "We have contributed in excess of 86,000 patients to the over 1 million that have opted-in for the nation. Additionally, our diligence paid off earlier in the month when we surpassed our 25 percent opt-in goal for VISN 6," said Harms.

MHV is an interactive, online personal health record database designed for Veterans, active duty service members, their dependents and caregivers. The secure messaging feature is recognized as one of MHV's best practices, and allows Veterans to communicate with their health care team(s) for non-urgent health care concerns on a secure server.

To use the secure messaging feature, Veterans must be receiving health care services from VA, have regis-



tered on My MHV as a "VA Patient" and have a Premium account. Research findings show that secure messaging:

- increases access and patient satisfaction
- increases convenience and efficiency
- enhances patient/provider relationships

In addition to secure messaging, MHV provides users' access to a host of health related information and services to include medical records and a prescription refill service.

VA credits all its MHV Coordinators and Champions with helping the Department reach the 1 million enrollee milestone.

For more information about MHV and secure messaging, visit [www.myhealth.va.gov](http://www.myhealth.va.gov).

### Highland County, Va., Veterans To Benefit From Grant

VA and the White House Rural Council announced the award of eight grants totaling more than \$800,000, focused on improving access to health care for Veterans living in highly rural areas.

The grants are part of a program authorized by Congress to help state Veterans Service Agencies and Veterans Service Organizations operate or contract for transportation services to transport Veterans to VA medical centers and other facilities that provide VA care.

In VISN 6, the Virginia Department of Veterans Services (VDVS) received a grant for more than \$8,000 to fund a transportation project for Veterans living in Highland County, Va.

“We are pleased to receive this award which will increase access to VA care for our most rural Veterans,”

said VDVS Commissioner Paul Galanti.

At this time the VDVS is in the planning stages and coordinating with local partners on implementation of the grant.

Brandi Jancaitis, executive director of the Virginia Wounded Warrior Program said, “The Virginia Department of Veterans Services will implement this grant through our Virginia Wounded Warrior Program and local partner in Highland County, the Valley Program for Aging Services, Inc. (VPAS). By joining with VPAS to enhance an existing transportation program, we are able to maximize grant dollars and close services gaps for rural Veterans.”

Funding was issued to seven states and 56 counties and is slated to serve more than 11,000 Veterans.

### VA To Restructure Office Of Medical Inspector

In response to the Office of Special Counsel’s (OSC) recent recommendations, Acting VA Secretary Sloan D. Gibson announced VA will restructure the Office of Medical Inspector (OMI) to better serve Veterans.

On June 23, the OSC sent a letter to President Obama regarding VA whistleblowers. Following the letter, Gibson directed an immediate review and subsequent briefing of OMI’s operation, process, and structure. As a result of the briefing, the acting secretary determined a clear need to revise the policies, procedures, and personnel structure by which OMI operates, and has directed a restructuring of the organization.

Gibson appointed Gerard R. Cox, MD, MHA as interim director of the OMI to assist with the transition.

“I expect Dr. Cox to help us restructure OMI to better serve Veterans and create a strong internal audit function, which will ensure issues of care quality and

patient safety remain at the forefront,” said Gibson.

Cox was previously appointed Assistant Deputy Under Secretary for Health for Policy and Services for the VHA in January 2014. Prior to joining VA, Cox served as a U.S. Navy medical officer for more than 30 years. Cox is a Veteran of the Persian Gulf War, during which he was deployed to a Fleet Hospital in Saudi Arabia (1990-1991).

He later oversaw Navy expeditionary health services throughout the Middle East, both ashore and afloat, while serving concurrently as Force Surgeon, U.S. Naval Forces Central Command and Fleet Surgeon, U.S. Fifth Fleet (2010-2012). In addition to other senior leadership positions, Cox also served as Assistant Inspector General of the Navy for Medical Matters.

As long-term restructuring moves forward, the Acting Secretary directed VA immediately suspend OMI’s hotline and refer all hotline calls to OIG.

### VA Opens Online Airborne Hazards, Open Burn Pit Registry

Veterans and service members who were exposed to burn pit smoke or other airborne hazards may now register with VAs Airborne Hazards and Open Burn Pit Registry.

The registry is open to any Veteran or service member who served in Operations Enduring Freedom (OEF), Iraqi Freedom (OIF) or New Dawn (OND), and Djibouti, Africa, after Sept. 11, 2001; and Operations Desert Shield, Desert Storm or the Southwest Asia theater of operations after Aug. 2, 1990.

According to the Burn Pit website, Veterans and service members who were exposed to burn pit smoke for long periods may be at greater risk for health problems. Health effects from burn pit exposure vary and depend

on a number of factors such as the kind of waste being burned, pre-existing conditions, and wind direction.

By participating in the registry, Veterans and service members can gain more information on related health concerns and receive information about ongoing health studies and VA services. Participants may request a no-cost medical evaluation in which to discuss their completed questionnaire with a VA or DOD health provider. In addition, other benefits include helping VA to learn more about the potential health effects of exposure to burn pits and other airborne hazards.

For more information or to enroll in VA’s burn pit registry, visit <https://veteran.mobilehealth.va.gov/AH-BurnPitRegistry>.

### VBA's Claims Processing Expedited, On Track For Record Year

The VBA is on track to complete more than 1.3 million claims this year – ensuring that nearly 200,000 more Veterans will receive decisions on their disability claims than fiscal year 2013.

Since 2011, VBA has been implementing the largest transformation in its history, fundamentally redesigning and streamlining the way it provides benefits and services to Veterans, their families and survivors.

“VBA has made significant progress toward eliminating the backlog, but there is more work to be done to reach our goal of processing all disability claims within 125 days in 2015,” said Allison Hickey, under secretary for benefits.

“VBA’s employees, half of whom are Veterans themselves, believe that Veterans should not have to wait for the benefits they have earned and deserve. While we work to drive down the backlog of disability claims, we must also improve productivity on other categories of non-rating work,” she said.

These rating decisions often determine eligibility for other VA benefits and services, including non-rating claims.

VBA has taken the following actions to improve

the timeliness and accuracy of non-rating claim decisions:

- Online Dependency Claims – VBA developed a new Rules-Based Processing System (RBPS) to automate dependency claims. Since inception, self-service features in RBPS have enabled over 75,000 Veterans to add or change the status of their dependents online. Over 50 percent of the dependency claims filed through RBPS are now automatically processed and paid in 1-2 days.

- Dependency Claims Contract – VA recently awarded a contract for assistance in entering data from paper-based dependency claims into VA’s electronic rules-based processing system. The contractor is entering the information from the paper-based dependency claims just as a claimant would enter information if filing the claim online.

- Up-front Income Verification for Pension – A new data-sharing initiative with the Social Security Administration and the Internal Revenue Service enables VBA to verify the income of pension applicants before awarding benefits and eliminates the annual income reporting requirement for pension beneficiaries.

### New Regulations Automate Burial Payments For Survivors

New burial regulations now allow VA to automatically pay the maximum amount allowable under law to most eligible surviving spouses, without the need for a written application.

Under former regulations, VA paid burial benefits on a reimbursement basis, which required survivors to submit receipts.

“VA is committed to improving the speed and ease of delivery of monetary burial benefits to Veterans’ survivors during their time of need,” said Acting VA Secretary Sloan D. Gibson.

This automation enables VA to pay a non-service-connected or service-connected burial allowance to an estimated 62,000 eligible surviving spouses for burial benefits in 2014.

Surviving spouses will be paid upon notice of the Veteran’s death. The burial allowance for a non-service-connected death is \$300, and \$2,000 for a death connected to military service.

For more information on monetary burial benefits, visit [www.benefits.va.gov/compensation/claims-special-burial.asp](http://www.benefits.va.gov/compensation/claims-special-burial.asp).

### VA Announces Adaptive Sports Grants For Disabled Veterans

VA has made \$8 million in grant funding available to provide adaptive sports opportunities for disabled Veterans and disabled members of the Armed Forces. Adaptive sports are those sports that have been created or modified for people with disabilities.

“Adaptive sports can help Veterans confront challenges and redefine their capabilities, which is critical to successful rehabilitation,” said Acting VA Secretary Sloan D. Gibson.

The new program provides grants to eligible organizations to plan, develop, manage, and implement appropriate adaptive sports activities.

Funding may be used for such things as training, program development, equipment, recreation therapists, coaches, sports equipment, supplies, program evaluation, and other activities related to program implementation and operation.

Eligible applicants for the grants include nonprofit organizations; public and private educational institutions; independent school districts; local, state and county governments and Native American tribal organizations. The application deadline is Aug. 11, 2014.

For more information, visit [www.grants.gov/web/grants/view-opportunity.html?oppId=258778](http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/view-opportunity.html?oppId=258778).

# VISN 6 Sites Of Care & VA Vet Centers

## MEDICAL CENTERS

**Asheville VAMC**  
1100 Tunnel Road  
Asheville, NC 28805  
828-298-7911, 800-932-6408  
[www.asheville.va.gov/](http://www.asheville.va.gov/)

**Beckley VAMC**  
200 Veterans Avenue  
Beckley, WV 25801  
304-255-2121, 877-902-5142  
[www.beckley.va.gov/](http://www.beckley.va.gov/)

**Durham VAMC**  
508 Fulton St.  
Durham, NC 27705  
919-286-0411, 888-878-6890  
[www.durham.va.gov/](http://www.durham.va.gov/)

**Fayetteville VAMC**  
2300 Ramsey St.  
Fayetteville, NC 28301  
910-488-2120, 800-771-6106  
[www.fayettevillenc.va.gov](http://www.fayettevillenc.va.gov)

**Hampton VAMC**  
100 Emancipation Dr.  
Hampton, VA 23667  
757-722-9961, 866-544-9961  
[www.hampton.va.gov/](http://www.hampton.va.gov/)

**Richmond VAMC**  
1201 Broad Rock Blvd.  
Richmond, VA 23249  
804-675-5000, 800-784-8381  
[www.richmond.va.gov/](http://www.richmond.va.gov/)

**Salem VAMC**  
1970 Roanoke Blvd.  
Salem, VA 24153  
540-982-2463, 888-982-2463  
[www.salem.va.gov/](http://www.salem.va.gov/)

**Salisbury VAMC**  
1601 Brenner Ave.  
Salisbury, NC 28144  
704-638-9000, 800-469-8262  
[www.salisbury.va.gov/](http://www.salisbury.va.gov/)

## OUTPATIENT CLINICS

**Albemarle CBOC**  
1845 W City Drive  
Elizabeth City, NC 27909  
252-331-2191

**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

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

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

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

**Goldsboro CBOC**  
2610 Hospital Road  
Goldsboro, NC 27909  
919-731-4809

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

**Greenville HCC**  
401 Moye Blvd.  
Greenville, NC 27834  
252-830-2149

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

**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, Suite 1  
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

**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

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

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

**Village Green Annex**  
1991 Fordham Drive  
Fayetteville, NC 28304  
910-488-2120 ext. 4020,

**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

## DIALYSIS CENTERS

**VA Dialysis and Blind Rehabilitation Clinics at Brier Creek**  
8081 Arco Corporate Drive  
Raleigh, NC 27617  
919-286-5220

**VA Dialysis Clinic Fayetteville**  
2301 Robeson Street, Ste. 101  
Fayetteville, NC 28305  
910-483-9727

## VET CENTERS

**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 Louisburg 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