



"Excellent Care – Earned by Veterans – Delivered Here"

Voices of VISN 6

Official news from around *your* VISN

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National VFW Convention Attracts High-Level Attention

By Steve Wilkins
VISN 6 Public Affairs

Members of the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW), attending that organization's national convention this year in Charlotte got an earful from the VA.

In addition to booths occupied in the Charlotte Convention Center July 23-27, by VA's Office of Connected Care, which traditionally sends representatives (MyHealthVet, Telehealth services, Blue Button, VA Mobile Apps, Make the Connec-

tion, Vets.gov, Veterans Health Library and Secure Messaging) to the annual event, VISN 6 compiled a team of health care professionals from Salisbury, Asheville, Fayetteville and Durham VAMCs representing a wide variety of services to Veterans; and the convention attendees heard from top VA leadership.

Over four days, Veterans were able to enroll in VA Health Care, register and participate in the Million Veteran Program,

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Luke Thompson
VA Under Secretary for Health Dr. David Shulkin, who visited the Charlotte VA Health Care Center, is flanked by Salisbury VAMC Director Kaye Green (l) and HCC Director Ken Mortimer (r).

Sec. McDonald Speaks At VFW Convention

Excerpts from remarks by Secretary Robert A. McDonald to the 117th Veterans of Foreign Wars National Convention, Charlotte, N.C. July 26.

Two years ago, I sat before the Senate Committee on Veterans Affairs for confirmation. In my confirmation hearing, I pledged to work to transform the VA. I pledged to make dramatic changes. I pledged to improve your access to the high-quality care and benefits that you've earned and deserve. And I pledged to work with Congress, with our Veteran Service Organizations, and with other stakeholders.

After confirmation, I consulted thousands of Veterans, VA employees, other stakeholders, and VSO leaders. We talked about how we could shape our MyVA transformation strategy, so VA would best serve Veterans.

And here's the point. It isn't my strategy, it's yours. It's not about me, it's about all of you. It reflects your ideals, your insights, and your innovations.

You've heard many times that VA is broken. So I'll answer one question: Can the Department of Veterans Affairs be fixed? Can it be trans-

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Luke Thompson
Secretary Robert A. McDonald speaks to the 117th Veterans of Foreign Wars National Convention in Charlotte, N.C., July 26.

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From The Director

Many would have us think that we have been undergoing an access crisis since 2014. The truth is that VA has transformed the provision of care since 2001 in a way that offers more Veterans more service than ever before. Although America sought to support Veterans after World War II, the greatest number of Veterans at once in our history, VA service and support of Veterans has never been stronger than it is right now. There are as many Veterans alive today as there were at the height of the Greatest Generation. Yet, VA is providing care to more Veterans every day than ever before.



In this VISN alone, we have doubled the number of Veterans we serve over the last 15 years, so that instead of reaching a fifth of the Veterans in our region (150,000 from a potential 750,000), we now provide service to more than half (377,000) and we have enrolled 520,000 Veterans to receive care.

Continually, we are caring for more Veterans in less time. In fact, one VA medical center in our network currently serves more than half the number of Veterans seen in the entire VISN in 2001, and is poised to expand the volume of care to practically equal that number in coming years! Salisbury VAMC, headed by Kaye Green, currently offers service to more than 91,000 Veterans and with the opening of health care centers in Kernersville and Charlotte, will increase the number of Veterans receiving care by 32,000 in Kernersville and 36,000 in Charlotte. By the way, the wait time for a primary care appointment in Salisbury is four days.

Those facilities are part of a construction program that brought 95 percent of the Veterans in the network's catchment area to within an hour of VA health care. In other words, more than 700,000 Veterans are currently within an hour's drive of a VA primary care appointment.

Yet for those who can't make the drive for any reason, there are alternatives to in-person VA care. Non-VA Care in the Community and Veterans Choice programs offer Veterans the opportunity to receive care as close to home and as quickly as possible. We stood the Choice program up quickly, so there are still some glitches we

are working to champion, but we are fervent in our efforts to provide Veterans the care they earned and deserve. Your VA staff is working diligently to provide Veterans the best possible care every time they need it.

We have championed the provision of telemedicine and the provision of telehealth services so that VA is second to none in the world in using remote and electronic means to provide treatment, consultation and analysis of Veteran health conditions wherever we can to supplement the care we provide Veterans with limited circumstances, so they receive necessary care with an immediacy that enables them to live their best lives without missing a beat. By November 2016 Veterans will have the opportunity to receive the same day access in behavioral health and primary care.

Since 2011 this VISN has provided 30.4 million appointments and 2.8 million bed days of care, with an average five day wait for a primary care appointment. Closing out the calendar year we expect to complete close to six million appointments, while filling 6.8 million prescriptions. In fact, 117 million of those prescriptions are filled through the mail with a delivery accuracy rate of 99.9998 percent, part of a VA rate that is unmatched in the private sector. The average delivery time for those parcels is 2.4 days. So, please understand that today's VA is serving more Veterans with better care and waiting less time than ever before in our nation's history, and our service is improving by the day. It is our passion. It's what we do.

Sincerely,

Dan Hoffmann

Askey Assumes VISN 6 Communications Post

Jennifer Askey has joined the VISN 6 team as the VISN 6 Communications Director effective July 10. Askey transferred from the Philadelphia VAMC where she oversaw Public Affairs, Community Relations, Congressional response and Medical Media operations as the Chief of Communications. Most recently, she served as the interim Executive Assistant to the Philadelphia Medical Center Director. Askey joined VA in 2010, first serving as the Public Affairs Officer and Congressional Liaison at the Hampton VAMC. She began her Federal service with the United States Army as a civilian Public Affairs Officer, serving more than 14 years in the field both stateside and abroad. A senior public affairs practitioner, she has worked in the media private sector as both an editor and reporter.



Jennifer Askey

In this key role for the VISN, she will be responsible for providing Public Affairs, Community Relations and Legislative Relations support to the VISN organization.

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Asheville VAMC Nurse Anesthetists Receive Honors

The Charles George VAMC anesthesia section recently received two significant honors from the 2016 graduates of the Duke University Nurse Anesthesia Program “Clinical Site of the Year” and the “Preceptor of the Year.”

Duke University has been sending Student Registered Nurse Anesthetists (SRNAs) to CGVAMC for 14 years. The Duke SRNAs complete a four week clinical rotation at the medical center providing supervised anesthesia care for our Veteran surgical patients.

The Asheville VAMC is one of 20 clinical sites utilized by the Duke SRNAs throughout North Carolina and Virginia. Despite Asheville being the farthest site from Durham, many students request to return for a second rotation because of the excellent clinical experience.

Asheville has been the recipient of the Clinical Site of the Year award several times which reflects an ongoing effort by the anesthesia staff to create a unique environment for learning while providing the best care possible for our patients.

“The CRNAs at this clinical site are an amazing group of intelligent, capable, and kind individuals. They strive every day to make sure that we, as students, have the best learning experience possible, and that we are comfortable at the clinical site. It is the one site where we believe that the preceptors get just as excited about the skills we get to perform as we do,” said one this year’s nursing students.



Scott Pittillo

The Charles George VAMC Nurse Anesthetist team. Front row (L to R): DR. Sabo, Brad Leon, Kaitlyln Bazemore, Duke SRNA, Susan Bazemore. Back row: Mike Ray, Wayne Johnson, Peter Ciaccio, Michelle Barker, Brian Ellis, Sarah Harvey.

This year, Susan Bazemore, was the recipient of the Preceptor of the Year. Susan is the Chief CRNA and Clinical Site Coordinator for the Duke Nurse Anesthesia. Of the 14 years that the CGVAMC has been affiliated with the Duke Nurse Anesthesia Program, a CRNA from Asheville was chosen seven times.

VFW Convention continued from Pg 1

which recently went over the 500,000 person mark in documenting Veteran genetic coding, Women Veterans’ Health, Mental Health and Suicide Prevention, homelessness, Hepatitis-C cure testing and information, VBA Claims issues, and information about how things work in the Vet Centers.

Then July 24 Dr. David Shulkin, VA’s Under Secretary for Health addressed the group. Shulkin spoke to the Veterans in a forum where he addressed topics concerning Veteran access to quality VA health care.

He spoke in prepared notes and answered questions from the audience for more than an hour. Before leaving the area, Shulkin made a stop to witness the cutting edge in health care, VA’s Charlotte Health Care Center.

Center Administrator Ken Mortimer led a tour that Sunday for a group including Salisbury Medical Center Director Kaye Green and VISN 6 Chief Medical Officer Dr. Mark Shelhorse.

Shulkin seemed impressed with the facility, which was under construction by the time he joined VA. But

he was also impressed with several of the programs and innovations that have been implemented by staff since the facility opened in April.

Shulkin was just the first major dignitary to visit the event, as presidential hopefuls travelled to the Queen City to make their cases. Hillary Clinton made an appearance July 25. But before a hopeful Donald Trump took the stage, VA Secretary Bob McDonald greeted the membership the morning of July 26.

McDonald delivered a speech detailing several recent VA accomplishments in transitioning from the bureaucratic crisis he inherited in the summer of 2014, noting services to Veterans unique to VA, outlining the future in VA benefits and health care, and thanking VFW, with other Veterans Service Organizations, which made VA and its provision of services possible, declaring that with their continued help, VA would continue to honor its commitment to providing Veterans the best care, in ways they know only VA is capable of providing. Excerpts of his comments are provided in this newsletter, beginning on the front page.

Durham Geriatric Activity Program Celebrates Success

Durham VAMC brought a longstanding group together July 13 to celebrate a milestone. Friends and staff joined Veteran members to commemorate the 30th Anniversary of the Gerofit program.

Many have been part of the program since its beginning. Founder Dr. Miriam Morey is still excited about all the program has done for Veterans and will continue to do for more of them, as it spreads throughout VA. It was most recently implemented at the Salem VA.

The Gerofit program is a model Clinical Demonstration Program of exercise and health promotion established at the Durham VAMC in 1987. Gerofit encourages physical activity among older Veterans to improve their health, sometimes helping to reverse declining health. VA Geriatric Research, Education and Clinical Center studies have shown that enhanced provider counseling, offering more educational materials and increased clinical intervention to motivate patients to move, which are tenets of the program, can benefit them over time.

According to Durham VAMC's Pete Tillman in an earlier article, "The program gives Veterans an opportunity to socialize regularly while maintaining their physical abilities. They can be seen on treadmills, exercise bikes, and even participating in Tai Chi."

In 2013 the VA Office of Geriatrics and Extended Care funded an implementation program to establish Gerofit to new partners across the country. Gerofit is now successfully operating in VA Medical Centers in Baltimore Md., Canandaigua and Rochester N.Y., Greater Los Angeles Calif., and Miami Fla.



Courtesy Photo

Dr. Miriam Morey (white shirt, center) initiates a spin class for a group of Veterans during the early days of the Gerofit program in 1987.

Dr. Morey says, "The Gerofit program is a wonderful example of health promotion and demonstrates how Veterans with chronic diseases are able to exercise safely." Physical activity helps other patients as well, so participating in other similar things, like VA's MOVE programs and a new initiative for patients with PTSD can be helpful. The GRECC research is coupled with a close relationship to clinical providers and leaves no doubt that Veterans at the Durham VAMC are in capable and qualified hands. [Click here for more information about Gerofit.](#)

Hampton VAMC Selects Executive Team Doctor, Nurse

By Daniel Henry
Hampton VAMC Public Affairs

Hampton VAMC recently announced the selection of two new additions to its healthcare executive leadership team. Priscilla Hankins, MD, was appointed chief of staff for the healthcare system and Crystal Lindaman, MSN, RN, was named nurse executive.

"We're thrilled to welcome Priscilla and Crystal into their new roles at the Hampton VA," says Mike Dunfee, facility director. "Their respective success and experience in leading people and assuring care delivery to our Veterans is an excellent fit as we continue working to expand access to Veterans throughout the region."

Hankins will step into the role vacated by the recently retired Dr. G Arul, who served the Hampton Roads Veteran community for 13 years as the facility's top doctor. Hankins, who has served as acting

chief of staff intermittently over a 6-month transition period, brings a wealth of knowledge and experience from her previous role as the hospital's chief of mental health.

A Navy Veteran who began serving at Hampton VAMC in 1993, Hankins will oversee all clinical programs at the Medical Center. "Priscilla is a trusted voice at the Hampton VA and will be an essential part of our efforts to continually improve the Veteran experience," says Dunfee. "Priscilla is known to the Veteran community, our stakeholders and the local media as a familiar and authoritative voice on clinical and mental health issues."

Leading the hospital's nursing services, Lindaman's role as associate director for patient care services gives her responsibility for the day-to-day organization, direction, and coordination of all nursing

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VIP Treatment At McGuire VAMC Gets Results

By David Hodge
Richmond VAMC Public Affairs

Everybody needs a break, right? For Veterans dealing with problems like chronic pain, coupled with weight problems and poor diet, the first step may seem insurmountable.

The McGuire VAMC has a group dedicated to teaching Veterans to take the steps needed to overcome chronic pain. The Veterans Integrative Pain (VIP) Center uses self-management techniques to break the pain cycle and turn around someone's overall health.

"Think of VIP as an empowering wellness center where you take back your health," said Dr. Meghan Rooney, a psychologist and co-clinical coordinator at the VIP Center. Rooney said she is not aware of any other program like this in our medical center region.

VIP offers wellness initiatives such as acupuncture, anti-inflammatory diet group, biofeedback, mindfulness and meditation, Qi Gong, and Tai Chi. "We have front row seats to the changes in people's lives," Rooney said. "This stuff is working. People are living again."

At the VIP Center, Veterans are encouraged to take the lead in their health care. One of those Veterans, Marine Corps Veteran Kelvin Willis has been coming to McGuire since 1982.



David Hodge

Dr. Mark Farrington, a psychiatric clinical nurse specialist at the Veterans Integrative Pain Center, demonstrates the Archer pose during a class of Qi Gong,

"I used to have a lot of pain," Willis explained. "Now, the pain is mild compared to what it used to be. I'm exercising and eating the proper food."

During a recent Qi Gong class, each class member

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Durham Receives East European Visitors For Tour

By Steve Wilkins
VISN 6 Public Affairs

A cadre of medically-focused soldiers from the nation of Moldova visited the Durham VAMC recently for an introduction on how America honors its Veterans through continued care and benefits after their military service.

According to North Carolina National Guard officials, who hosted the group throughout their stay, the Moldovan military does not have a program or medical facility that supports Veteran medical needs as comprehensively as VA. So the tour of a VA medical facility was especially beneficial for them. The Moldovan contingent included an Army hospital commander and administrative personnel, who traveled to North Carolina under the State Partnership Program (SPP) agreement they share.

Durham VAMC Director DeAnne Seekins welcomed the group with an introduction to VA's mission and values and an overview of hospital operations and capabilities. Medical center staff supported the visit



Linnie Skidmore

Durham VAMC Director DeAnne Seekins was on hand to welcome members of a Moldovan Delegation who visited for a look at how America honors its Veterans.

with presentations of critical as well as ancillary areas

[Continued on Pg 8](#)

Asheville Social Worker Awarded For Helping Veterans

From Blue Ridge Now Online staff reports

An Asheville VAMC social worker who has dedicated his career to improving the well-being of the nation's veterans has received the National Social Worker of the Year Award from the National Association of Social Workers.

John Cowart was chosen for his work as the former Prisoner of War Coordinator for the VA in Asheville. Cowart organized weekend reunions for the survivors of the World War II battles of Bataan and Corregidor.

"John Cowart has provided direct services to generations of our nation's brave Veterans, including those who served in the Spanish American War, World War I and II, the Korean War, Vietnam War, Gulf War and the Afghanistan and Iraq wars," said National Association of Social Workers CEO Angelo McClain. "His work has been awe-inspiring, innovative, and inspirational."

For 15 years Cowart also arranged and financed a Washington, D.C. trip for Veterans living with PTSD to visit the national War Memorials as a form of therapy and healing.

He built and strengthened relationships that did not previously exist between VA medical centers, the Veterans Benefits Administration, the North Carolina Division of Veterans Affairs, Congressional offices, county veteran's service offices, and local communities.

The award honors a member of the association who has demonstrated the best of the profession's values



Scott Pittillo
Asheville Social Worker John Cowart speaks during a recent POW/MIA ceremony. He was recently recognized for a lifetime of service to Veterans.

and achievements through specific accomplishments and highlights superb accomplishments in the practice of social work.

"John Cowart is especially deserving of this award because he has shown how powerful social work can be in improving the lives of veterans who have sacrificed so much for our nation," McClain said. "His efforts have truly made a difference in so many lives and inspired generations of social workers to come."

VIP continued from Pg 5

worked to replicate the fluid-like hand and arm motions while maintaining a steady midsection and firmly-planted feet. Dr. Mark Farrington explained to the class how this traditional Chinese practice uses a combination of body posture, movement, and breathing control to bring healing and energy to the body.

Farrington, a psychiatric clinical nurse specialist at the VIP Center, also performs acupuncture and mindfulness and meditation. Many of the techniques and methods used at the VIP Center are used in private practice all over the world, he said.

"In everything I do, mindfulness has a direct effect on the perception of pain—leading to more acceptance and less stress," Farrington said.

Imagine cutting a wedge out of a lemon and placing it to the tongue, Farrington posited. The body automatically begins to respond with increased saliva or the lock-jaw feeling. The body's response from the brain is an example of the power of the mind.

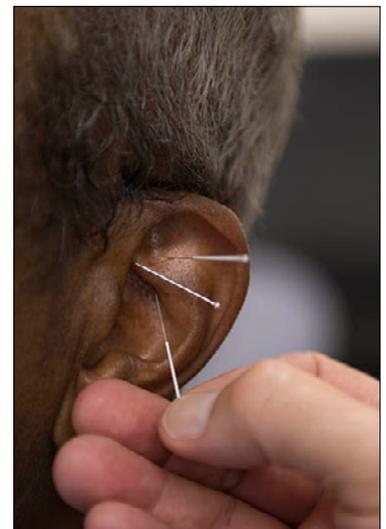
"Pain comes from injury, but chronic pain activates the nervous system," Farrington said. "Learning to ac-

cept the pain improves the overall reaction to chronic pain."

Willis, who has participated in Qi Gong, Tai Chi and the anti-inflammatory diet group, said he has lost 28 pounds since he began programs at the VIP center.

"But, I'm looking to go 40 pounds," Willis added.

"If you don't think you can do things on your own, come to VIP," Willis stated. "I didn't think it would be this beneficial. I know it is working because I can feel the difference."



David Hodge
Acupuncture is often a first step for Veterans looking to manage chronic pain.

Salem VAMC Staff Pays Tribute To 22 Local Veteran Artists

Salem VAMC staff paid tribute to 22 Veterans who participated in the local and National Creative Arts competition this year. The five divisions for entry submission included art, creative writing, dance, drama, and music.

The National Veterans Creative Arts Festival (NV-CAF) is the celebration and grand finale stage and art show, which are the culmination of talent competitions in art, creative writing, dance, drama and music for Veterans treated in the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) national health care system.

Salem has participated in the competition for the past eight years and we are honored to have several Veterans win medals at the national level. An increase in the number of participating Veterans for the 2016 local competition led to 35 entries submitted for National judging. Seven individual Veterans won a total of 10 medals, three of which were first place entries.

VA medical facilities incorporate creative arts into their recreation therapy programs to further the rehabilitation milieu for both inpatients and outpatients. This annual competition recognizes the progress and recovery made through that therapy, and raises the visibility of the creative achievements of our Nation's Veterans after disease, disability or life crisis.

Receiving gold medals were female Veterans Bonnie Clark, Stephanie Somers and Cynthia Flanagan.

Ms. Flanagan, an Air Force Veteran who served during the Persian Gulf War, has also been invited to give a live classical piano performance during the National Veterans Creative Arts Festival in Jackson, Mississippi. Of all the national winners, only about 20-25 are invited to perform their solo's for the festival stage show. We are very honored that Ms. Flanagan will be representing Salem VAMC's talented Veterans!

The 2016 local phase of the National Veterans Creative Arts Competition ended on March 25. For information regarding entering the 2017 competition, please contact recreation/creative arts therapy staff at the VA facility in which you are enrolled.

The competition is open to Veterans who are enrolled at a VA Medical Center or Outpatient Clinic before entering the local competition. An eligible Veteran can enter local competition at only one VA facility per year. He/she can submit an entry in creative writing, dance, drama or music categories with a Veteran or group from another VA facility, but still represents and must go through his/her originating VA facility to enter the competition. This facility should be the site where he/she receives their primary treatment.



Richmond Magazine Names McGuire Doctor Top Dentist

Dr. Cassidy Turner, who serves as the Chief of Dental Service at the Richmond VAMC and works closely with VA patients and doctors in both inpatient and outpatient settings to help deliver all aspects of dental treatments, received recognition as a "Top Dentist" by the Richmond Magazine in the category of Hospital Dentistry. Earlier this year, the Magazine mailed letters to approximately 769 local dentists in which they asked folks to nominate peers. Additionally, Turner volunteers for the Virginia Dental Association Foundation's Missions of Mercy projects. Turner completed a two-year general practice residency between VCU and the Richmond VAMC after earning her D.D.S. degree from Virginia Commonwealth University School of Dentistry in 2007.

Fayetteville Honors CLC Boxers With Special Event

By Fayetteville Public Affairs

The passing of boxing legend Muhammad Ali prompted recreational therapy intern Wesley Wray and her rec therapy co-workers to move forward with an idea they had been tossing about to honor several Fayetteville VAMC Community Living Center residents who were boxers in their youth, most notably CLC resident Larry Carlisle. In his heyday, Carlisle was a premier fighter, earning the 1969 AAU Light Middleweight title and multiple All-Marine titles. In 1971, he won three Marine Corps titles, the Golden Gloves welterweight title and a silver medal in the Pan Am Games.

A few days before “Boxing Day” as the event was dubbed, a visitor to the medical center overheard the mention of Carlisle’s name. That visitor, Al Smith, former boxer, longtime U.S. Army boxing coach and noted trainer, knew Carlisle well and he knew others in the military boxing community who knew Carlisle.

Coach Smith, a Carolina Boxing Hall of Fame inductee, made a few calls and on June 30 dropped in on the celebration with some big names in military boxing annals to pay tribute to Carlisle.

Among those dropping in were: J.C. Davis, Carlisle 1st coach, longtime Marine boxing team coach and well-known trainer; former All-Army boxer Ray Mercer, 1988 Olympic Gold Medalist and former World Boxing Organization heavyweight champion; Nathaniel Fitch Sr., 1984 AAU Super Heavyweight champion, 1987 Golden Gloves Super Heavyweight Champion, who lives in Spring Lake and is a Carolinas Boxing Hall of Fame inductee like Smith; and Carlisle All-Marine boxing contemporaries George Haynes, Charles Jackson and Tony Braxton.



Jeff Melvin

Recreational therapy intern Wesley Wray, kneeling, poses for a photo with CLC resident Larry Carlisle and several of his ‘brothers in arms and the ring.’ Top row from left, Al Smith, Ray Mercer, George Haynes, Nathaniel Fitch Sr. and J.C. Davis; kneeling, left, Tony Braxton, and far right Charles Jackson.

Haynes, a seven-time All-Marine champion at 135 lbs., said he still uses the training technique Carlisle taught him more than 40 years ago to train fighters. The men, brothers in arms as well as in the ring, gladly took time out of their busy lives to pay tribute to a fellow warrior.

Durham continued from Pg 5

of the facility, including the inpatient ward, Emergency Department, Community Living Center, Recreation therapy and volunteer services.

According to Durham VAMC Executive Assistant Pete Tillman, “the Moldovan visitors and the NC National Guard soldiers were impressed all the way around. They told me how grateful they were to visit and learn from our staff.”

Other VA programs, like MyHealthVet and Secure Messaging became part of the presentation, as staff descriptions unfolded the interconnectedness and holistic nature of VA Health Care during their discussions with the international visitors.

Army Maj. Veronica Alston, one of the group’s American military escorts, is the proud wife of a Veteran receiving care and volunteering at the Durham

VAMC. She claimed that, “My husband has gained a lot more confidence since being a part of the Durham VA family. She continued, saying, “He currently volunteers at the MyHealthVet section and has recently participated in the Creative Arts Festival as well as the [National Veterans] Wheelchair games in Utah earlier this month. I don’t think there is any country that takes care of its Veterans like the US and I just want to show the officers what great looks like.”

Last stop on the tour was the recently renovated 12,500 square-ft. Durham VAMC Emergency Department, which now houses a psychological emergency center, which allows for more integrated mental health care within the unit. But, Tillman added, “They were

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VA Named A “Most Wired” Hospital System

VA, representing all of its health care facilities nationwide, is a 2016 “Most Wired” health care system. This is the fourth consecutive year VA has been designated for the honor, which distinguishes VA’s health care system as a leader in clinical integration and adoption of health Information Technology (HIT) to better care for our Nation’s Veterans. Technology is improving the efficiency of care delivery and creating a new dynamic in patient interactions, according to results of the 18th Annual Health Care’s Most Wired® survey, released this month by the American Hospital Association’s (AHA) Health Forum.

According to the survey, Most Wired hospitals, such as VA health care facilities, are using telehealth to fill gaps in care; provide services 24 hours a day, 7 days a week; and expand access to medical specialists. Being named a 2016 Most Wired award winner distinguishes VA’s health care system as a leader in the implementation and use of EHRs, mobile health technology, and social media to better care for our Nation’s Veterans – three criteria identified as significant in today’s health care delivery by Most Wired.

“Hospitals are breaking-out of their traditional four walls and providing care where and when patients need it,” said Rick Pollack, president and CEO of the AHA. “These Most Wired hospitals exemplify this transformation by harnessing technology, engaging patients and offering services remotely.”

As a Most Wired health care system, VA offers more than seven apps in mobile marketplaces to help Veterans address Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), connect with health care providers, and leverage technologies to track and manage their health. VA is using technology to build patient engagement with that Veteran’s lifestyle in mind, which includes online access to their health care teams via Secure Messaging

available on its personal health record. Also critical is to ensure that patients get the right care; Most Wired hospitals are using predictive modeling to eliminate preventable problems. For VA, advanced analytics to support population health has been a central focus of VA for nearly a decade. VA’s Corporate Data Warehouse (CDW) serves as a repository for patient-level data aggregated across the VA national health delivery system. Clinical summaries and reports created using CDW are an indispensable part of how VA delivers care.

“Receiving the Most Wired designation acknowledges VA’s continued commitment to using information technology innovation to improve the health outcomes for our Veteran patients,” said VHA Under Secretary for Health, David J. Shulkin, M.D. “We are pleased to have been selected a ‘Most Wired’ hospital system by our industry peers. This recognition affirms our leadership in the use of health technology that improves quality and coordinated care.”

HealthCare’s Most Wired® survey, conducted between Jan. 15 and March 15, 2016, is published annually by Health & Hospitals Networks (H&HN). The 2016 Most Wired® survey and benchmarking study is a leading industry barometer measuring information technology (IT) use and adoption among hospitals nationwide. The survey of 680 participants, representing an estimated 2,146 hospitals—more than 34 percent of all hospitals in the U.S.—examines how organizations are leveraging IT to improve performance for value-based health care in the areas of infrastructure, business and administrative management; quality and safety; and clinical integration.

Detailed results of the survey and study can be found in the July issue of H&HN. For a full list of winners, visit www.hhnmag.com.

Hampton continued from Pg 4

functions throughout the medical center. The previous nurse executive, Shedale Tindall left Hampton VAMC in late 2015.

“Crystal’s proven ability to build teams that produce results as our chief nurse for acute care services was key to her selection,” Dunfee says. “For the last five years she has served as both an advocate for the Veterans under her watch and 160 nursing staff under her supervision. Her leadership will be a significant asset as we continue to improve the experience of our Veterans.” Lindaman has more than 35 years of nursing experience.

In addition to these new appointments, the Hampton VA medical center remains focused on expand-

ed access to care for Veterans throughout Hampton Roads.

The facility is in the midst of a robust and aggressive expansion of clinical and administrative spaces, that includes the addition of more than 50,000 square feet of new on-campus construction dedicated to mental health and specialty services; the building of a new stand-alone dialysis center; and, the addition of more than 300 surface parking spaces to meet the ever growing needs of local Veterans.



Secretary Remarks continued from Pg 1

formed? The answer is yes. Absolutely.

Not only can it be transformed, transformation is well underway—and we're already seeing results.

Changing VA means changing leadership. So it's important you know that 13 of our top 18 executives are new since I became Secretary. These are world-class, enthusiastic business leaders and healthcare professionals. And eight of them are Veterans themselves.

It's important you know that since early last year—March 2015—our new MyVA Advisory Committee has been hard at work. These are innovative, resourceful, respected leaders who are advising us on transformation. They know business. They know customer service. They know Veterans.

It's important you know we're collaborating with world-class institutions like Johnson & Johnson, USAA, Starbucks, NASA, Kaiser Permanente, Hospital Corporation of America, Virginia Mason, Marriott and Ritz-Carlton, among others. And it's important you know we're partnered with respected organizations like the YMCA, the Elks, the PenFed Foundation, LinkedIn, Coursera, Google, Walgreens, academic institutions, other Federal agencies, and many more.

New leadership, innovative collaboration, expanded partnerships—all of that matters. These are powerful, productive partnerships for Veterans.

Over the last two years, we've helped build a new national network of 67 Community Veterans Engagement Boards—CVEBs. CVEB partnerships leverage community assets, not just VA assets, to help ensure we implement local solutions to meet the needs of Veterans in our communities. Our goal is 100 CVEBs across the country by year's end. And if there's no CVEB in your community, let's help make it happen.

Let me talk about VA healthcare. You know VA's the largest integrated healthcare system in the country. We have a unique lifetime relationship with our nine million patients, and a single electronic health record across the entire enterprise. Nobody else offers that.

Our mental health care's integrated with primary care, with specialty care, and with psycho-social support to minimize barriers and help resolve problems early. Nobody else offers that.

VA healthcare is whole Veteran healthcare—body, mind, and soul, customized to meet Veteran needs. Yoga? Acupuncture? Sports therapy, music therapy, writing and art therapy? We validate and embrace what works to heal Veterans. And VA care is integrated with non-medical determinants of health and well-being that people often miss. I'm talking about things like education services, career transition support, fiduciary services, pension resources, disability compensation, and many others. Nobody offers all that.

And our Under Secretary of Health, Dr. David Shulkin, is changing our system to proactive, holistic healthcare and wellness. It's time we got beyond just reacting to disease when it happens.

Let me talk about access to VA healthcare. You should know that more Veterans are coming to VA for our care, and waiting less time.

You should know that last year Veterans had nearly five million more appointments than the previous year. Almost 57 million were in VA facilities, over 21 million were VA care in communities. Last March Veterans set a record for completed appointments—5.3 million inside VA, 730,000 more than March 2014. Last March Veterans were issued 370,000 authorizations for care in the community—twice as many as March 2014. Those authorizations represent more than 2 million appointments for Veterans in the months ahead.

Ninety-seven percent of appointments are now completed within 30 days of Veterans' preferred date. Eighty-six percent are completed within seven days. And 22 percent are completed the same-day.

You should know that average wait time for primary care is around five days, six days for specialty care, and two days for mental healthcare. And by December, you can expect same day access in primary care and same day access in mental healthcare. By the way, VA's the only healthcare system that publicly reports on wait times as a measure of access.

Ninety percent of Veterans we've surveyed are "satisfied or completely satisfied" with the timeliness of their care. We won't be satisfied until we hit 100 percent.

So we are making important progress. But you rarely hear that in the media. You'd never know we lead in many fields of research that benefit all Americans—PTSD, Traumatic Brain Injury, Spinal Cord Injury, prosthetics, genetics. You'd never know the American Customer Satisfaction Index rated your National Cemetery Administration No. 1 in customer service five times running.

You'd never know J.D. Power rated your mail-order pharmacy best in the country in customer satisfaction six years running. Our employees are good people. I'm proud of them. They care about us. They want to serve us well. And we're equipping them for success.

They're not all perfect, not by a long shot. But it's a gross misrepresentation to cherry-pick the worst and hold them up like they represent VA employees, just like it's a gross misrepresentation to hold up a bad Veteran to represent all of us. It's a distortion that sells papers, but it's a distortion that hurts Veterans, and hurts

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Hampton continued from Pg 8

particularly moved by the Hospice visit and the honor processional that was explained to them.

The SPP evolved from a 1991 U.S. European Command decision to set up the Joint Contact Team program in the Baltic Region with Reserve component Soldiers and Airmen.

The program has been successfully building relationships for over 20 years, with at least 76 nations around the globe. SPP links a unique component of the Department of Defense – a state's National Guard - with the armed forces or equivalent of a partner country in a cooperative, mutually beneficial relationship.

Forged from NATO's 1999 Partnership for Peace

and renewed in 2015, the North Carolina Partnership for Peace program is based upon an agreement linking these two states together to better facilitate cooperation in the area of civil emergency operations, expansion of markets, cultural, scientific and academic exchanges, and the coordination of humanitarian efforts, private and many governmental and non-governmental organizations.

According to Tillman, "Each part of the visit was well received, from the common link with Joe Scunziano at our greeting, to the final farewell with Dr. Villani in the ED. It was a reminder that health care delivered here truly is world class."

Secretary Remarks continued from Pg 10

the good people caring for them.

Some claim there's no accountability at VA. Don't think we hold people accountable? Tell that to the VA employee in Augusta, Georgia, recently convicted of falsifying healthcare records. He's facing sentencing that could include years in prison and thousands of dollars in fines.

All told, we've terminated over 3,750 employees in two years.

Some people think everything will be fine if we fire more people, more quickly. It's not true. We can't fire our way to excellence. Over my 33 years in the private sector, I've never encountered an organization where firing people was a measure of leadership. Now, consequences for behavior inconsistent with our values are part of effective leadership, and we're committed to that principle. But we won't punish people based on opinions, recycled and embellished media accounts, or external pressure. It's not in the best interest of the Veterans we serve.

Excellence is what we're after. So the right dialogue is about forward-looking leadership, and sustainable accountability. Sustainable accountability gives you positive outcomes. Sustainable accountability is leaders and supervisors providing routine feedback, just like you remember in well-led, well-trained military outfits. It's recognizing what's going well, coaching and re-training when improvement's necessary. It's ensuring employees understand how daily work supports our mission, values, and strategy. It's training leaders to lead and employees to exceed expectations, every day. And, yes, it's taking corrective action when it's warranted and supported by evidence.

These are pretty simple concepts for Veterans. These very same principles built the greatest fighting force in history.

We're serious about the work we're doing for you,

and we have the opportunity to look back at 2016 as the year we turned the corner for Veterans. But there are some things we can't do without the help of Congress.

It's important that you know the Senate Appropriations Committee approved a budget nearly equal to the President's request. The House proposed a \$1.5 billion reduction. That will hurt Veterans, impede some critical initiatives to transform VA into the high-performing organization you deserve.

Eighty-six years ago last week, VSOs made the Veterans Bureau happen. Nine years later, VSOs made the Veterans Administration happen. VSOs got us the GI Bill. You got us the Montgomery GI Bill. You got us the post-9/11 GI Bill. You're why President Reagan made VA a Department—giving all of us "a seat at the table of our national affairs." And you're the ones who can keep Veterans in control of how, when, and where THEY wish to be served.

And that's what MyVA is about.

Now, you'll hear lots more recommendations about VA's future. Some have argued VA can best serve Veterans by shutting down VA healthcare altogether. They argue that closing VHA is the "bold transformation" Veterans and families need, want, and deserve. I suspect that proposal serves some parties somewhere pretty well. But it's not transformational—it's more along the lines of dereliction.

It doesn't serve Veterans well, and it doesn't sit well with me.

So make sure there's substance to those discussions, that they're about Veterans' interests, and not something else. Make sure they're anchored to the service and sacrifice, the sense of duty and honor, that Veterans represent, and only Veterans understand.

It's your VA. It always has been. God bless you and your families. God bless Veterans. And God bless the United States of America.

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/

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

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

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

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

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/

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

Charlotte HCC
3506 W. Tyvola Rd.
Charlotte, NC 28208
704-329-1300

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

Chesapeake CBOC
1987 S. Military Highway
Chesapeake, Va 23320
757-722-9961

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

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

Fayetteville HCC
7300 So. Raeford Rd
Fayetteville NC 28304
910-488-2120
800-771-6106

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

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

Fredericksburg at Southpoint CBOC
10401 Spotsylvania Ave, Ste 300
Fredericksburg, VA 22408
540-370-4468

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

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
4006 Henderson Drive
Jacksonville, NC 28546
910-353-6406

Kernersville HCC
1695 Kernersville Medical Pkwy
Kernersville, NC 27284
336-515-5000

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 Road
Rutherfordton, NC 28139
828-288-2780

Sanford CBOC
3112 Tramway Road
Sanford, NC 27332
919-775-6160

Staunton CBOC
102 Lacy B. King 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

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

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

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

Fayetteville Vet Center
2301 Robeson Street
Fayetteville, NC 28305
910-488-6252

Greensboro Vet Center
3515 W Market Street, Suite 120
Greensboro, NC 27403
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

Raleigh Vet Center
8851 Ellstree Lane
Raleigh, NC 27617
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