



"Excellent Care – Earned by Veterans – Delivered Here"

# Voices of VISN 6

Official news from around *your* VISN

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## Kernersville HCC Celebrates Grand Opening Feb. 26

By Steve Wilkins  
VISN 6 Public Affairs

Hundreds of Veterans jammed the lobbies and strolled hallways with dignitaries from Washington, Raleigh, Charlotte, Greensboro and Kernersville as officials from the Salisbury VAMC hosted a grand opening and ribbon-cutting event for the Kernersville VA HCC Feb. 26.

The Kernersville HCC, designed to serve up to 40,000 Veteran patients a year, with 280,000 net usable square feet of space, and more than

1,900 parking spaces, will provide a wide variety of outpatient services, with even greater capacity for expansion in the future.

VISN 6 Director Dan Hoffmann joined a chorus of local officials and Veterans, as well as Senator Richard Burr in thanking a vast group of people responsible for seeing the project through and creating a space where Veterans will receive the best possible service and most advanced care.

Janet Murphy, Deputy

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**Luke Thompson**  
*Janet Murphy (DUSHOM, 2nd from Right) and VISN 6 Director Dan Hoffmann (Right) join other officials in celebrating the opening of Kernersville HCC.*

## McGuire Cuts Ribbon On Clinic, Expands Services

By David Hodge  
Richmond VAMC  
Public Affairs

Representatives from VA and Commonwealth of Virginia cut the ribbon on the latest VA medical clinic in Charlottesville, Va., during a ceremony, Feb. 4.

The new Charlottesville CBOC opened its doors officially on Dec. 7, and the recent ceremony offered a chance for Veterans, guests and community partners to see firsthand all areas of the clinic and to meet many of its staff members.

Veterans who use this clinic will know it is an

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**Jason Miller**  
*L-R: Scott Leake, director of outreach for U.S. Rep. Robert Hurt (Va.-05); Dr. Adam Holmes, medical director for the Charlottesville CBOC; Joe Edger, deputy network director, VA Mid-Atlantic Health Care Network; Chaplain Oscar Stone, chief of chaplains, McGuire VAMC; Commissioner John Newby, Virginia Department of Veterans Services; and John A. Brandecker, director, McGuire VAMC.*

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## From The Director

This spring we will have opened a total of more than one million square feet of space during FY 16, dedicated to enhancing access, quality and the Veteran experience in VISN 6. During this year we have opened new outpatient clinics in Jacksonville, N.C.; Charlottesville, Va.; and Fredericksburg Va. Additionally, in January, we opened the doors of the first of three large health care centers (HCC) in Fayetteville, N.C. Just recently, on Feb. 26th in fact, we dedicated the second HCC in North Carolina's Piedmont region, in Kernersville, N.C.



The growth in the number and strategic location of outpatient sites of care we've been able to provide to Veterans throughout the network has been truly gratifying. North Carolina alone had four VA Medical Centers and two outpatient clinics. Today, we still have four medical centers but have since added 22 sites of care in NC. In addition to the Fayetteville and Kernersville HCC's, the third jewel in North Carolina's crown, a new HCC will be opened in Charlotte in April.

There has also been a telling shift in the way that medicine is practiced today. Health care has moved from inpatient to outpatient care for sure; but also, a level of outpatient services and diagnostic sophistication exists now that would have been hard to even imagine 20 years ago.

Built from the ground up, using every bit of contemporary architectural and medical information available, these truly state of the art facilities are places where VA employees can effectively deliver the best medicine to Veterans most efficiently. We built spaces that represent the best thinking around logical groupings of services, patient flow, and ease of access, energy efficiency and the like, to offer a more robust level of service, and to provide greater access to a greater number of Veterans in this area than ever before.

Yet that is really only a by-product of why we built them. The reasons are many and varied: to gain desperately needed space; to add more of the services and diagnostics Veterans need to enhance their care, in a

"one stop" shopping environment.

We also wanted our staff working in a less constrained environment to perform their daily tasks ... allowing them to excel during those special moments of caring when providers and Veterans come together in personalized care.

The new facilities also allowed us to enhance VA's part of training tomorrow's medical professionals and accommodate an ever growing and dynamic research capability in conjunction with our medical affiliate at Wake Forest University.

But, the ultimate reason these facilities were built, enhancing the Veteran health care experience, and to give us a better than even shot at exceeding Veterans expectations.

So, at the same time we celebrate with our Veterans our "new digs," it is important to know that our focus is, and will continue to be, on anticipating and providing high quality, high touch, cost effective care, meeting the ideals of our VISN 6 motto: "Excellent Care\*\*Earned by Veterans\*\*Delivered Here!"

Sincerely,

Dan Hoffmann

## Stackhouse Steps into Interim Salem Top Spot

With the departure of Dr. Miguel Lapuz, on his ascent to lead VISN 8 operations, VISN 6 Director Dan Hoffmann announced Feb. 9 the appointment of Rebecca Stackhouse as Interim Director of the Salem VAMC, Va.

In this key role for the network, Stackhouse, who has been permanently assigned as the facility's associate director since 2012, will maintain operational oversight responsibility for the medical center.



*Rebecca Stackhouse*

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



Questions or comments about the newsletter, e-mail [stephen.wilkins2@va.gov](mailto:stephen.wilkins2@va.gov) or call 919-956-5541.

Daniel F. Hoffmann, Network Director  
Joseph Edger, Deputy Network Director  
Mark Shelhorse M.D., Chief Medical Officer  
Steve Wilkins, Network Public Affairs  
Patrick Schuetz, Chitra Productions

**Veterans  
Crisis Line** 1-800-273-8255  
PRESS 1

### Access To Care Stand Down Diminishes Urgent Need Appts.

VA conducted its second nationwide “access to care stand-down” to increase and improve timely access to the care they have earned and deserve Feb. 27.

Our ability to meet the urgent health needs of our Veterans remains a priority for VA and the nation. As long as there is even a single Veteran with an urgent care need that we are not meeting in a timely fashion, we will not be satisfied.

Building on momentum generated by the VA Access to Care Stand Down last November, the Feb. 27 VA “Stand Down #2: Road to MyAccess” event was hosted by all VA Medical Centers.

The event connected Veterans who have urgent health care needs, with providers at their medical centers to address those needs on the spot. Many facility staff worked in the weeks prior to coordinate appoint-

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**Jeff Melvin**

Fayetteville VAMC's Barry Washington helps Bob Crespo with MyHealthVet during the Feb. 27 Stand Down.

### Team Praised For Transitions Collaborative Participation

By Fayetteville VAMC Public Affairs

Fayetteville VAMC had the opportunity to participate in the Systems Design program office's National Transitions Collaborative during FY 15. This collaborative aimed to increase the overall efficiency of patient flow to impact the Adjusted Length of Stay for the acute care areas.

The team didn't just meet all established goals, but exceeded them, resulting in a perfect overall score of 5 for the facility from the Systems Redesign program office. Their efforts saved the facility more than \$300,000 in avoidable bed days of care.

In addition, the team sought to ensure Veterans' transition from the acute care unit to the Community Living Center were completed in a timely manner, which included decreasing delays in transitioning as well as ensuring all referrals were appropriate and complete.

The team worked efficiently to increase the amount of discharges before noon, decrease the number of patient awaiting placement on the acute care unit as well as increasing the acute medicine anticipated discharge order compliance.

FVAMC was recognized nationally as having a best practice team, sharing successes with VA Medical Centers across the country. The team was invited to present during System Redesign Learning Session 2 and Session 3.

Based on to the success of the previous team, FVAMC was invited to participate in this year's Patient Flow Coordination Collaborative. This collaborative will provide an opportunity for FVAMC to have a posi-



**Monica Wright**

L-R: Jennifer Johnson, Maria Pytlarz, Jill Bullard, Dr. Razia Hafiz, Jennie Butler, Deborah Kirk and Dr. Gregory Antoine. Not pictured: Dr. Collins Oseki and Cathy Richmond.

tive impact on the Length of Stays of patients on the acute care ward. The team is focusing on specialty services, particularly cardiology, on the inpatient unit.

The overall goals of this project are to decrease the amount of time to answer inpatient cardiology consult from the first action to completion by the end of FY 16 as well as to decrease the amount of time a stress test is ordered and resulted in CPRS by the end of FY16.

The teams traveled to Phoenix, Ariz. Jan. 25-28 for the first learning session and are eager to make progress.

# Richmond Cardiothoracic Surgery Pgm Celebrates 20 Years

By Armenthis Lester  
Richmond VAMC Public Affairs

Before the celebration, the Richmond VAMC conference room was packed — full of excitement. People moved around the room like pollinating bees, from one group to the next. Guests traveled from various points along the east coast to participate in the “VAD-Iversary:” places like New Hampshire, District of Columbia, North Carolina and Florida. In addition to being a celebration of successful surgical care, this gathering of Veterans, family members, and medical center staff mirrored a family reunion.

On Feb. 9, the cardiothoracic surgery program at Richmond VAMC celebrated its 20th year of Left Ventricular Assist Device (LVAD) surgery. The LVAD was first developed in 1966 and the first successful long-term implant was completed in 1988, in Boston. The Richmond VAMC completed its first successful LVAD surgery in the summer of 1995. Since that time, the Richmond VAMC surgery team has implanted nearly 200 devices.

Richmond VAMC is the only comprehensive LVAD program in VA. As a result, Veterans travel from all over the country to receive care. Dr. Gundars Katlaps leads the cardiothoracic team of specialized medical personnel and administrative staff who ensure the program runs like a well-oiled machine.

The LVAD is a small, battery operated pump that

extends the life of failing hearts until a heart transplant becomes available by ensuring oxygen-rich blood reaches vital organs. Patients must always wear their external battery.

According to Toni Chase, cardiothoracic surgery administrative officer, following the procedure, most patients are discharged home, where they wait for a heart transplant. Due to its technological advancements, most of the patients live on the device for years. One patient has survived on the same device for more than seven

years now (and still going). Many patients live full and productive lives. According to Katlaps, “With the success of this technology the indications to use it have broadened. It serves not only as a bridge to transplantation now. For patients who are not heart transplant



**Mary Beatty-Brooks**  
*Navy Veteran Timothy Bunstone came from New York to participate in the 20th Left Ventricle Active Device (LVAD) Anniversary celebration. His LVAD is keeping him alive until he gets a heart transplant.*

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## McGuire continued from Pg 1

extension of the quality care from the McGuire VAMC, said Joe Edger, deputy network director, VA Mid-Atlantic Health Care Network.

Edger spoke about the rich history of Charlottesville, and how the new clinic brings great, new services to Veterans of the area.

The new clinic is double the size—approximately 10,000 square feet. The extra space allows for a 4th primary care team, additional mental health provider, full-time audiology services, and surgical pre-operative and post-operative clinics.

Dr. Adam Holmes, medical director of the Charlottesville CBOC, said the new larger clinic aims to deliver care to a place where Veterans can find healing.

Phil Grimm said he thinks the new clinic is fabulous. Grimm, commander of the local American Legion Post 74, relayed how excited he was to see full-time audiology being offered.

Grimm explained how the addition of full-time audiology services is a benefit due to the number of Veterans in the local community who experience hearing issues.



*Charlottesville CBOC*

From Grimm’s perspective as the leader of a local Veterans organization, he said he believes Veterans most often experience trouble with the VA when making the initial steps to receive care and benefits.

“But, once they get to see a doctor, the care is fantastic,” Grimm said. The new facility is located at 590 Peter Jefferson Pkwy, Suite 250, 2nd Floor, and is co-located with several other community specialty clinics.

# Toastmasters Group Helps McGuire Employees Communicate

By David Hodge  
Richmond VAMC Public Affairs

From the moment Barbara Mulvaney sat down, she was fascinated. It was her first meeting, and she knew the club was the place to develop much-needed skills.

Mulvaney heard about the local Toastmasters club about a year ago in new-employee orientation, when she started in the Health Information Management service at the McGuire VAMC. She wanted to elevate her speaking skills and interact with people she may not ever interact with at the large medical facility. So she decided to join the Very Articulate Master Communicators Toastmasters club with members from entry-level employees to service chiefs.

“Increased confidence in my speaking skills is an obvious benefit, but for me, it is more than that,” Mulvaney explained. “I truly appreciate the feedback I receive from other members when I give a speech. I appreciate how it has changed the way I listen to other public speakers, and how it has helped me organize my thoughts before opening my mouth.”

Mulvaney believes every single person at McGuire could benefit from Toastmasters. “We all have times when we need to speak in front of a group, whether it is a staff meeting, training or at morning meeting,” said Mulvaney. “Every employee has an audience in coworkers and Veterans that we encounter every day.”

Club President James Moser said the local club began 10 years ago and is part of the larger non-profit organization Toastmasters International. Their aim is to help members around the world improve their communication, public speaking and leadership skills.

This is accomplished by two different advancement tracks within the program, explained Moser. The tracks focus on developing skills in communication and leadership. To progress, members must present a number of speeches and perform the many different roles within



*David Hodge*  
President James Moser kicks off a recent Toastmasters meeting at the McGuire VAMC.

the club. Members are able to set their own pace.

Stephen Freeby joined to become more comfortable speaking with energy and confidence in front of people. “I have been with Toastmasters for only about three months, and so far I have gained a much broader perspective of where my speaking skills are, and the improvements I need to become a well-rounded speaker.”

Meetings typically last about an hour, and are held three times per month, and accommodate daytime and evening shifts in the medical center. For more information about Toastmasters membership, please contact club president James Moser at [James.Moser2@va.gov](mailto:James.Moser2@va.gov).

## Richmond continued from Pg 4

candidates this device can serve as destination therapy adding years to their life.”

Mike Wheeler and his wife Carole traveled to the celebration from Fairfax, Va. Wheeler, a 66 year-old Navy Veteran, had an LVAD implanted following a major heart attack in Fairfax, Virginia. Three years ago, on April Fool’s Day, he received a new heart at Richmond VAMC. When asked how he currently felt, he replied, “Fantastic!” Wheeler also complimented Richmond’s staff saying, “Everyone was top notch. I really can’t say enough—cleaning staff, food services, nurses, doctors—everyone.” Carole Wheeler chimed in, adding,

“Without them he wouldn’t be here. You [the medical center] are lucky to have them.”

Last year, Katlaps and his team were influential in helping the Cleveland VAMC implement a successful LVAD program, which has now completed two successful LVAD surgeries.

Richmond’s cardiothoracic team has added “years to life and life to years” for Veterans and their families. The future holds no promises, but if past successes are a good predictor of future outcomes, when the Richmond VAMC cardiothoracic team hosts its 30th “VAD-Iversary,” they will need a larger venue.

### VA Joins Annual Observance Of Women's History Month

March is Women's History Month. VA is proud to salute women Veterans for their accomplishments and contributions to society. For generations, women Veterans served honorably in the military. Their success has continued when they take off the uniform. More than two million American women are Veterans.

Here at VA, the number of women Veterans we are seeing has more than doubled since 2000 and today more



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### VISN 6 Mobile Mammography To See Veterans In Greenville

By Megan Warren-Moore  
Durham VAMC Public Affairs

Durham VAMC's Greenville HCC is making mammogram accessibility easier for female Veterans. The VISN 6 Mobile Mammography Unit, one of two in VA, began operating from the Greenville HCC Feb. 16, and will continue to offer mammograms there until at least May 20.

The mobile mammography unit offers local women Veterans the opportunity for screening mammograms without the need to travel to a VA Medical Center. "It is going very well. We have over 200 women scheduled for our first three month period," said Joan Galbraith, Women Veterans Program Manager for the Durham VAMC, "We are also able to take same day appointments, which is great for access."

Along with providing access, the mobile unit boasts a private waiting room with educational materials for women Veterans. "Dr. [Daniel] Sherwood is our Chief of Radiology in Greenville, and is also an experienced mammographer, so we are very fortunate to have him," said Galbraith. In addition to Dr. Sherwood, two Mammography Technicians work within the mobile unit.

Each Veteran also receives a small token to welcome them to Mobile Mammography at the Greenville HCC. "We're excited to bring the highest quality, certified mammography screening services to where Veterans live," said Dr. Ken Goldberg, Durham VAMC chief of staff.

The unit is a VISN 6 asset that travels between medical facilities to increase access for Veterans who

#### VISN 6 Mobile Mammogram Unit Greenville Health Care Center



You Served,  
You Deserve the Best Care  
Anywhere!

Greenville will begin  
offering mammograms  
**Tuesday,  
February 16, 2016**

Contact your Primary  
Care Team to assist in  
ordering your screening  
mammogram now!

VISN 6, Durham VA Medical Center and the Greenville Health Care Center are pleased to announce the opening of the VISN 6 Mobile Mammogram Unit to serve Veteran's in the Greenville, Morehead City, and New Bern areas.

don't live near a VA medical center that provides the radiologic procedure on a regular basis. VA encourages all women between ages 50 and 75 to get mammograms every two years. "This van will have a tremendous impact on access to mammogram screenings for the area's women Veterans," said Shenekia Williams-Johnson, who oversees the VISN 6 Women's Health program.

"Mammograms play such a vital role in the early detection of breast cancer because they can detect changes in the breast that are too small or subtle to be felt," said Williams-Johnson. For more information, Veterans are encouraged to contact their Primary Care Team to assist in ordering a mammogram screening.

### Kernersville continued from Pg 1

Under Secretary for Health, for Operations and Management recognized that the building signified an evolution in health care, but also owed its development to input from Veterans, VA staff, and leadership from within and outside VA in the community.

Salisbury VAMC Director Kaye Green says she's proud of the strides Salisbury VA is making to provide the best healthcare and access for local Veterans.

"Increasing access to quality medical care through the Salisbury VA Health Care System has been one of our highest priorities over the past three years, and the opening of the Kernersville Health Care Center is a major milestone in that effort," she said. "We are dedicated to providing the best care anywhere. The Kernersville Health Care Center will no doubt help us deliver on that promise through state-of-the-art equipment and dedicated, caring staff in a convenient location for our Veterans. Our nation's Veterans deserve nothing less."

The significance of the facility's placement there was highlighted by guest speaker Tara McClary Reeves, whose father had been severely injured during his service in Vietnam. McClary initially moved the audience with a stirring rendition of the Star Spangled Banner. Later, as she addressed the crowd, her sentiments were so evocative it brought tears to some and others hugged her afterward. She urged Vietnam Vets especially to feel proud of their service, noting for them that they are appreciated and loved.

Originally planned in 2007 and approved in 2010, the facility finally opened its doors in February. Senator Burr cajoled Hoffmann about the extensive time it took to see the fruition of their efforts, but they agreed



Kernersville HCC

that Veterans will benefit from the vast array of services brought closer to home by the facility, one of three health care centers approved for construction in North Carolina in 2010 and opening this year. In fact, VISN 6 will activate more new health care space this year than the rest of VHA.

The building's design incorporates features that enable patient-oriented service, from welcome areas that make it easier for Veterans to engage and interact with staff, to offices, through ways and examination rooms that enable full performance of Patient-Aligned Care Teams, which are designed to place the Veteran at the center of their care.

Questions about the ceremony or the Kernersville HCC can be directed to the Salisbury VAMC Public Affairs Office by email at [VHASBYPublicAffairs@va.gov](mailto:VHASBYPublicAffairs@va.gov).

### Access To Care cont'd from Pg 3

ments and ensure providers, administrators and support staff were available for the Saturday event. Many facilities already sponsor extended hours on Saturdays to help alleviate their patient volume.

More than 1,600 Veterans were seen throughout VISN 6 that day, through the efforts of a committed and diligent staff. The numbers didn't eliminate the backlog, but it enable many of those Veterans the opportunity to get the care they needed.



Armenthis Lester

*A Veteran's blood pressure and temperature are checked at the Richmond Access to Care Stand Down.*

### Women's History Month cont'd from Pg 6

than 450,000 women Veterans are now using VA for care.

VA now operates a Women Veterans Call Center (WVCC), created to provide women Veterans access to services for which they may be eligible. As of June 2015, WVCC received over 24,000 incoming calls and made over 219,000 successful outbound calls.

Women Veterans deserve health care provided with privacy, safety, dignity and sensitivity to gender-specific needs. VA offers comprehensive health services to women Veterans including primary care, specialty care, gynecology and maternity care services, including seven days of newborn care. This March, join VA in honoring women Veterans.



# Asheville Veterans Are Telling Their Remarkable Stories

By Melanie McConnell  
Asheville VAMC

Stories. We know they are out there because we're hearing them every day as we provide care to America's heroes—countless stories of honor, patriotism, and selfless service among the 50,000 Veterans within Western North Carolina who receive care at the Asheville VAMC.

Capturing these remarkable pieces of history is part of the medical center's My Life, My Story project, which launched in February 2015.

The project was established to foster a closer connection between Veterans and their VA providers by adding the Veteran's written stories to their medical files to provide their healthcare team with a deeper understanding of who they are and how VA can better serve them. With each interview, we discover new

[Continued on Pg 11](#)



**Sharonda Pearson**  
*Ed Cottrell, 93, of Hendersonville, told his story during the My Life, My Story project at the Asheville VAMC.*

## Salem VA Research & Development: Best Kept Secret

By Kristine Miller Allred, MPA  
Research and Development  
Salem VAMC

VA Research and Development is one of the three legs of the “stool” that comprises the Veterans Health Administration, in addition to patient care and education.

In fact, in 2016 VA Research received \$622 million to support development of cutting-edge medical treatments for Veterans and the nation.

In May, VA Research and Development will officially celebrate its 91st year and has compiled a long history of significant successes dating back to development of the first hospital-based medical studies in 1925. Other notable successes include the implantable cardiac pacemaker in 1960, the first long-term, successful kidney transplant in 1962, a transdermal nicotine patch in 1984, VA researchers find that deep brain stimulation may hold significant benefits for those with Parkinson's disease in 2009, and VA researchers developed an artificial lung prototype that mimics the structure of a natural lung considered a “significant step toward creating the first truly portable and implantable artificial lung systems” in 2011.

The success of VA Research and Development can be attributed to the unique benefit of having more than 60 percent of its VA researchers also serving in clinics, actively engaged in treating patients.

This multi-versatile approach affords them the best

of both worlds – theoretical and practical. Additionally, the use of electronic health records and a dedicated Veteran population committed to volunteering for research studies that advance the medical field have helped propel VA Research and Development to the forefront of the medical community.

Locally, the Salem VA Research and Development Program facilitates more than 60 projects, ranging from unfunded investigator-initiated research to projects funded by VA, pharmaceuticals, and foundations.

“The Salem VA has been an integral part of innovation in the medical field and health care through its participation in VA national research projects. We have had multicenter national trials in different fields of medicine including mental health, cardiology, medicine, endocrinology, and geriatrics,” explained Dr. Mamta Sapra, Acting Associate Chief of Staff for Research.

Another essential element of Salem VA Research and Development is the non-profit Salem Research Institute (SRI), which is celebrating 25 years of supporting VA's research and education activities.

“SRI brings in research opportunities from many of the world's leading pharmaceutical companies and foundations to benefit the veteran population. Currently, we are participating in medical studies in fields such as Endocrine and Cardiology; and Mental Health studies such as Alzheimers-related research and others,” said Frances Hickman, SRI Executive Director.

For information visit [www.salem.va.gov/services/research.asp](http://www.salem.va.gov/services/research.asp).

### VA's Polytrauma System Of Care Marks 1 Million TBI Screenings

The Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA) Polytrauma System of Care (PSC) has hit the one million mark in screening Veterans for Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI), often regarded as one of the signature injuries of combat in Iraq and Afghanistan. TBI symptoms such as severe headaches, memory loss, reduced executive functioning, and tinnitus can range from manageable to seriously disabling, potentially limiting a Veteran's ability to work and manage daily living. Screening Veterans for TBI and helping them to deal with the condition is one of the central programs of PSC.

Started in May 2005, PSC provides comprehensive and coordinated rehabilitative care to Veterans with life-changing injuries, including TBI, limb loss, blindness, hearing loss and tinnitus, among others. PSC also assists with community re-entry needs. It is fully coordinated with the Department of Defense to ensure uninterrupted, seamless health care transition for those that served on active duty.

Over these past 10 years, many Service members have returned home with injuries that would not have been survivable in previous conflicts. Today, they not only survive, they thrive, in large part due to PSC, a thoroughly Veteran-centric VA program. "The one million mark in TBI screenings reflects VA's success in building an integrated polytrauma care program for wounded and injured Service members and Veterans," said Dr. David J. Shulkin, VA Under Secretary for Health. "VA's dedicated polytrauma care teams recognize the importance of taking care of the whole person and coordinating physical, mental and rehabilitative

care for Veterans suffering the most dramatic injuries of the war."

PSC patients have sustained injuries affecting multiple body parts that result in physical, cognitive, psychological, and functional disabilities. Frequently, Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) occurs in Polytrauma patients, as does Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), and other mental health problems.

"The Polytrauma System of Care sets VA apart from other health care systems," said Dr. Joel Scholten, National Director, Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation for VA. "PSC demonstrates VA's unique understanding of the needs of Veterans and the best way to support them in achieving well-being and their personal life goals."

VA has 110 Polytrauma rehabilitation sites across the country, including 5 Polytrauma Rehabilitation Centers (one in the Hunter Holmes McGuire VA Medical Center in Richmond, Va.), (comprehensive inpatient rehabilitation); 23 Polytrauma Network Sites (comprehensive outpatient rehabilitation); and 87 Polytrauma Support Clinic Teams (comprehensive outpatient rehabilitations).

Services available through PCS include interdisciplinary evaluation and treatment, development of a comprehensive plan of care, case management, patient and family education and training, psychosocial support, and use of advanced rehabilitation treatments and prosthetic technologies.

For more information about the Polytrauma System of Care, visit [www.polytrauma.va.gov/](http://www.polytrauma.va.gov/).

### VA Improves Timeliness Of Provider Payments, Enhancing Access

To enhance Veterans' access to care and eliminate delays in Choice provider payment, VA is eliminating administrative burdens placed on community providers. Previously, payments to Choice providers were not allowed until a copy of the Veteran's medical record was submitted.

Now, community providers, under the Choice program, will no longer be required to submit medical records prior to payment being made. To facilitate the change, VA has modified the Choice Program contract, making it easier for Health Net and TriWest to promptly pay providers. VA continues to require pertinent medical information be returned to ensure continuity of care; however, it is no longer tied to payment. VA is taking these steps to more closely align with industry standards.

"This administrative step just makes sense," said VA Under Secretary for Health Dr. David J. Shulkin. "It ensures Veteran access, timely payments and strengthens our partnerships with our Choice providers. We know

that providing Veterans access to high-quality, timely healthcare would be impossible without collaboration with our community providers."

VA's Plan to Consolidate Community Care Programs outlines additional solutions to improving timely provider payment. VA is moving forward on two paths to further improve timely payment.

First, VA is working toward a single community care program that is easy to understand, simple to administer and meets the needs of Veterans, community providers and VA staff. Secondly, VA plans to pursue a claims solution that moves to a more automated process for payment.

Veterans seeking to use the Veterans Choice Program or wanting to know more about it can call 866-606-8198 to confirm their eligibility and to schedule an appointment. For more details about the Veterans Choice Program and VA's progress, visit [www.va.gov/opa/choiceact](http://www.va.gov/opa/choiceact).

### Brain Injury Awareness Month

The Defense and Veterans Brain Injury Center (DVBIC) recognizes Brain Injury Awareness Month every March. The theme this year is: Think Ahead: Be safe. Know the signs. Get help.

During March, DVBIC will focus efforts on raising awareness of information and key resources to help service members, Veterans, military families and others prevent, recognize and recover from traumatic brain injury (TBI).

Since 2000, more than 339,000 service members have been diagnosed with traumatic brain injury.

DVBIC encourages everyone to Think Ahead and learn the common causes of TBI, to take action that can prevent TBIs while engaged in daily activities or partic-



ipating in sports. One way is through the use of protective equipment (i.e., helmets, seatbelts, etc.). Falls are also among the leading causes of brain injuries, so simply being aware of your surroundings can be a simple way to prevent injuries.

Mild TBI, also known as concussion, often goes undiagnosed initially because the symptoms can be subtle and varied. If you think you, your spouse or child has a TBI, get medical help as quickly as possible to both facilitate recovery and improve outcomes. DVBIC urges you to Think Ahead to promote better recovery by seeking treatment early.

### VA Celebrates 70 Years Of Partnering With Medical Schools

Caring for the nation's Veterans is a shared honor and a shared responsibility, which is why VA this year is celebrating the 70th anniversary of its partnership with the nation's medical and health professional schools.

Since 1946, VA has worked with academic institutions to provide high quality, state-of-the-art health care to America's Veterans and to train new health professionals to meet the rapidly evolving health care needs within VA and the nation.

"We are extremely proud of the long-standing, close relationships built over the past 70 years among VA and academic institutions across the country," said VA Secretary Robert A. McDonald. "These partnerships strengthen VA's healthcare system, and provide high quality training for the nation's healthcare workforce. We cannot do what we do without them."

The partnership between VA and academic affiliates dates back to the end of World War II. Following the allied victory, VA faced the imminent arrival of over 100,000 new patients and was confronted with a severe lack of resources as it had only 98 mostly rural hospitals offering fewer than 84,000 beds and 1,000 physicians.

To meet this challenge, VA created a landmark partnership with U.S. medical schools to establish a dynamic, talented workforce of students, physician residents, and faculty who provide world class care to Veterans while providing training to generations of future physicians that has evolved to include more than forty health care professions over the decades.

"Through this historic collaboration, VA has become the largest single provider of medical training in the country, where more than 40,000 residents and

20,000 medical students receive clinical training each year," said Darrell G. Kirch, President and CEO of the Association of American Medical Colleges.

"VA benefits enormously from its relationship with its partners in the medical academic community. We are able to do the work we do because of this synergistic relationship," said VA Under Secretary for Health Dr. David Shulkin.

"We have the benefit of the top medical professionals being produced by leading academic institutions. In turn, the medical community and patients around the country benefit from VA innovations – innovations such as the implantable cardiac pacemaker; the nicotine patch to help smokers quit; liver transplants and electronic medical records. We are both proud and grateful for these relationships," said Shulkin.

Today, VA conducts the largest education and training programs for health professionals in the United States. VA has affiliations with more than 1,800 educational institutions; more than 70 percent of all doctors in the U.S. have received training in the VA healthcare system.

VA invests \$900 million annually to provide clinical education and training programs to more than 120,000 interns, residents, fellows and students in more than 40 clinical health professions. Among them are over 10,000 graduate medical education positions training more than 40,000 physicians in training annually.

For more information about VA's Office of Academic Affiliations, visit [www.va.gov/OAA](http://www.va.gov/OAA). To learn more about the 70th anniversary of VA's partnership with medical schools, visit [www.va.gov/OAA/OAA\\_70th\\_Anniversary.asp](http://www.va.gov/OAA/OAA_70th_Anniversary.asp).

# Care/Benefits For Veterans Strengthened By \$182B VA Budget

In his FY 2017 budget, President Obama is proposing \$182.3 billion for VA. Funding will continue to support the largest transformation in VA history; expand access to timely, high-quality health care and benefits; and advance efforts to end Veteran homelessness.

“VA has before it one of the greatest opportunities in its history to transform the way it cares for our Veterans who nobly served and sacrificed for our Nation,” said VA Secretary Robert A. McDonald. “As we work to become a more efficient, effective and responsive, Veteran-centric department, we can’t do it alone; we need the help of Congress. This year, VA submitted over 100 legislative proposals, including 40 new proposals to better serve Veterans. Our goal is provide the best care to our Veterans while removing obstacles or barriers that prevent them from getting the care they deserve.”

The FY 2017 budget includes \$78.7 billion in discretionary funding, largely for health care and \$103.6 billion for mandatory benefit programs such as disability compensation and pensions. The \$78.7 billion for discretionary spending is \$3.6 billion (4.9 percent) above the 2016 enacted level, including over \$3.6 billion in medical care collections from health insurers and Veteran copayments.

The budget also requests \$70.0 billion, including collections, for the 2018 advance appropriations for medical care, an increase of \$1.5 billion and 2.1 percent above the 2017 medical care budget request.

The request includes \$103.9 billion in 2018 mandatory advance appropriations for Compensation and Pensions, Readjustment Benefits and Veterans Insurance and Indemnities benefits programs in the Veter-

### Major spending categories within the health care budget are:

\$12.2 billion for care in the community;  
\$8.5 billion for long-term care;  
\$7.8 billion for mental health;  
\$1.6 billion for homeless Veterans;  
\$1.5 billion for Hepatitis-C treatments;  
\$725 million for Caregivers;  
\$601 million for spinal cord injuries; and  
\$284 million for traumatic brain injuries.

ans Benefits Administration.

The 2017 budget continues the largest Department-wide transformation in VA’s history through the MyVA initiative, which is changing VA’s culture, processes, and capabilities to put the needs, expectations and interests of Veterans and their families first. MyVA has developed five objectives fundamental to the transformation of VA: 1) improving the Veterans’ experience; 2) improving the employee experience; 3) improving support service excellence; 4) establishing a culture of continuous performance improvement; and 5) enhancing strategic partnerships.

VA operates the largest integrated health care system in the country; the tenth largest life insurance program in the nation, with \$1.3 trillion in coverage; monthly disability compensation, pensions, and survivors benefits to 5.3 million beneficiaries; educational assistance or vocational rehabilitation benefits and services to nearly 1.2 million students; mortgage guarantees to over 2 million homeowners; and the largest cemetery system in the nation.

## Stories continued from Pg 8

stories about our Veterans’ lives, before and after their military service.

For example: Myrl Jean Hughes, 92, of Hendersonville joined the Army Medical Department in 1943 as a physical therapist. Stationed in New Guinea for 16 months, Hughes helped rehabilitate injured Veterans. Later, she returned to college and earned a degree in Christian education, working for member churches of Presbyterian Church USA, in Ohio, New Jersey and Minnesota.

She is a long-time volunteer at Pardee Hospital and for FISH of Henderson County, which provides transportation for people with no way to get to medical appointments.

Tom Nebbia, 86, exchanged his gun for a camera during the Korean War. A novice photographer when he arrived, Nebbia spent the next 12 months documenting

the war’s savagery at the Puson Perimeter and honing his photography skills. When Life Magazine published one of his pictures, Nebbia knew he found his calling.

After the war, Nebbia, by then a seasoned combat photographer, worked for the State-Record newspaper in Columbia, S.C. before landing a gig with National Geographic. There he spent the next 25 years traveling the world with his beloved wife, Gitta, to capture some of the most stunning and moving images life offered. From Tibet to Rhodesia to Walt Disney and Jackie Kennedy at the White House, Nebbia has spent his life showing the world itself through his artful lens.

Everyone has a story and we would love to hear it. For more information about the program, please contact Melanie Threlkeld McConnell, writer/editor, at [Melanie.McConnell@va.gov](mailto:Melanie.McConnell@va.gov) or 828-298-7911, ext. 3103.

# 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/)

**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**  
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

**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

**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, 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 Pkwy  
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

**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