



"Excellent Care – Earned by Veterans – Delivered Here"

# Voices of VISN 6

Official news from around *your* VISN

Vol. 6, No. 9

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## VA Officially Opens New 10,000 Sq. Ft. Sanford Clinic

VA and community officials gathered in Sanford June 29 to cut the ribbon on the new Community Based Outpatient Clinic at 3112 Tramway Road. VA began seeing patients at the new facility May 9.

Rep. Renee Ellmers delivered remarks along with Sanford Mayor T. Chet Mann and VISN 6 Director Daniel Hoffmann.

VA officials say the 10,000 sq. ft. facility will provide exceptional health care to Veterans in Lee, Harnett, Moore and surrounding counties.

"We want Lee and sur-

rounding county Veterans to have better access to quality health care that is close to their homes," said Fayetteville VAMC Director Elizabeth Goolsby.

Built specifically to accommodate VA's Patient Aligned Care Team (PACT) model of health care service, the clinic will initially host four PACTs, providing Primary Care, Mental Health, and telehealth (using health informatics, disease management and telehealth technologies to target care

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**Brad Garner**

*William Waddell, Lee County's oldest living Veteran at just a few days shy of 102, joins Fayetteville VAMC Director Elizabeth Goolsby (center, with scissors), flanked by U.S. Rep. Renee Ellmers and Sanford Mayor Chet Mann on the left, and VISN 6 Director Dan Hoffmann to her right to celebrate the opening of the Sanford Community Based Outpatient Clinic.*

## Fayetteville Fetes First Treatment Court Finisher

By Jeff Melvin  
Fayetteville VAMC  
Public Affairs Officer

Fayetteville VAMC was among the long list of groups, organizations and individuals receiving thanks for their roles in helping Air Force Veteran Garret Vann become the first graduate of the Cumberland County Veterans Treatment Court (VTC) April 26.

Starting with Vann who he said made an amazing transformation while completing the court's strict regimen, District Court Judge Lou Olivera, who presides over the court, credited now retired Chief District

Court Judge Beth Keever, whose vision helped the court progress from a years-long concept to reality in November 2014, the Veterans Court Team, and Fayetteville VA Director Elizabeth Goolsby with playing leading roles in helping the court achieve this milestone.

"Garrett has himself to thank for deciding to change his life," said Olivera, a former soldier who only days before the ceremony made national headlines for sentencing a Veteran going through the program to a night in jail for violating a provision of his participation and

**Continued on Pg 10**



**Jeff Melvin**

*Air Force Veteran Garret Vann addresses the audience during a ceremony celebrating his graduation from Cumberland County Veterans Treatment Court.*

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## From The Director

General Omar Bradley, former VA Secretary (1945–1947) defined well the role we all play in the VA in service to Veterans when he said, “We are dealing with Veterans, not procedures; with their problems, not ours.” Secretary Robert McDonald has doubled down on that concept with his emphasis on shaping our organization’s efforts and attitudes around the Veteran, and focuses on a system that is Easy to Access, Efficient in its operations, and Improves the Veteran’s feeling of Health and Well Being.



Our efforts in VISN 6 to improve Access to our Veteran’s has made enormous progress. Over the last year alone, VISN 6 has completed construction and opened over 1 million square feet of superbly designed health-care space to accommodate the needs of our ever growing Veteran population. The current number of sites of care in VISN 6 has grown to 39 facilities and includes 7 Medical Centers and 32 outpatient centers, large and small; putting our care within an hour or less from most every Veteran in our catchment area.

In 2015 alone VISN 6 treated over 377,000 Veterans, and 4.4 million outpatient visits through those new and expanded sites of care. The numbers for 2016 will further eclipse our historical numbers, and have given our VISN the distinction of being the fastest growing VISN in all of VHA over the past 10 years.

Our efforts to become more efficient with all of our resources have also taken on increased importance. Our work with staff to incorporate Lean Six Sigma training and principles into the fabric of our everyday operations, and adopting an attitude of “improving our work is our work” has helped us enormously. Our patient flow dynamics, reducing the number of missed appointments, and decreased average wait times in primary care and mental health are all evidence of the successes in this area.

And finally, our efforts to improve the patient experience has seen significant progress as well. Implementation of a VISN-wide near real time Veteran satisfaction survey information has led to many improvements. Changes in hallway etiquette, increases in parking, im-

provement in our telephone responsiveness, increasing hours of operation in the morning, early evening, and weekends, to better collaborate with our community partners has all contributed to this effort.

Our work is clearly not done, but I can confidently say the staff in VISN 6 has made tremendous progress toward “My VA”.

Sincerely,

Dan Hoffmann

## WOMEN VETERANS HEALTH CARE



### When A Warrior Is A Woman

Found in nearly every area of the military, Women comprise about 15% of active-duty military force members. They are fighter pilots, gunners, warship commanders, and military police. When they are discharged from the military, they become Veterans. At this time, 2.2 million women in the United States are Veterans. In VISN 6 almost 19 percent, or just over 14,000 women Veterans, are enrolled in VA Health Care.

Hampton VAMC Women Veterans Program Manager Patrice C. Malena recently wrote an article appearing in the Nurse Practitioner Women’s Health Magazine that discusses distinguishing factors in the care of the female warfighter called, “When the Warrior is a Woman.” Here is a link to this important story:

<http://npwomenshealthcare.com/when-the-warrior-is-a-woman/>.

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

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**Veterans**    
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**PRESS 1**

# 117th VFW National Convention To Be Held In Charlotte

Charlotte, N.C., is the host city to the 117th VFW National Convention, July 23-27. Thousands of VFW and Auxiliary members from around the world will convene for the five-day event at the Charlotte Convention Center, located in the heart of “Queen City.”

Few cities of Charlotte’s size can lay claim to the

thriving arts, music, cuisine, shopping and sports scene, all combined with a healthy dose of regal southern hospitality. Convention housing reservation forms are now available.

To register for the 117th VFW National Convention, please log in to [www.vfw.org/Convention/](http://www.vfw.org/Convention/).

## Goolsby, Area Leaders Develop Opioid Task Force

Fayetteville Mayor Nat Robertson and Elizabeth Goolsby, director of the Fayetteville VAMC are bringing together individuals from the State, County and City in an Opioid Abuse and Awareness Task Force.

The group’s main focuses are: Reduce the number of opioid overdoses; educate providers who prescribe opioids and options; bring awareness to the general public on opioid addiction and treatment; and promote treatment and recovery resources.

The task force is utilizing findings from the Governor’s Task Force on Mental Health and Substance Use to provide recommendations and discuss possible solutions for Cumberland County and Fayetteville.

The group will hold its first meeting Tuesday from 4-6 p.m. at the Fayetteville VA Health Care Center on S. Raeford Road and will meet once a month thereafter until September, which is National Recovery Month.

Robertson and Goolsby hope to build on the success of a previous collaboration that resulted in Fayetteville being one of the first cities in the nation to reach the Functional Zero milestone on ending homelessness among Veterans last October.

“Building on the coming together we saw in the community approach to homelessness, it seems the next logical step is a call to action to address opioids in our community,” Director Goolsby said. “Opioid use and its consequences is a community problem that will take a community response to address.”

“Fayetteville is committed to addressing opioid

*The following organizations are confirmed members of the task force:*

- Fayetteville City Council
- Cumberland County Board of Commissioners
- The Fayetteville Observer
- Superior Court Judges
- DSS
- Coastal Horizons - TASC
- Family Endeavors
- Alliance Behavioral Healthcare - Cumberland Site
- Fayetteville VA Medical Center
- Fayetteville Police Department
- Governor’s Office
- Carolina Collaborative Community Care
- Southern Regional AHEC
- District Attorney
- Cumberland County Health Department
- Cape Fear Valley Health System

abuse in our community,” Robertson said. “The City is looking forward to working with our partners so that we can make positive strides in reducing opioid use in Fayetteville.”

*Courtesy of the City of Fayetteville, N.C. Public Information Office.*

## Sanford continued from Pg 1

and case management to improve access to care and improving the health of Veterans) services for enrolled Veterans. As demand increases, the clinic has the capacity to serve up to 7,000 patients.

The PACT team works with patients and their families to ensure trusted, personal relationships are forged to coordinate all aspects of the Veterans health care.

Veterans currently enrolled at the Fayetteville VAMC who live closer to the new clinic will be given priority for care there. Prior to the new facility opening, the medical center reviewed its list of enrolled Veterans who may benefit from transferring to the new clinic and

offered them the opportunity to make the switch.

Construction Managers, Inc. of Fremont, N.C., built the new clinic under a contract award that covered the construction of the clinic and a five-year lease with five, one year, extensions. The total cost of the lease for the 10-year period is approximately \$2.5 million. Construction Managers also built the Goldsboro CBOC that opened in July 2013 and the Jacksonville replacement CBOC that opened in January 2016.

To reach the new Sanford clinic, call 919-775-6160. For information on Health Benefits eligibility, call 910-822-7016 or visit [www.fayettevillenc.va.gov](http://www.fayettevillenc.va.gov).

# Salisbury VA Interior Designer Receives National Award

On June 11, Jamie Tierney, interior designer for the Salisbury VA Health Care System, received a well-deserved surprise – the Veterans Health Administration Interior Designer of the Year Award.

Tierney, a graduate of The Ohio State University, has been a vital member of the Salisbury VA team since 2011. Since joining Salisbury, Tierney has led the interior design efforts of more than two dozen projects, including the opening of the two largest leased outpatient clinics across the entire Department of Veterans Affairs, the opening of a brand new inpatient mental health building, and renovations of numerous areas spanning the Salisbury campus.

“Jamie’s efforts have been instrumental in providing the Veterans we serve at Salisbury VA, and at our clinics in Charlotte and Kernersville, with a healthcare experiences that rivals anything in the private sector,” said Salisbury VAMC Director Kaye Green. “She has spent the last several years ensuring that our facilities, both old and new, support the healing of our veterans through design and aesthetics. Jamie has an unrivalled understanding how our environments have a significant effect on the health and safety of the Veterans we serve, and we’re proud to have her on our team.”

From the color of the wall down to the flooring selection, including the art hanging up and the furniture spread about, Tierney has worked with design and construction teams to support Salisbury VA goals of providing quality, safe, and timely healthcare to Veterans throughout central North Carolina.



*Courtesy Photo*

*The design elements of this thoroughfare in the Kernersville VA Health Care Center make visits to the facility more satisfying to Veterans. Award-winning interior designer Jamie Tierney worked with contractors to create the interior effect.*

Salisbury VA served more than 92,000 Veterans through more than 860,000 outpatient visits and nearly 77,000 bed days of care in Fiscal Year 2015. The Charlotte Health Care Center, which opened in April, is the largest leased outpatient clinic in VA, with 425,000 square feet. Kernersville HCC opened in February and is the second-largest outpatient clinic in VA, with 400,000 square feet.

# Inaugural Virginia Women Veterans’ Summit Held June 24

More than 250 women Veterans participated in the inaugural Virginia Women’s Veteran Summit June 24.

Women Veterans’ summits have been held in other states and are intended to support women Veterans in their transition from military to civilian life.

They offer women opportunities to see and engage employment services, education and training opportunities in the community, health and wellness information, benefits discovery, transition coping, mental health and other relevant topics for females who are leaving military service.

Women Veterans comprise close to 20 percent of new VA enrollees in this VISN. Besides some distinctions in women’s needs overall that VA has been successfully addressing over recent years, many women have been hesitant to acknowledge their military service in ways that are healthy and afford them the honor



*Mary Betty Brooks*

*Women Veterans expressed excitement and pride when their branch of service was mentioned by retired Navy Admiral John C. Harvey during the general session of the Virginia Women Veterans’ Summit June 24.*

**Continued on Pg 9**

# Deep Brain Stimulation Turns Veterans Lives Around

While on a routine visit to the seizure clinic within the McGuire VAMC, “Doc” said some staff from the hospital’s Parkinson’s disease clinic noticed a slight tremble in his hands.

For years, Doc worked as a locomotive engineer while his hands became progressively worse to the point that activities such as eating and writing were hard to complete. “It was very difficult to do the simple things,” said Theodore “Doc” Holliday, a Vietnam-Era Air Force Veteran.

A meeting with members from McGuire’s Parkinson’s Disease Research, Education, and Clinical Center (PADRECC) confirmed it to be Parkinson’s disease. In April 2015, Doc had Deep Brain Stimulation (DBS) surgery at McGuire VAMC—performed by Dr. Kathryn Holloway, Chief of Neurosurgery at McGuire VAMC and Director of Neurosurgical Services at PADRECC Southeast.

DBS surgery involves placing an electrode in a very specific region of the brain to alter normal impulses in a controlled manner. The electrical impulses block the natural signals in the brain that causes negative effects in patients with Parkinson’s disease, essential tremor, and dystonia. During the procedure, a battery-powered pulse generator is implanted under the skin in the chest. An extension wire leads from the pulse generator, under the skin, to an area atop the head. From there, the

electrode is placed in the correct region of the brain.

At the time, Doc was unable to drive himself. He became more and more dependent on others for help.

After his surgery, Doc said, the implant required calibration. During this time he was holding a bottle of water and it was shaking all around. All of a sudden, he explained, like a lightning bolt, the bottle and water were steady in his hand.

“It’s changed my quality of life 180 degrees because I can do anything I want at my age,” Doc stated.

“I’ll carry to my grave the love and respect from the people who’ve treated me in the seizure clinic, PADRECC and Parkinson’s Clinic,” Doc said.

Holloway recently reached a major milestone among neurosurgeons—500 DBS implant procedures.



*Dr. Kathryn Holloway*

[Continued on Pg 6](#)

# Durham VAMC Honored With American Spirit Award

The Durham VA Health Care System’s Voluntary Service Department was recently awarded the Department of Veterans Affairs Voluntary Service American Spirit Award for Excellence in corporate recruitment. The small staff of three, led by Voluntary Service Chief Ronni Miller, developed partnerships with the United Auto Workers and General Motors over the last several years that greatly benefited Durham’s hospice patients, including raising funds to purchase a Recreation Service wheelchair accessible van for hospice patients.

“No single organization has all the necessary resources to meet the needs of every Veteran, every time. That’s why our community partnerships are absolutely vital,” Miller said. “Nothing depicts that more than the wheelchair accessible van donated by two of our community partners, United Auto Workers and General Motors, which has been used to fulfill the last wishes of several of our hospice patients. It enables us to honor their service and sacrifice in their final days.”

In 2014, the first five Wheelchair Accessible Vans were donated to the Michigan VA’s by General Motors and United Auto Workers. And, on June 25, 2015,



*Linnie Skidmore*

*Community Living Center resident Karl Ahrens cuts the ribbon on a van donated by United Auto Workers and General Motors in 2015.*

Miller had the honor of accepting the keys from United Auto Workers and General Motors on behalf of the Durham VA.

# Durham VAMC Among Best Workplaces For Commuters

By Durham VAMC Public Affairs

Durham VAMC recently gained certification through Best Workplaces for Commuters (BWC), an innovative membership program providing qualified employers with national recognition and an elite designation for offering outstanding commuter benefits.

Because the Durham facility offers and promotes energy conservative methods of getting to work, which also helps to alleviate congested parking, the facility qualified for the national certification, received locally by Director DeAnne Seekins.

VA employees working at Durham can take advantage of several programs that make commuting more energy efficient; from carpool or vanpool matching through a VA-sponsored or outside organization, a bike buddy matching program, or shuttles, to preferred parking for van or carpools; Secure bicycle parking, incentives to use alternative transportation and telework or compressed work schedules that reduce commuter trips.

Employers that meet the organization's national standard of excellence in commuter benefits can get on the list of best workplaces for commuters.

According to Seekins, "This helps to exemplify Durham VA's commitment to VA's mission and strategic goals that put Veterans first, by empowering employees through enhancement of the employee experience, so they are ready to deliver excellent customer service whenever their jobs demand it."

Making sure employees aren't encumbered in get-



*Mary Sell*  
Gathered with other local recipients, Durham VAMC Director DeAnne Seekins (3rd from right) recently accepted recognition placing the facility among the Best Workplaces for Commuters during a brief ceremony in Raleigh. Executive Assistant Pete Tillman (4th from right) was also on hand for the presentation.

ting to work is part of the solution offering Veterans access to the best care. VA is currently undergoing a cultural transformation that makes it a leaner, more efficient, pleasant, high quality care provider. Seekins stated that, "We recognize that every staff member plays a part in that care and we want to place each person in the best position to consistently deliver the best possible care to every Veteran."

## DBS continued from Pg 5

She's been doing DBS procedures between McGuire VAMC and Virginia Commonwealth University since the Food and Drug Administration first approved DBS for treatment of tremor in 1997.

"It's extremely gratifying," Holloway said about her work.

Holloway works in a very small section of the brain in which the electrical pulse stimulates a circular area about four millimeters in diameter. When talking about precision in neurological surgeries, this is the ultimate in that endeavor, Holloway said.

Holloway splits her duties between McGuire VAMC and Virginia Commonwealth University, where she serves as Professor of Neurosurgery at VCU and neurosurgeon for the VCU Parkinson's and Movement Disorders Center. She credits the entire team of professionals—nurses, therapists, neurologists and others—who have worked to grow the neurosurgical programs and have successful medical outcomes.

## 5 ways to protect your eyes at home:

- 1 Use protective eyewear.
- 2 Remove debris before mowing.
- 3 Point spray nozzles away from you.
- 4 Secure rugs and railings.
- 5 Don't mix cleaning agents.

July is  
Eye Injury  
Prevention Month



### Inaugural Class Of Clinical Pastoral Education Students Graduates

Today VA operates more than 200 specialized programs for the It is often said, “Graduation is not the end, it’s the beginning.” This sentiment was felt during the recent graduation of McGuire VAMC’s inaugural class of the Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) program, held on May 3, 2016. During the ceremony, the medical center’s chapel was packed with proud family members and supportive staff, all present to witness the six graduates’ accomplishments.

CPE is designed for people at various stages of life: clergy seeking continuing education; laity wanting to explore/develop themselves as pastoral caregivers; and seminarians preparing for ministry. The course has two formats: a full-time, 11-week summer internship from May to August, or a part-time, 30-week extended internship that runs from September to May.

McGuire’s CPE Program operates as a satellite of Virginia Commonwealth University, which is accredited to offer CPE (Levels I/II) and Supervisory CPE by the Association for Clinical Pastoral Education, Inc. The curriculum uses various educational frameworks to train the participants in various areas of clinical pastoral care.



*Courtesy Photo*

*CPE graduate and McGuire employee Unique Clary continued to work full-time while completing the part-time chaplain internship.*

Subjects covered during the training include: visi-

**Continued on Pg 11**

### Asheville VAMC Rates High With Service To Diverse Groups

The Asheville VAMC has been recognized as a “Leader in LGBT Healthcare Equality” by the Human Rights Campaign (HRC) Foundation, the educational arm of the country’s largest lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) civil rights organization.

The findings were part of HRC Foundation’s Healthcare Equality Index 2016, a unique annual survey that encourages equal care for LGBT Americans by evaluating inclusive policies and practices related to LGBT patients, visitors, and employees.

The facility earned top marks in meeting non-discrimination and training criteria that demonstrate its commitment to equitable, inclusive care for LGBT patients, and their families, who can face significant challenges in securing the quality health care and respect they deserve.

Asheville VAMC Director Cynthia Breyfogle states, “In keeping with the Department of Veterans Affairs mission to honor and serve America’s Veterans, Charles George VAMC continuously strives to create and maintain a health care environment that provides high quality, equitable, Veteran-centered, and compassionate care to all Veterans.”

Asheville VAMC is one of a select group of 496 healthcare facilities nationwide to be named Leaders in LGBT Healthcare Equality. Facilities awarded this

title meet key criteria, including patient and employee non-discrimination policies that specifically mention sexual orientation and gender identity, a guarantee of equal visitation for same-sex partners and parents, and LGBT health education for key staff members.

“Despite all the progress we’ve made, far too many LGBT people still lack inclusive and affirming healthcare. Leaders in LGBT Healthcare Equality are helping to change that, and, in the process, making the lives of LGBT patients and their families better each and every day,” said Chad Griffin, President of the Human Rights Campaign. “LGBT people have a right to be treated equally in all aspects of our lives, and HRC celebrates Charles George VAMC for its work to create an inclusive and welcoming environment for all patients.”

The Healthcare Equality Index offers healthcare facilities unique and powerful resources designed to help provide equal care to a long-overlooked group of patients, as well as assistance in complying with regulatory requirements and access to high-quality staff training. The Department of Veterans Affairs Office of Health Equity coordinates facility participation in the Healthcare Equity Index. This office is responsible for championing equitable health for all Veterans including Veterans from LGBT communities.

# Durham Program Helps Colleges Meet Veteran Needs

By Paul Brown  
Durham VAMC Medical Support Assistant,  
Ambulatory Care

As members of the military returned from recent conflicts in increasing numbers, Susan Watkins, Program Manager of the OEF-OIF-OND Transition Care Management Program at the Durham VAMC, and Michael Redic, Transition Patient Advocate for the program, began noticing a disturbing reality.

The economic downturn that shook the nation in 2008 meant fewer jobs for those who fought the wars. Many Veterans turned unemployment into an opportunity to pursue higher education. But Veterans often found the public and private universities and community colleges were unaware of their needs.

It wasn't malicious. Rather, administrators struggled with the combination of a dizzying array of financial aid programs that the new students brought with them, often with complex rules for qualification, as well as the physical and emotional issues that are unique to people back from warfare.

Redic took on the task of educating the educators; visiting campuses in the counties around the medical center, trying to help administrators better understand Veterans' needs.

Chad Kessler, Durham's deputy chief of staff, heard about the successes – and about the limited reach. "Michael was doing the work regionally," said Watkins. "Dr. Kessler challenged us to do it statewide."

The result is N.C. Student Transition Resource Initiative For Veteran's Education or NC STRIVE. Watkins said the great value of NC STRIVE for Veterans is offering school administrators and faculty the perspective of a person returning to civilian life. She added that more than 200 people, including representatives from all 16 UNC-system universities and every community college were scheduled to attend the group's second statewide conference in June.

It's no accident that administrators will make up the audience. "We targeted university administrators, those individuals who had responsibility for making decisions," said Redic. They also are best able to pass on information about Veterans to their colleagues. "Academic people speak each other's language just like military people understand each other's language," he said.

Participants in the 2015 conference asked for practical tools to serve Veterans, so NC STRIVE 2016 offered specific workshops to serve former warriors, including Green Zone Training, a product (named after Green or "safe" zones in combat areas) that "sensitizes people to military culture," Redic explained.



**Linnie Skidmore**  
*Durham VAMC founding partners, Transition Patient Advocate Michael Redic and OEF/OIF/OND Transition Care Program Manager Susan Watkins promote the Student Transition Resource Initiative for Veteran Education (STRIVE) at the recent North Carolina Women Veterans' Summit in Raleigh, NC.*

Nationally, OEF-OIF-OND programs are for those who served on active duty in a theater of combat operations after Nov. 11, 1998. Durham's program has served more than 15,000 Veterans, says Watkins. Eighty to 120 Veterans enroll per month, and the program has seen double digit growth for the past 10 years.

NC STRIVE seems a perfect fit for North Carolina, which has long placed focus and money on higher education and which is unabashedly friendly to its large number of military bases and active-duty and Veteran members of the military.



# Combat Veteran Brings Disc Golf To Asheville VA

By Paul Waldrop  
Asheville VAMC

When combat Veteran and Asheville VA employee Jamie Miller discovered disc golf, she knew immediately that the program could be beneficial to other Veterans. Fast forward, several years and Charles George VAMC patients can now enjoy a recreational game of disc golf due in large part to a grassroots initiative led by the Army Veteran.

Miller's passion for disc golf started when she began working at the Asheville VA. Early on, she met fellow Housekeeper and former Marine Mary Van Hass, and the two became fast friends. Van Hass introduced Miller to disc golf and today they are both avid players and supporters of the game. Miller said for her, there is a therapeutic component to the sport. "I love being outdoors, and disc golf lets me be in nature where I can relax, be mindful of the beauty around me and focus on the game. It's a great way for me to let go of stress and anxiety," she said.

It was Miller's enthusiasm for the sport that got her to thinking about how she could share the benefits of disc golf with fellow Veterans. "If it was such fun and good therapy for me, why wouldn't it work for others too?"

Miller and Van Hass began talking up the idea with their fellow disc golfers, many of whom are members of the Western North Carolina Disc Golf Association. After careful consideration, they decided on the idea of holding a disc golf tournament in honor of Veterans with all the proceeds going towards paying for the disc golf baskets. Next, Miller pitched the idea to her supervisors and medical center leadership, who ultimately gave her the green light to proceed.



**Rod Doty**

*Jamie Miller demonstrates a round of disc golf at Asheville VAMC's recently installed course.*

To date, two baskets have been installed with a third, wheel chair accessible basket, to be added soon. The baskets are located on the front lawn on either side of the main entrance.

But the story doesn't end there. During this time, Van Hass finished her Master's Degree in Social Work and now works in the medical center's Mental Health department. Miller too is continuing her education. She has started attending college on the Post 9/11 GI Bill with the goal of becoming a Recreational Therapist working with Veterans and no doubt helping them to learn about the many benefits of disc golf.



**Mary Betty Brooks**

*Women Veterans participate in a morning session titled, "Achieving Wellness and Empowering Women."*

## Summit continued from Pg 4

they deserve. Events like the Women Veterans' Summit help to spread the word that they have served and deserve the care and benefits available to them, like every other Veteran.

The event was a collaboration between state, federal, and local Veteran organizations. The event featured guest speakers, interactive discussion panels, and a women Veteran-centric resource fair.

VISN 6 Director Dan Hoffmann offered an inspirational, drop-the-mike moment about the value of women Veterans' service that meshed well with other renowned speakers including Dorothy McAuliffe, First Lady, Commonwealth of Virginia, and John Newby, Commissioner, Virginia Department of Veteran Services.

# VA Secretary Provides Relief For Veterans With TBI

VA Secretary Robert McDonald has granted equitable relief to more than 24,000 Veterans following a national review of Traumatic Brain Injury medical examinations conducted in connection with disability compensation claims processed between 2007 and 2015.

This action by the Secretary allows the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to offer new TBI examinations to Veterans whose initial examination for TBI was not conducted by one of four designated medical specialists and provides them with the opportunity to have their claims reprocessed. Equitable relief is a unique legal remedy that allows the Secretary to correct an injustice to a claimant where VA is not otherwise authorized to do so within the scope of the law.

“Traumatic Brain Injury is a signature injury in Veterans returning from the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan, and VA is proud to be an organization that sets the bar high for supporting these, and all, Veterans,” said McDonald. “Providing support for Veterans suffering from a TBI is a priority and a privilege, and we must make certain they receive a just and fair rating for their disabilities.”

To ensure TBI is properly evaluated for disability compensation purposes, VA developed a policy in 2007 requiring that one of four specialists – a psychiatrist, physiatrist, neurosurgeon or neurologist – complete TBI exams when VA does not have a prior diagnosis.

Since 2007, medicine around TBI has been a rapidly evolving science. VA designated particular specialists to conduct initial TBI exams because they have the most experience with the symptoms and effects of TBI.

As more research became available, VA issued a number of guidance documents that may have created confusion regarding the policy. VA has confirmed that its TBI guidance is now clear and being followed.

“We let these Veterans down,” McDonald said. “That is why we are taking every step necessary to grant equitable relief to those affected to ensure they receive the full benefits to which they are entitled.”

VA understands the importance of an accurate exam to support Veterans’ disability claims. The secretary’s decision to grant relief will enable VA to take action on any new examinations without requiring Veterans to submit new claims. If additional benefits are due, VA will award an effective date as early as the date of the initial TBI claim.

VA will contact Veterans identified as part of this national TBI review to offer them an opportunity to receive a new examination and have their claims reprocessed. More than 13,000 of these affected Veterans are already receiving service-connected compensation benefits for TBI at a 10-percent disability evaluation or higher, which means that the diagnosis has already been established.

## Veteran Court continued from Pg 1

staying in cell with the Veteran overnight to ease his anxiety. “It’s really a team effort. It takes everyone. You have a lot of people there to pick you up.”

Speaking about VA, Olivera said Director Goolsby has been an outstanding supporter and “the local VA has been ‘Johnny-on-the-spot.’”

The Cumberland County VTC is a hybrid Drug and Mental Health Treatment Court, created to provide judicially monitored treatment to Veterans in the criminal justice system struggling with substance addiction, mental health issues, PTSD or TBI.

From the all veteran or military affiliated treatment team, to the VA-assigned Veterans Justice Outreach (VJO) Specialist facilitating treatment and housing services, to the Veterans Service Officer (VSO) assisting with benefits, to the Veteran Mentors assisting the mentees in receiving needed services as well as navigating the court process, the Cumberland County VTC features a heavy Veteran presence. It’s very much about Veterans helping Veterans.

The Veteran must attend counseling, community support meetings, participate in a stringent drug testing program and perform community service. At the end of

the year-long program, the successful graduate may be eligible to have his or her original charges dropped or expunged.

Court administrator Craig Shore, an Air Force veteran, described the court as walking a fine line between jurisprudence and treatment, advocacy and accountability.

“As a program, we will find the Veteran, offer assistance, assess their needs, manage their care and teach them efficient problem solving,” Shore said.

Once homeless, estranged from his family, battling substance abuse and facing several felony charges, a year later Vann says he’s a different person. “I am employed full-time and have an apartment with home furnishings. I have a car and most importantly, the fractured relationships are healing.”

Olivera said Vann’s graduation is proof that the program works and his transformation will serve as inspiration for others.

For more information about the VJO program, contact Koslik at 910-488-2120 ext. 7269, email [christen.koslik@va.gov](mailto:christen.koslik@va.gov). For information about Veterans Courts in general, visit [justiceforvets.org](http://justiceforvets.org).

### Improving Veteran Experience Through MyVA Communities

As part of the VA MyVA initiative, the largest transformation in the history of VA, VA is reporting the progress and growth of the locally led, community-driven initiative, MyVA Communities.

Modeled after San Diego's successful One VA Community Advocacy Board, more than 50 communities have joined the MyVA Communities movement. What these communities have in common is that they have local Veteran engagement boards which are led by the community, provide a feedback and input mechanism for local Veterans, are accessible, and are designed to bring together all available local resources and capabilities to better support Veterans. They are also flexible enough to meet the unique needs of each community and facilitate the development of local solutions.

"VA is undergoing its largest ever transformation, MyVA, based around the central premise that we must look at all of the decisions we make through the lens of the Veteran, that is how we provide a better experience," said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Robert A. McDonald. "A vital part of that transformation is better working with strategic partners and that's exactly what MyVA Communities help us do, bring together local community leaders that want to help VA improve and provide services to Veterans."

Connecticut established the first Veterans community board in the country using the new MyVA Communities model and was followed by several other startups including MyVA Pikes Peak in Colorado Springs, Colorado. In other areas, VA was able to join well-

established existing engagements including the Alaska Forget Me Not Coalition and the Region 9 Veterans Community Action Team in Ann Arbor, Michigan.

The community Veterans engagement boards, which go by different names in each community, are co-chaired and driven by local community leaders and include representatives from all three VA Administrations on the board membership (Veterans Benefits Administration, Veterans Health Administration and the National Cemetery Administration).

To support integration of VA service offerings in communities, VA is incorporating the Veterans Economic Communities Initiative (VECI) into the MyVA Veterans Experience portfolio of service offerings. VECI, which was announced by the Secretary in 2015, has improved education and employment opportunities for Veterans in over 25 communities around the country. This is one example of a resource VA can offer to current and future MyVA Communities across the country.

VA expects to see 100 MyVA Communities throughout the country by the end of this year as a result of ongoing engagements with community leaders and existing groups with similar missions. The goal is to seek integration with existing community collaborative groups and encourage local community leaders to adopt the MyVA Communities model where gaps may exist.

For more information on the MyVA Communities effort, visit [www.va.gov/nace/myVA/index.asp](http://www.va.gov/nace/myVA/index.asp). More information about MyVA may be found at [www.va.gov/opa/myva/docs/myva\\_integrated\\_plan.pdf](http://www.va.gov/opa/myva/docs/myva_integrated_plan.pdf).

### CPE continued from Pg 7

tation skills; reflective listening; spiritual assessment; grief and loss counseling; and non-directive ministry. They also participate in case studies, one-on-one meetings with the CPE supervisor, and lead religious services.

During the graduation ceremony, each graduate had an opportunity to reflect on their experience as a chaplain intern. The graduates varied in age, gender, and pastoral experience; however, they all expressed moments when they felt challenged during the CPE program. The graduates also expressed how the program yielded great spiritual and emotional growth in their lives.

When reflecting on his CPE experience, Arthur Slavinski stated that although he had done many things in his life, his role as a chaplain intern had been the most enriching. Slavinski, a Navy Veteran, was overcome with emotion during his speech.

During their individual speeches, several of the chaplain interns expressed the notion that the people they were sent to help, were actually helping them. CPE graduate, Unique Clary, a McGuire Employee who

worked full-time while completing her part-time chaplain internship, summed up what the program meant to her, "CPE is about self-discovery. It forces you to deal with your own personal issues. Doing so best helps you minister to Veterans."

Following their speeches, the graduates received a certificate of completion and a gift. The graduating class also presented a gift to the CPE Supervisor Chaplain Kenneth Linder and the staff chaplains. The ceremony was followed by lunch and fellowship.

As this chapter closes, each graduate goes off to provide skilled, clinical pastoral care to those in need.

To learn more about the CPE program, visit [www.richmond.va.gov/Clinical\\_Pastoral\\_Education.asp](http://www.richmond.va.gov/Clinical_Pastoral_Education.asp).

#### CPE Graduates

- Arthur Slavinski
- Brad Bradley
- Brenda Phillips
- Cathleen Pierce
- James Ginter
- Unique Clary

# 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

**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

**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, ext. 1900

**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