



VA MID-ATLANTIC HEALTH CARE NETWORK - VISN 6

Vol. 4, No. 6

"Excellent Care – Earned by Veterans – Delivered Here"

Voices of VISN 6

Official news from around *your* VISN

March 31, 2014



Brad Garner



Luke Thompson

(Left) On March 17, VISN 6 Director Dan Hoffmann (4th from left) is joined by Fayetteville VAMC Director Elizabeth Goolsby (4th from right) and local officials to break ground on a new outpatient clinic in Jacksonville, N.C. (Right) On March 28, Hoffmann (5th from left) is joined by Salisbury VAMC Director Kaye Green (4th from left), Sen. Richard Burr, Rep. Robert Pittenger and local officials to break ground on a new health care center in Charlotte, N.C.

VISN 6 Continues March To Expand Access

March became a month of precedent, as VISN 6 ceremonies recognized facility construction at three sites. Following the ground breakings in Sanford and Kernersville in February, the month of March found the VISN breaking ground for a replacement outpatient clinic in Jacksonville, taking part in a ribbon cutting for the new Health Care Center in Greenville and bringing the month to a close with a ground breaking for a new Health Care Center in Charlotte.

Addressing the audience at the ground breaking in Charlotte, VISN 6

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Linnie Skidmore

Sen. Richard Burr and U.S. Rep. Walter Jones watch the National Sojourners color guard of Jacksonville N.C., pass by the dais to post the colors. Both were on hand to cut the ribbon officially opening the Greenville Health Care Center in Greenville, N.C.

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From The Director

This has been an amazing year so far.

For more than a decade, we've been working to grow the network's capacity to the point that we can care for every eligible Veteran who desires our service. During March, I had many opportunities to talk about what a difference 10 years has made with regard to access. In 2000, access to VA health care was literally a road too far to travel for many, and I'm thrilled to share that those days are about over for the vast majority of our Veterans.

The time our teams invested in planning and developing sites of care has really turned the tide.

While America was experiencing the Polar Vortex of 2014, our team was experiencing a contracting vortex. Since January, we've opened a Mental Health Facility in Salem, a remodel inpatient Mental Health unit, and Outpatient Specialty Care unit in Asheville, a Health



Care Center in Greenville, broken ground for new clinics in Sanford, Jacksonville and new Health Care Centers in Fayetteville, Kernersville and Charlotte.

I take great pride in the access we've created. Growing from 10 sites of care in 2000 to more than the 40 today, we offer an amazing array of services to tens of thousands of new Veterans who have never before had the benefit of our services. VISN 6 is making a difference in their lives.

I truly believe there has never been a better time to be a Veteran in this region and I know there has never been a better time to be part of VA health care.

We always talk about the sites of care, but they cannot stand alone. Health care facilities require a great deal of support services to ensure they have what they need to function. One of those support services that im-

pacts Veterans and service members around the region is the laundry at Richmond VAMC.

I had the opportunity to be part of the grand opening of VA's one-of-a-kind laundry in Richmond. Calling it a laundry really does not do it justice. This new facility will crank out four million pounds of laundry a year, while at the same time save an estimated \$150,000 in utility costs and more than 1 million gallons of water.



This facility serves not only VA hospitals but several Department of Defense medical centers as well. Albert Boyd and his team work behind the scenes every day, ensuring that all these hospitals have high quality linen products to utilize for their patients, and demonstrating pride in the work that they do.

Finally, since January, I've spent a lot of time on the road meeting with staff in every corner of our network. I've met with staffs in Staunton, Hampton, Virginia Beach, Elizabeth City, Charlottesville, Richmond, Fredericksburg, Greenville, Morehead City, Raleigh, Brier Creek Dialysis Center, Jacksonville, Asheville, Franklin, Rutherfordton, Hickory, Winston-Salem, Salisbury and Charlotte. I'm proud of what I've seen and the wonderful work our teams are doing...and, our Veteran are saying the same thing as evidenced by our increasing Veteran satisfaction scores over the past year.

Whether in our medical centers, our outpatient sites of care, or newest laundry facilities, the staff of VISN 6 is living its motto daily: Excellent Service — Earned by Veterans — Delivered Here.

Until next month, I wish you all the best.

Sincerely,

Dan Hoffmann

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

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

Excellent Care — Earned by Veterans — Delivered Here
Voices of VISN 6
Official news from around your VISN

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Richmond's 3-D Printing Offers Endless Possibilities

By Kenita D. Gordon
VISN 6 public affairs

Designing and creating one-of-a-kind devices to help Veterans has taken on a new dimension at the Richmond VAMC using additive manufacturing or 3-D printing to make Veterans' lives a little easier.

Ben Salatin and Brian Burkhardt, rehabilitation engineers of the Assistive Technology (AT) Center under the Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation (PM&R) service at Richmond, are using 3-D printing to make everything from device enclosures to cell phone and tablet mount adapters for wheelchairs.



A 3-D printed Assistive Technology Program logo.

According to Bill Wenninger, Rehabilitation Planning Specialist at VHA central office, Richmond is one of five VAMCs that have AT labs (others are located in Palo Alto, Minneapolis, Tampa, and San Antonio); however, it is the only one using a 3-D printer to create items previously unavailable.

Although 3-D printing was created in 1988, it was not until recently that this technology was seen as a viable alternative to traditional manufacturing – especially in healthcare. Salatin says that although it will not replace mass manufacturing any time soon, 3-D printing can offer Veterans professionally made highly custom-



Fernandez Scott

Ben Salatin discusses a cell phone mount adapter made using Richmond's 3-D printer.

ized devices.

3-D printing produces a solid object directly from a digital model on a computer. The 3-D printer create or “prints” an object by layering small, thin layers of plastic or another substance, stacking them on top of one another to form a solid object.

“Just think of the layers in a seven layer cake that are stacked to create one large cake. It’s just like print-

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Expanding Access continued from Pg 1

Director Dan Hoffmann shared that North Carolina is home to nearly 800,000 Veterans and declared, “The time is right, the location is right, and when the day comes that we cut the ribbon, you’ll know that the design is right,” referring to the actual layout of this and the other Health Care Centers under construction in Fayetteville and Kernersville.

Hoffmann hailed the increased access to Veteran care and services afforded by all the new facilities throughout the region. Within the next two years, VISN 6 will add nearly 1 million square feet of space to treat Veterans.

Senator Richard Burr, who participated in the ceremonies in Charlotte and Greenville spoke about America keeping its promise with those who have served and sacrificed.

In Charlotte, U.S. Rep Robert Pittenger talked about the growth in the Veteran population in the Charlotte area and the wonderful service the new Health Care

Center will provide. A host of other local dignitaries were on hand to usher in the new dawn of health care in Charlotte, which, according to Charlotte’s Mayor pro tem Michael Barnes “is a source of pride for all.”

Hoffmann appears justified in saying that “Veterans have voted with their feet,” by making VA facilities their health care homes of choice. With more than 40 sites of care, most every Veteran residing in the VISN’s region should be within a one hour drive from a VA facility. As more Veterans come through VA’s doors, filling every available slot, VA will continue to expand service. “And that’s great,” according to Hoffmann, who added, “We want to care for every eligible Veteran.”

All three VA Health Care Centers in North Carolina are scheduled to open for patient care in 2016. Other VISN 6 constructions that will soon be completed include a Mental Health Center of Excellence located at the Salisbury VAMC and the new research building at the Durham VAMC.

Durham's Cardiac Cath Lab 1st In VA With New Procedure

By Shannon Mann,
Durham VAMC

In March, the Cardiac Cath Lab at the Durham VAMC became the first VA hospital in the nation to obtain and use the Diamondback Orbital Atherectomy, a thin device that is used to open blockages in the heart's arteries.

Dr. Sunil Rao, director of Durham's Cardiac Cath Lab, said the procedure can open blockages that are unable to be opened using balloon angioplasty.

The device, which was approved by the FDA last October, is inserted in the artery and rotates in an orbital fashion to break up rock-hard calcium deposits. Since early March, the Durham VAMC has used the procedure four times with great results.

"It has worked extremely well," said Rao. "It allows us to deliver stents into coronary arteries much more easily."

While balloons and stents are the usual treatment for unblocking the main arteries that supply the heart, Rao said this new procedure is more effective for the types of patients he sees at the VA.

"Given the age and other medical conditions our Veterans have, the blockages we see in their coronary arteries are often very heavily calcified," Rao said. "Our regular balloons and stents don't often work in this setting so we need something to help them get more blood flow to their hearts."

"The staff at the Durham VA Medical Center is always looking for ways to provide our Veterans with the best possible care available and this new device is a great example," said DeAnne Seekins, director for the Durham VAMC.

"Dr. Rao and his team embraced this ground-breaking, top-of-the-line technology making this facility a leader in the healthcare industry. We couldn't be more proud to be the first in the VA to do it," she added.

'Top Shelf Fishin' Festival For Wounded Warriors April 24

Operation North State is sponsoring the second "Top Shelf Fishin' Festival" for 45 active duty military and Veteran wounded warriors April 24 from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. at Badin Lake in central North Carolina.

The event matches wounded warrior fishermen with experienced volunteer host counterparts for a day of fun on the water. The North Carolina Wildlife Resource Commission has waived the one-day fishing license requirement for the wounded warriors who will fish for either bass or crappie. Although it is not a competi-



Courtesy Photo

Fishing host Brad Staley and Veteran David Brown proudly display their catches.

tion, there is a competitive nature to the event, as the fisherman hauling in the largest fish and most pounds receive trophies. Each wounded warrior fisherman will also receive up to \$400 in donated gifts, along with meals throughout the day.

er 20 Veterans on landside helped make the day memorable for the disabled Veteran and military warriors. They have tried to make it easy for everyone to participate and have a good time. Snyder said "It's all about providing a special outing that most of the guys won't experience otherwise and to develop new friendships."

For more information, call 336-764-5967 or email: snydert33@gmail.com or mailbox@operationnorthstate.com. A video posted to Youtube showcases the spirit and energy of the event at www.youtube.com/watch?v=XbsruJGC5zQ&feature=youtube.



Richmond Opens First Steamless Textile Care Facility

By Darlene Edwards
Richmond VAMC public affairs

As one can imagine, doing laundry for one medical center is a large job. Doing it for many facilities is an enormous job. At the Richmond VAMC, the 26-member staff processes more than 4 million pounds of laundry per year.

As of March 13, they are accomplishing this task in the most modern, energy efficient facility anywhere in the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Speaking at the March 13 ribbon cutting for VA's first Steamless Textile Care Processing facility, VISN 6 Deputy Network Director Augustin Davila said, "Doing Laundry is one of those behind the scenes operations that we rarely hear about, but make no mistake, the work done here every day is vital to the organization and our mission."

The \$8 million renovation with its new machines and overhead monorail system doubles the output from 1,400 pounds of laundry per hour to more than 2,800.



Kevin Buser
(L-R) John Brandecker, director, Richmond VAMC, Albert Boyd, Richmond's textile plant manager, Augustin Davila, VISN 6 deputy director, Steven C. Parrish VHA's program manager for Textile Care, and Dan Hoffmann, VISN 6 director, cut the ribbon on VA's first Steamless Textile Care Processing Facility located at the Richmond VAMC.

"With the old system, we washed 500 sheets per hour. Now, it's 1,000 sheets an hour," said Slyvie Small, a

production work leader and 27-year employee.

The speed of processing the four million pounds of laundry annually is important as this facility services the medical center, as well as the Hampton VAMC, Fayetteville VAMC, Fort Lee, McDonald Army Hospital, Kenner Health Clinic, Camp Perry, Fort Eustis and Langley AFB.

As with all renovations, VA is working to enhance the environmental impact and this effort hits a home run as the equipment is expected to produce savings of \$150,000 in energy and more than a million gallons of water annually.



Darlene Edwards
Laundry worker Maurice Long provides an overview one of the new 500 pound dryers to VISN 6 Deputy Network Director Augustin Davila.

Asheville VAMC Officially Opens Newly Renovated Space

On March 26, Asheville VAMC officially opened newly renovated first floor space that includes specialty clinics in dermatology, anticoagulation, anemia, infectious disease, neurology, rheumatology, gastroenterology, nephrology, foot clinic, wound clinic, endocrinology and teaching. Formerly located on the fourth floor, relocation to the first floor offers Veterans more convenient access. The year-long project cost about \$1.3 million. More than 1,200 Veterans are expected to visit the clinics weekly.

Ready at the ribbon are (L-R) VISN 6 Director Dan Hoffmann, Chief of Medicine Dr. Eva Morgenstern, Assistant Nurse Manager for Specialty Clinics Sharon Matson, Medical Center Volunteer and Army Vietnam Veteran Randy Shores and Medical Center Director Cynthia Bryfgole.



Veterans Awareness Meeting



The Sandhills Chapter of the Military Officers Association of America (MOAA) will hold a meeting on Saturday, April 5th, 4 p.m., at the Country Club of Whispering Pines, 2 Country Club Blvd, Whispering Pines, N.C., 28327.

The meeting will:

- Advance the awareness of Veteran challenges in Moore County
- Identify where the MOAA can make a difference.
- Identify opportunities for Veterans within Moore County

All active, retired, or former officers, spouses, and guests are invited to attend.

For more information please visit www.sandhillsmoaa.com, www.facebook.com/Sandhills-MOAA, or email sandhills.MOAA@gmail.com.

4th Annual Hiring Conference To Be Held



Wounded warriors, transitioning service members, Veterans, military spouses and family members are invited to the 4th annual Wounded

Warrior Hiring and Support Conference, hosted by the Department of the Navy, May 28-29 at the Hilton North Raleigh/Midtown, 3415 Wake Forest Rd.

This year's theme is "Hiring Our Nation's Heroes – Meet the Challenge, Hire a Veteran!" The conference will bring together government, military, industry leaders, and their human resource professionals committed to hiring and supporting wounded warriors.

Registration is encouraged for job seekers, but walk-ins are welcome on the day of the event.

For more information, visit www.navsea.navy.mil/WWemployment/default.aspx.

3-D Printing continued from Pg 3

ing on paper except that on paper you have only two dimensions. Think of taking 1,000 sheets of paper with a two-dimensional shape and stacking them up. Now you go from two-dimensional to three dimensional. In 3-D printing you're stacking hundreds or thousands of layers of a 2-D profile of something and you end up with a 3-D solid object," said Salatin.

The AT lab at Richmond purchased its Stratasys 3-D printer at the end of 2012. In the beginning, few realized the potential of the technology. "For us to find uses for it, we had to educate our clinicians as to what it can do," says Salatin.

As a result, the numbers of consults in the beginning were low. However, in the past six months the requests for custom devices for patients has grown tremendously. Salatin says the amount of items being created has increased as they've seen more patients and as therapists, providers, and Veterans come to them with more ideas for types of devices that are needed.

Elsewhere in VA, places like the National Center for Rehabilitative Auditory Research (NCRAR) at Portland VAMC is using 3-D printing in research and development programs.

According to Christine Kaelin, program manager in the Portland VAMC Research Service, NCRAR is creating custom ear mold attachments in order to allow more precise positioning of their laser vibrometer in the ears of study participants.

According to the National Additive Manufacturing Innovation Institute, the key benefits of 3-D printing, officially known as additive manufacturing, are that it enables shorter lead times, mass customization, reduced parts count, more complex shapes, parts on demand, less material waste, and lower life-cycle energy use.

The federal government is investing in additive



Ben Salatin

A custom box was designed to hold Bluetooth adapters which connected the Veterans sip-n-puff wheelchair controller to his iPad and computer.

manufacturing. The U.S. Department of Energy's Oak Ridge National Laboratory has asked machine tool manufacturer Cincinnati Incorporated to help increase the speed and print size of 3-D printing — 200 to 500 times faster and 10 times the size.

The Department of Energy anticipates that additive manufacturing processes could provide more than a 50 percent energy savings over today's 'subtractive' manufacturing processes.

The Department of Defense is using 3-D printing to make electronics, weapon components, training models and radio antennas small enough to fit into a soldier's helmet.

Since 2012, the Departments of Defense, Energy, and Commerce, the National Science Foundation, and NASA have committed \$45 million for further development of 3-D printing.

When asked about the future of 3-D printing at RichmondMcGuire, Salatin says, he would like the ability to print with different materials and to print a complete device at one time instead of a device in multiple parts.

"The Assistive Technology Center has brought 3-D printing into one discipline at McGuire but it should not end there. Advances in printing different plastics and metals could be used in multiple disciplines. Perfectly fit prosthetic sockets could be printed instead of made by hand. Custom shaped surgical plates could be printed based on 3-D CT scans of a patient. There is a lot of potential for 3-D printing in the VA and new uses are continually being discovered. I hope that McGuire will continue to be a leader in this dynamic field, serving as an example and resource to other VA hospitals," said Salatin.



Fernandez Scott

Ben Salatin displays a swiveling mobile phone mount his team created with 3-D printer.

North Carolina To Host Women Veterans Summit, Expo

Empower, Educate and Enrich

The US Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and the North Carolina Division of Veterans Affairs (NCDVA) are partnering to host a Women Veterans Summit and Expo on April 17.

The Summit will take place from 8 a.m. until 6:30 p.m. at the NC National Guard Joint Forces Headquarters in Raleigh.

The Summit will provide women Veterans with access to counselors with expertise in claims, healthcare, eBenefits, education and training benefits, VA home loans, women's business opportunities and more. The event is free and all women who have honorably served in the US military are invited to attend. All Veterans are encouraged to bring a copy of their DD Form 214.

"Women make up the fastest growing population of Veterans, yet we know that many have yet to seek the benefits they have earned. By bringing together every federal, state and local organization that services Veterans, we are offering a one-stop shop for women to learn about virtually any service or benefit that they may be entitled to in a casual and comfortable environment," said Shenekia Williams-Johnson, VA's regional Women Veterans Program Manager.

Sponsoring federal partners includes the VA's Health and Benefits Administrations and the Vet Centers. NCDVA and the NC National Guard

are leading state partners that also include, NC Department of Administration's NC Council for Women and the Office for Historically Underutilized Businesses.

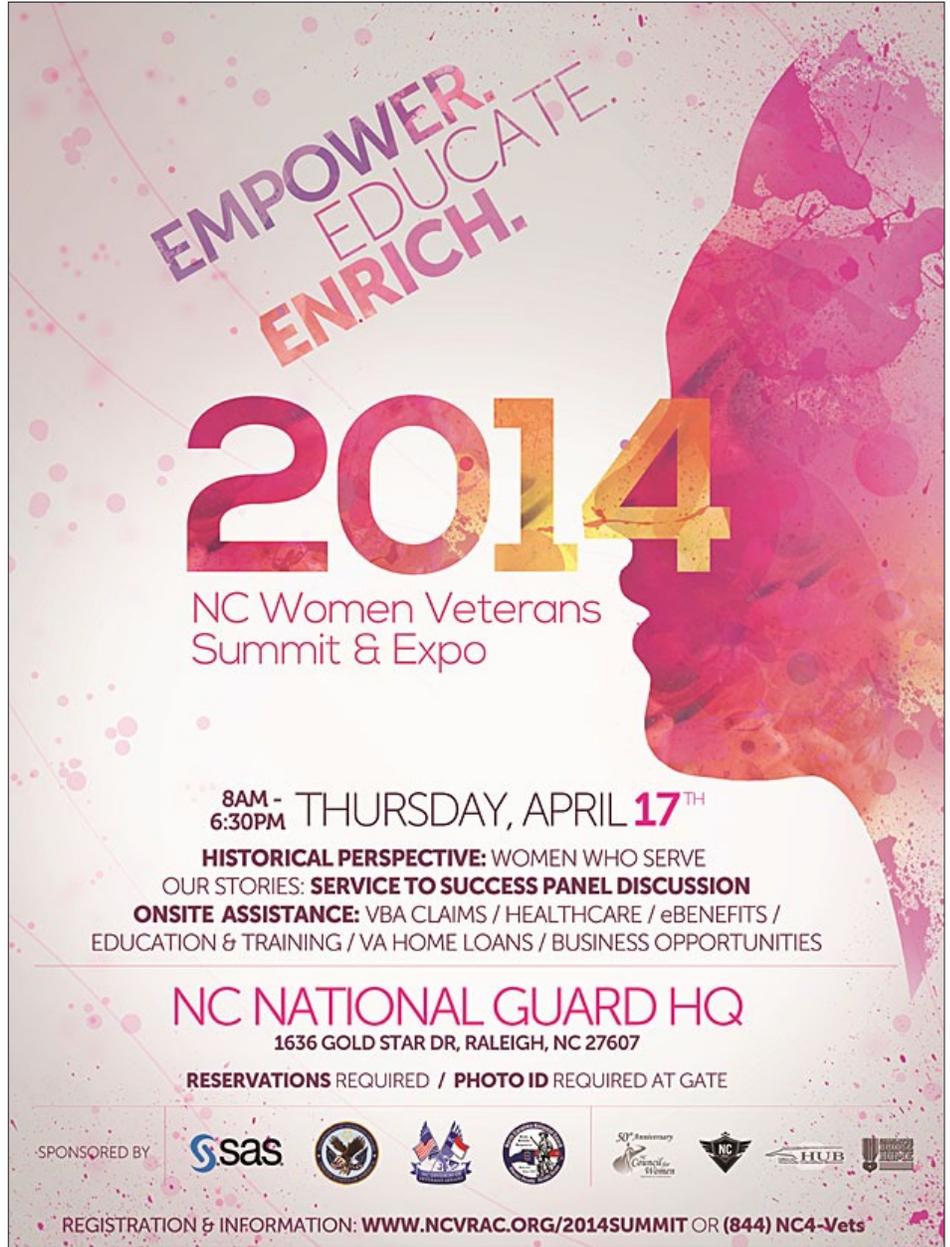
Job seeking services will be provided by both non-profit partners and the Veteran job advisors from the NC Department of Commerce's Division of Workforce Solutions.

"We are excited to celebrate women Veterans and their service to the state and the nation," said Ilario Pantano, Director of the NCDVA. "The cooperation of such a wide-range of state, federal, and private partners in this Summit and Expo is the model for deliver-

ing the quality of service our Veterans deserve – a true one-stop shop."

This is the first statewide event dedicated to supporting women veterans in North Carolina. The Summit and Expo will feature representatives from various service organizations and feature speakers and panel discussions ranging from historical presentations to professional success stories and networking.

The venue is a secure facility and pre-registration is required. Registration and more information can be found at www.NCVRAC.org or by phone at 844-NC4-VETS.



EMPOWER. EDUCATE. ENRICH.

2014

NC Women Veterans Summit & Expo

8AM - 6:30PM THURSDAY, APRIL 17TH

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE: WOMEN WHO SERVE
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FY-15 VA Budget Strengthens Care, Benefits For Veterans

The President has proposed a \$163.9 billion budget, a 6.5 percent increase over Fiscal Year 2014, that will support VA's goals to expand access to health care and other benefits, eliminate the disability claims backlog, and end homelessness among Veterans. The budget includes \$68.4 billion in discretionary spending, largely for healthcare, and \$95.6 billion for mandatory programs – mostly disability compensation and pensions for Veterans.

"This budget is a tangible demonstration of the President's commitment to ensuring Veterans and their families have the care and benefits they've earned and deserve," said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki.

The \$68.4 billion total in discretionary spending includes approximately \$3.1 billion in medical care collections from health insurers and Veteran copayments.

"We remain committed to providing Veterans the opportunity to pursue their education, find meaningful employment and access high-quality health care," Shinseki added.

VA operates one of the largest integrated health care systems in the country with nearly 9 million enrollees; the ninth largest life insurance program; monthly disability pay, pensions and survivors payments to more than 5.1 million beneficiaries of monthly pay, pensions and survivor benefits; education assistance or vocational rehabilitation benefits and services to 1.2 million students; mortgage guaranties to over 2 million homeowners; and the largest cemetery system in the nation.

Here are highlights from the President's 2015 budget request for VA.

Health Care

With a medical care budget of \$59.1 billion, including collections, VA is positioned to provide care to 6.7 million patients in the fiscal year beginning Oct. 1. The patient total includes over 757,000 people whose military service began after Sept. 11, 2001.

Major spending categories within the budget are:

- \$7.2 billion for mental health;
- \$2.6 billion for prosthetics;
- \$561 million for spinal cord injuries;
- \$229 million for traumatic brain injuries;
- \$238 million for readjustment counseling; and
- \$7.0 billion for long-term care.

Expanding Access

The proposed budget would ensure that care and other benefits are available to Veterans when and where they need them. Among the programs that will expand access under the proposed budget are:

- \$567 million in telehealth funding, which helps patients monitor chronic conditions and increases access to care, especially in rural and remote locations;

- \$403 million for health care services specifically-designed for women, an increase of 8.7 percent over the present level;

- \$534 million for the activation of new and enhanced health care facilities;

- \$562 million for on-going construction projects;

- \$86.6 million for improved customer service applications for online self-service portals and call center agent-assisted inquiries; and

- \$3.6 million to open two new national cemeteries in Florida and prepare for the opening of two new rural national Veterans burial grounds.

Eliminating Claims Backlog

The President's proposed budget provides for full implementation of VBA's robust Transformation Plan – a series of people, process and technology initiatives – in FY 2015. This plan will continue to reduce the backlog and enable the Department to reach its 2015 goal – to eliminate the disability claims backlog and process all claims within 125 days with 98 percent accuracy.

Major transformation initiatives in the budget proposal invest \$312 million to bring leading-edge technology to the claims backlog, including:

- \$173 million (\$137 million in Information Technology and \$36 million in VBA) for the next generation of the electronic claims processing system Veterans Benefits Management System (VBMS); and

- \$139 million for Veterans Claims Intake Program (VCIP) to continue conversion of paper records into electronic images and data in VBMS.

Eliminating Veteran Homelessness

A major strategic goal for the Department is to end homelessness among Veterans in 2015. The budget request targets \$1.6 billion for programs to prevent or reduce homelessness, including:

- \$500 million for Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) to promote housing stability;

- \$374 million for the HUD-VASH program where in VA provides case management services for at-risk Veterans and their families and HUD provides permanent housing through its Housing Choice Voucher program; and

- \$253 million in grant and per diem payments that support temporary housing provided by community-based organizations.

Other Services for Veterans

Other features of the administration's FY 2015 budget request for the department are:

- \$257 million to administer the VA-run system of national cemeteries;

- \$3.9 billion for information technology; and

- \$1.2 billion in construction, cemetery grants and extended care grants.

Commemorating 25 Years As A Cabinet-Level Department

In 1930, President Herbert Hoover created the Veterans Administration by consolidating three existent organizations—the U.S. Veterans Bureau, the National Homes for Disabled Soldiers, and the Bureau of Pensions—into an organization of 54 hospitals, 31,600 employees, and 4.7 million Veterans, many of whom had served in World War I, others who had fought in the Spanish-American War, and some even in the Civil War.

Nearly 60 years later, President Ronald Reagan signed the Department of Veterans Affairs Act of 1988, elevating the former administration to a cabinet-level Department of Veterans Affairs. President Reagan ex-

plained, then, that the “bill gives those who have borne America’s battles, who have defended the borders of freedom, who have protected our Nation’s security in war and in peace—it gives them what they have deserved for so long: a seat at the table in our national affairs.”

March 15 was the 25th anniversary of President Reagan’s executive action. This year’s celebration coincides with America’s commemoration of the Civil War. President Abraham Lincoln’s charge to all Americans in 1865 has defined America’s covenant with its Veterans—“to care for [those] who shall have borne the battle, and for [their families and survivors].”

VA Eliminates Burden Of Annual Income Reporting Requirement

VA is eliminating the annual requirement for most Veterans enrolled in VA’s health care system to report income information beginning this month. Instead, VA will automatically match income information obtained from the Internal Revenue Service and Social Security Administration.

“Eliminating the requirement for annual income reporting makes our health care benefits easier for Veterans to obtain,” said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki. “This change will reduce the burden on Veterans, improve customer service and make it much easier for Veterans to keep their health care eligibility up-to-date.”

Some Veterans applying for enrollment for the first time are still required to submit income information. There is no change in VA’s long-standing policy to provide no-cost care to indigent Veterans, Veterans with catastrophic medical conditions, Veterans with a disability rating of 50 percent or higher, or for conditions that are officially rated as “service-connected.”

VA encourages Veterans to continue to use the health benefits renewal form to report changes in their personal information, such as address, phone numbers, dependents, next of kin, income and health insurance.

For more information, visit www.va.gov/healthbenefits/cost or call VA toll-free at 877-222-VETS (8387).

Specially Adaptive Housing Grant Eligibility Automatic For ALS

Veterans and active-duty military personnel with service-connected amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS), commonly known as Lou Gehrig’s disease, are now presumed medically eligible for grants up to almost \$68,000 to adapt their homes.

The change affects recipients of VA’s specially adapted housing grants, which helps pay for the costs for building, buying or adapting a home, up to a maximum of \$67,555.

Under the change, Veterans and Servicemembers with service-connected ALS will be determined medically eligible for the maximum grant. The program provides grants to construct or modify a home to meet their unique housing needs. Grants are also available to help eligible individuals purchase adapted homes or pay down mortgages on homes that are already adapted. VA estimates this change will save approximately 12 months in the overall process of a Specially Adapted Housing (SAH) grant.

“This change automates and shortens our SAH grant delivery process,” said Under Secretary for Ben-

efits Allison A. Hickey. “SAH is an important benefit giving beneficiaries the ability to adapt their homes and create a barrier free living environment- expanding their independence in their own homes.”

In 2008, VA established a presumption of service connection for ALS for any Veteran who develops the disease at any time after separation from service. VA amended its disability rating scale in January 2012, assigning a 100-percent disability evaluation for any Veteran who has service-connected ALS.

VA adapted its rules so Veterans with service-connected ALS no longer have to file multiple claims for increased benefits as their condition progresses. Prior to the new SAH regulatory change, many Veterans and Servicemembers who were rated by VA for service connected ALS, but who did not yet have symptoms debilitating enough to affect their mobility to the degree required for SAH grant eligibility, were unable to begin the process of modifying their homes.

For more information, visit <http://benefits.va.gov/homeloans/adaptedhousing.asp>.

Initiative Shows Promise In Reducing Opioid Use For Chronic Pain

VA has initiated a multi-faceted approach to reduce the use of opioids among America's Veterans using VA health care. The Opioid Safety Initiative (OSI) is a comprehensive effort to improve the quality of life for the hundreds of thousands of Veterans suffering from chronic pain.

Launched in October 2013 in Minneapolis, Minnesota, OSI is already demonstrating success in lowering dependency on this class of drugs. At eight sites of care in Minnesota, OSI practices have decreased high-dose opioid use by more than 50 percent. OSI incorporates the team approach with the goal of reducing opioid use by alleviating a Veterans' pain using non-prescription methods. There is an emphasis on patient education, close patient monitoring with frequent feedback and Complementary and Alternative Medicine practices like acupuncture.

"We have developed and implemented joint pain management guidelines which encourage the use of other medications and therapies in lieu of habit forming opiates," said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki. "Early results give us hope that we can reduce the use of opioids for Veterans suffering with chronic pain and share these best practices across our health-care networks."

The Opioid Safety Initiative faces the challenge of opioid dependency with an innovative and comprehensive plan that closely monitors VA's dispensing practices system-wide and coordinates pain management to include patient and provider education, testing and

tapering programs, and alternative therapies like acupuncture and behavior therapy.

Veterans enrolled in the VA health care system suffer from high rates of chronic pain. Each VA facility employs personnel including Interdisciplinary Pain Medicine Specialty Teams and Consult Services, Facility Pain Committees, Pharmacy staff and Primary Care/PACT, and other professionals to accomplish the goals and objectives of the OSI.

VA has developed patient management initiatives including Pain Coach, which is a pain management app available for download by patients receiving pain management treatments, a Veterans' Health Library, including a Patient/Family Management Toolkit, and resources for Pain Management on My HealtheVet. All of these applications allow Veterans to better manage their pain without the use of opioids. VA's measurement-based pain care includes the "Pain Scale," which reduces uncertainty and helps Veterans by discussing the potential benefits of a medication and possible side-effects.

"The Opioid Safety Initiative is an example of VHA's personalized, proactive and patient-centered approach to health care. We are also using a full-range of support treatments for Veterans, including Complementary and Alternative Medicine," said Dr. Robert Petzel, VA's Under Secretary for Health. "We are delivering health care with the patient's long-term personal health goals at the forefront."

For further information, Veterans should contact their primary care health team.

NPRC Allows Public Access To Military Personnel Records

The National Personnel Records Center (NPRC) now provides public access to millions of individual Official Military Personnel Files (OMPFs) of service members who served from the late 1800s through 1945.

The records opening is part of an ongoing expansion of the NPRC's Archival Program that aims to transfer all OMPFs from the military services to the legal custody of the National Archives Records Administration (NARA).

Prior to 2007, only next-of-kin (surviving spouse or children) were able to request access to these records; however, a joint venture by the NPRC and NARA opened access to the public. Now historians, researchers, genealogists, extended family members and so on are able to further research our nation's military history and prior servicemen and women.

Records opened include:

- U.S. Navy Enlisted OMPFs with discharge dates beginning in 1885 through 1945;
- U.S. Navy Officer OMPFs with discharge dates

beginning in 1902 through 1945;

- U.S. Marine Corps Enlisted OMPFs with discharge dates beginning in 1906 through 1945;
- U.S. Marine Corps Officer OMPFs with discharge dates beginning in 1905 through 1945;
- U.S. Army OMPFs with discharge dates beginning in 1912 through 1945; and
- U.S. Coast Guard OMPFs with discharge dates beginning in 1898 through 1945.

The cost for the individual OMPFs are as follows:

- OMPF of five pages or fewer: \$15
- OMPF of greater than five pages: \$50 (most OMPFs fall in this category)
- Persons of Exceptional Prominence OMPF: \$.75 per page.
- Copies of individual OMPF documents made in the Archival Research Room: \$.75 per page.

For more information, please call the NPRC at 314-801-0800 or visit www.archives.gov/st-louis/military-personnel/index.html.

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/

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

OUTPATIENT CLINICS

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Goldsboro CBOC
2610 Hospital Road
Goldsboro, NC 27909
919-731-9766

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

DIALYSIS CENTERS

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

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

VET CENTERS

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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