

VOICES OF VISN 6

— Excellent Care – Earned by Veterans – Delivered Here —



IN CHARLOTTE, *Make-Believe Imitates* LIFE DURING EXERCISE

Inside This Issue



- 3 | Salem VA Medical Center's Gerofit Program
- 6 | Improvement Advisor Academy
- 7 | Durham Researcher Recognized for Study on Smoking, PTSD
- 8 | Project Hero Hosts Training Program

COVER STORY //

By **Steve Wilkins** | VISN 6 PUBLIC AFFAIRS

Department of Veterans Affairs staff from Salisbury and Durham VA medical centers and the Mid-Atlantic Health Care Network (VISN 6) participated in the Triennial Part 139 Disaster Exercise at the Charlotte Douglas International Airport Oct. 8.

VA staff actively train on a regular basis to fulfill VA's fourth mission of disaster response and relief. Staff from top leadership positions down is trained in every aspect of crisis and emergency management, to ensure that

COVER PHOTO // Kasey Boyd-Smith, a nurse at the Salisbury VA, simulates triage activities with exercise victims during Triennial Part 139 Disaster Exercise in Charlotte, Oct. 8. (Photo by Steve Wilkins)

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

Volunteer Reminded of VETERANS' SACRIFICE WITH EVERY BREATH



By Scott Pittillo | ASHEVILLE VAMC PUBLIC AFFAIRS



Volunteer Rob Reuss, right, speaks to a Veteran at the Charles George VA Medical Center with his dog, Digit, summer of 2017. (Photo by Scott Pittillo)

Volunteers donate their time at the VA for a thousand reasons. Many do so for a sense of duty. For others, it's more personal. For VA Volunteer Rob Reuss the reason is personal — he owes his life to a Marine killed in the line of duty.

In 2015, Reuss was diagnosed with Bronchiolitis Obliterans, which is as bad as it sounds. It's a terminal lung disease that gets progressively worse over time. Doctors gave Reuss a couple of years to live without a complete lung transplant.

So then it was a waiting game, and Reuss was added to the national transplant list. During that time, he became weaker and weaker, but passed on a couple of opportunities until the right fit came along.

"It's very stressful," said Reuss. "You have to be ready to go for the operation at any time and you have to make the decision about whether a particular donor is right for you, and if you are going to have time to wait."

The right fit was a young Marine named Lance Corporal Matthew J. Determan, killed in a training accident in Southern California.

"Matthew saved me and four other people that day," said Reuss. When Reuss

finally received the transplant at University of California at San Francisco he had less than six months to live and was down to 14 percent lung capacity.

"The first breath after (the operation) was like being born again," said Reuss, explaining the first thing he remembers after waking up from the operation.

He was out of the hospital after 10 days, and he says that he now has about 130 percent lung capacity because the new lungs are a little larger than his original. Other than taking medication to prevent rejection and being on constant lookout for infections, Reuss says he feels great.

Transplant recipients have the option of reaching out to the family to ask if they want to share the donor's story. The decision is then left up to the family whether they want to reply.

"I waited a year before I decided to write a letter to Matthew's family," said Reuss. "I wasn't sure how they would feel about it or

how I would feel about it, but it was a tremendous gift to know who the donor was and be in contact with his family."

The family replied.

Matthew's father was gracious and happy to tell Reuss about his son. After learning that his donor was a Marine, Reuss wanted to do something to give back to all Veterans for his lifesaving gift.

After moving to North Carolina, he found out that he could volunteer at the local VA with his small dog, Digit, in Animal Therapy and Mental Health.

Reuss spends as much time as he can just sharing his story with hospitalized Veterans and listening to their stories. He and Digit just try to be there for people who need companionship and an open ear. Digit is about the best-behaved little dog that you could imagine, and his partnership with Reuss seems like a match made in heaven. Digit is patient and ready for a soft scratch behind the ears from all comers.

Reuss says that the transplant wasn't a permanent solution, but his time is now numbered in years and not days anymore.

"I use that knowledge as a reminder to live fully, so it's a gift to know that my days are limited," said Reuss.

In the meantime, to live fully for Reuss means giving back when he can, hoping that his good feelings can filter down to the Veterans he visits and to help them find peace as well.



VA Caregiver Support Supporting Veterans from all service eras.

Caregivers who are assisting Veterans are eligible for:

- Peer Mentoring
- Online Courses
- Face-to-Face Classes
- Phone Support

These services are offered in addition to the care provided by VA physicians, nurses and clinicians.

www.caregiver.va.gov

#VAcaregiver





LEFT PHOTO // One presenter prepares while another finishes up. New VISN 6 conference space enables technically advanced presentation for a large number of participants, like the students attending the Fall 2017 Improvement Advisors Academy. The IAA is preparing improvement professionals to better engage facility leaders. (Photo by Jason Miller)

IMPROVEMENT ADVISOR ACADEMY

Aims to Improve Facility Leader Engagement

A national program group met at the VISN 6 office in October to help advance VA's commitment to continuous improvement and development of VA as an efficient, high-performing, high reliability organization.

VISN 6 Headquarters recently moved to a new location in Durham, NC, featuring technology-forward conference space that has already become attractive for VA training encounters beyond the scope of the VISN.

Last spring, the VHA Office of Systems Redesign and Improvement initiated the FY17 VHA Improvement Advisory Academy. Slated to hone the advising skills of 40 improvement professionals from around VHA, through face to face encounters and virtual experience, the IAA learning sessions occur quarterly, in different locations for a year. The VISN office seemed an appealing destination, with its state of the art design and technical

amenities. Other locations include Kansas City, MO and Vancouver, Wash.

Program director Kay Calloway said the course should develop "change agents," improvement specialists who can work with others in their organizations, to share a variety of improvement methods.

Calloway is Acting Associate Director, VHA Systems Improvement & Consultation. She says each participant will work on three improvement projects during the course period where they learn to use and implement as improvement program professionals to influence others. One student affirmed the course purpose by adding that, "I've already begun to encourage others to apply to be a part of the next session because of the value IAA has added to my work environment."

The program's goal is that participants will be viewed by their senior leadership as

strategically vital assets to the organization, based on their enhanced advising skills to help others improve their professional output. Faculty come from within and outside VA, to offer students broad, cutting edge thought on the topics covered.

Upon completion, IAA students will offer their leadership improvement processes and methods that support collaboration, facilitation, and coaching of improvement teams. Successes of the program, which was also offered in 2009 – 2011 will be measured by student project completion, surveys, and career tracking.

Calloway contends that their acquisition of concepts in project management, improvement processes, Lean principles, data and statistical analysis, and variability concepts should affect improvement and sustainment of positive change in their home locations.

VISN 6 students selected for the program are Jan Johnson (VISN 6 Office); Jennifer Johnson (Fayetteville VAMC); Veeron Wilson (Richmond VAMC); April Short (Richmond VAMC); and Laurie Guin (Fayetteville VAMC). Student Jan Johnson confided that, "Enterprise wide we are seeing a significant amount of change, both small and large. Being a participant in IAA is sharpening my statistical, analytical and improvement skills." She added, "IAA increases the capability to perform improvement work which is essential for lasting organizational change."



More than 50 turned out to show support at an open house event to kick off Veterans Month. (Photo by Jason Miller, Medical Media, Richmond VA Medical Center.)

Richmond Kicks Off Veterans Month With Open House

More than 50 Veterans, community members and Richmond VA Medical Center employees gathered Nov. 1 for an open house event to kick off Veterans Month, and to showcase the unwavering commitment that VA holds to honor the individuals who proudly wore the uniform. During the event, time was given to learn about community programs, to speak with a Veterans Benefits Administration representative, and to ask questions of medical center leaders.



Memorial Message from the Secretary

It is with great sadness that I share the news of the passing of Robert L. Jesse, M.D., Ph.D.

Dr. Jesse served as Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA), Chief Academic Affiliations Officer, Veterans Health Administration (VHA), VA Central Office, where he was responsible for the largest health professions education program in the United States, including more than 120,000 trainees annually in more than 40 different health professions.

Dr. Jesse was a remarkable leader in the development of clinical policies and programs in VHA. Prior to becoming the Chief Academic Affiliations Officer, Dr. Jesse served in a myriad of roles in VHA including Acting Under Secretary for Health, Principal Deputy Under Secretary for Health, Chief Consultant for Medical Surgical Service in Office of Patient Care Services, National Program Director for Cardiology, Chief of Cardiology at the Richmond VA Medical Center, and Director of the Acute Cardiac Care program at Virginia Commonwealth University Health System. He also practiced at the Richmond VA Medical Center.

Dr. Jesse was a Fellow on various Boards and a recipient of many awards for his contributions to improving Veterans' health care.

Dr. Jesse will be missed by his many friends and supporters at VA. Arrangements are pending and we will share that information once available.

David J. Shulkin, M.D.

McGuire VA, Project Hero host training program

To spread cycling programs to other VA hospitals

By David Hodge | PUBLIC AFFAIRS SPECIALIST

In early October, the McGuire VA Medical Center welcomed a specialized training team from Project Hero to help spread the sport of cycling to other VA facilities.

Recently, the Dept. of Veterans Affairs and the California-based non-profit announced a partnership to bring official Project Hero hubs to VA medical centers across the U.S. Project Hero's mission is to bring therapeutic cycling programs to Veterans and first responders affected by injury, post-traumatic stress disorder, military sexual trauma and traumatic brain injury.

"I believe my Veterans will benefit from Project Hero," said Shannon O'Rawe, recreation therapist at the Tennessee Valley Healthcare System in Nashville. "This nonprofit complements the Recreational Therapy Program at VA in Nashville as we are focused on adaptive sports and overall Veteran health and wellness."

The weeklong training program included discussions, demonstrations and hands-on instruction for both new and experienced riders. Project Hero brought a dedicated team of cycling experts, Veterans, and other personnel to help participants gain in-depth knowledge about the sport of cycling. The group practiced in various settings, such as the City of Richmond and Virginia Capital Trail.

"Cycling is not only an enjoyable sport, but it is also a competitive sport that a lot of my Veterans have taken interest in competing," O'Rawe added.

"Specifically, my Veterans who compete in the Golden Age Games will benefit the most."

Army Veteran Mike Kanney has taken part in several Project Hero rides in the past. To him, and other Veterans he has spoken with, cycling can be an alternative therapy to combat the effects of PTSD.

"This is in addition to all the therapies offered here at McGuire," Kanney said. "It's not a showboat program. The sole purpose is to help Veterans."

For more information on these resources visit: www.Richmond.VA.Gov, www.ProjectHero.Org, and www.VirginiaCapitalTrail.Org.

VA employees from several medical centers throughout the US attended Project Hero's first VA-specific Hub training program to teach both new and experienced cyclists how to start a similar program at their respective facilities. VA clinicians from North Carolina, Virginia, West Virginia, Arizona, and Tennessee attended the event.



VA employees from several medical centers throughout the U.S. attended Project Hero's first VA-specific Hub training program to teach both new and experienced cyclists how to start a similar program at their respective facilities. VA clinicians from North Carolina, Virginia, West Virginia, Arizona, and Tennessee attended the event. Photos courtesy of Tiffini Skuce, Project Hero.

VA Mental Health Resources



Make the Connection

Make the Connection is an online resource designed to connect Veterans, their family members and friends, and other supporters with information and solutions to issues affecting their lives. On the website, visitors can watch hundreds of Veterans share their stories of strength and recovery, read about a variety of life events and mental health topics, and locate nearby resources.

www.MakeTheConnection.net

@VeteransMTC



Veterans Crisis Line

The Veterans Crisis Line connects Veterans in crisis and their families and friends with qualified, caring VA responders through a confidential toll-free hotline, online chat, and text-messaging service. Veterans and their loved ones can call **1-800-273-8255** and **Press 1**, chat online, or send a text message to **838255** to receive confidential support 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year.

www.VeteransCrisisLine.net



Coaching into Care

Coaching into Care is a national telephone service of the VA that aims to educate, support, and empower family members and friends who are seeking care or services for a Veteran. Our goal is to help Veterans and their family members, and other loved ones find the appropriate services at their local VA facility and/or in their community. Coaching is provided by licensed psychologists or social workers, free of charge.

www.mirecc.va.gov/coaching

@CoachingIntoCare
 @CoachingIn2Care



Veteran Training

The Veteran Training online self-help portal provides tools for overcoming everyday challenges. The Portal has tools to help Veterans work on problem-solving skills, manage anger, develop parenting skills, and more. All tools are free, their use is entirely anonymous, and they are based on mental health practices that have proven successful with Veterans and their families.

www.veterantraining.va.gov



AboutFace

AboutFace features the real stories of Veterans who have experienced PTSD, their family members, and VA clinicians. By watching the videos on AboutFace, you can learn about PTSD, explore treatment options, and get advice from others who have been there.

www.ptsd.va.gov/apps/AboutFace



Community Provider Toolkit

The Community Provider Toolkit supports the behavioral health and wellness of Veterans receiving services outside the VA health care system. Community providers play an essential role in providing America's Veterans with the support they have earned. Resources available in the toolkit include information on screening for military service, handouts and trainings to increase understanding of military culture, and mini-clinics focused on relevant aspects of behavioral health and wellness.

www.mentalhealth.va.gov/communityproviders

Rhett Herrera: Rhett.Herrera@va.gov
Koby South: Koby.South@va.gov



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

VISN 6 Sites Of Care & VA Vet Centers

MEDICAL CENTERS

Asheville VAMC

1100 Tunnel Road
Asheville, NC 28805
828-298-7911 | 800-932-6408
www.asheville.va.gov

Durham VAMC

508 Fulton Street
Durham, NC 27705
919-286-0411 | 888-878-6890
www.durham.va.gov

Fayetteville VAMC

2300 Ramsey Street
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 County CBOC

18 Doctors Cl., Units 2 & 3
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

Fayetteville Rehabilitation Clinic

4101 Raeford Rd. Ste 100-B
Fayetteville NC 28304
910-908-2222

Franklin CBOC

647 Wayah Street
Franklin, NC 28734-3390
828-369-1781

Fredericksburg CBOC

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

Fredericksburg at Southpoint CBOC

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

Goldsboro CBOC

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

Greenville HCC

401 Moya 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

Raleigh III CBOC

2600 Atlantic Ave, Ste 200
Raleigh, NC 27604
919-755-2620

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

141 Ben Bolt Ave.
Tazewell, VA 24651
276-988-8860

Virginia Beach CBOC

244 Clearfield Avenue
Virginia Beach, VA
757-722-9961

Wilmington HCC

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

Wytheville CBOC

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

DIALYSIS CENTERS

VA Dialysis and Blind Rehabilitation Clinics at Brier Creek

8081 Arco Corporate Drive
Raleigh, NC 27617
919-286-5220

VA Dialysis Clinic Fayetteville

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

VET CENTERS

Charlotte Vet Center

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

Fayetteville Vet Center

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

Greensboro Vet Center

3515 W Market Street, Suite 120
Greensboro, NC 27403
336-333-5366

Greenville Vet Center

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

Jacksonville, N.C. Vet Center

110-A Branchwood Drive
Jacksonville, NC 28546
910-577-1100

Norfolk Vet Center

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

Raleigh Vet Center

8851 Ellstree Lane
Raleigh, NC 27617
919-856-4616

Roanoke Vet Center

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

Virginia Beach Vet Center

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

VISN 6 Newsletter

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

Questions or comments about the newsletter, email stephen.wilkins2@va.gov or call 919-956-5541

VISN 6 EDITORIAL

DeAnne Seekins // VISN 6 Network Director
Linda Exner // Acting Deputy Network Director
Tara Ricks // Director of Communications
Steve Wilkins // Editor

PRODUCTION TEAM

Fanning Communications
John Fanning // President + CEO
DeAnna Clark // Graphic Designer
Karl J. Paloucek // Editor + Copywriter

