

VOICES OF VISN 6

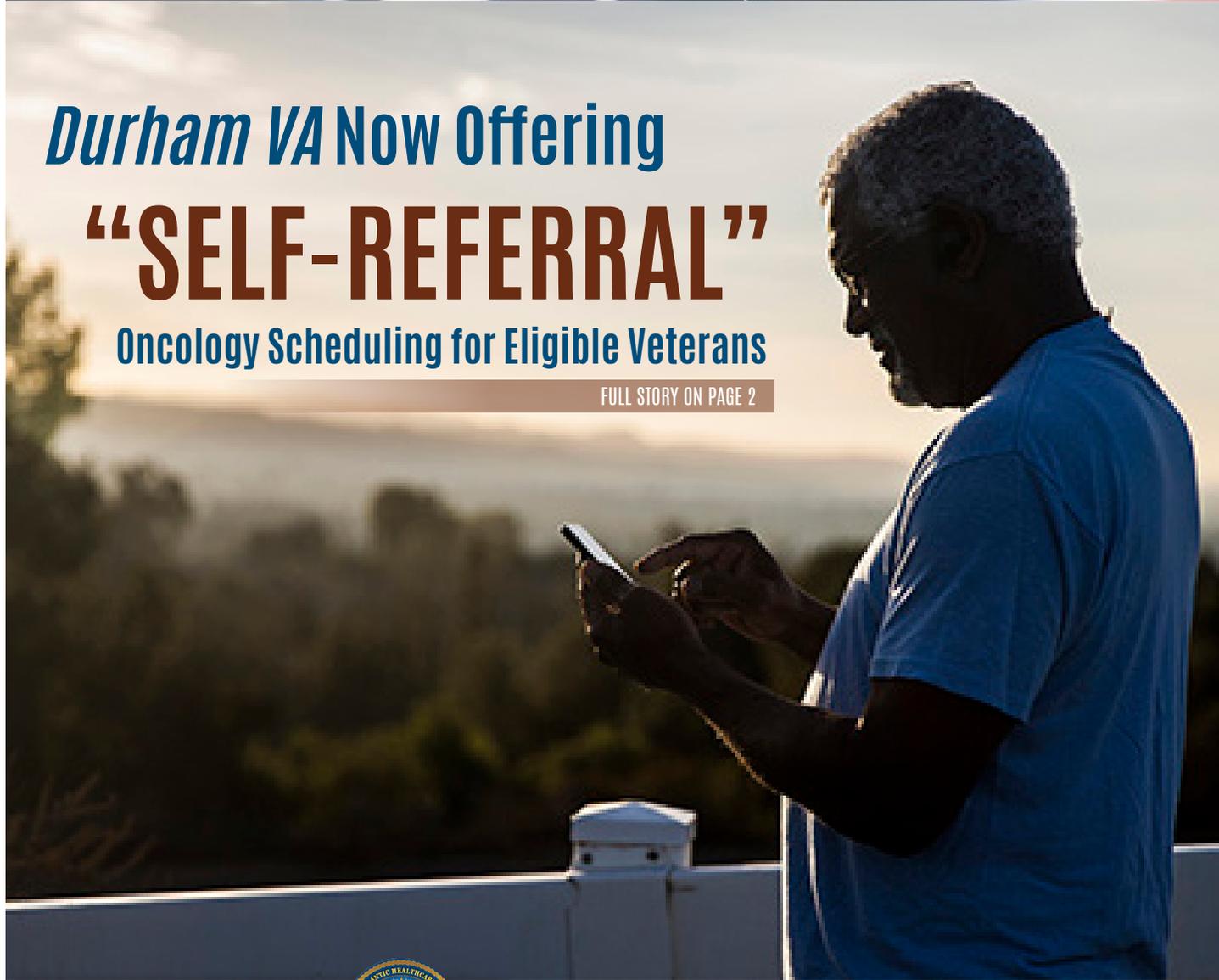
— Excellent Care – Earned by Veterans – Delivered Here —

Durham VA Now Offering

“SELF-REFERRAL”

Oncology Scheduling for Eligible Veterans

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Iconic Female WWII Veteran Celebrates 100



Durham VA Health Care System’s Home Based Care presented Veteran Millie Dunn Veasey with a cake and roses on Jan. 31 at her home in honor of her 100th birthday. Durham VA Health Care System’s Deputy Chief of Staff, Dr. Anne Emler, also presented Ms. Veasey with a copy of her “My Life, My Story” during the visit. “The VA is keeping me alive,” said Veasey during the celebration. “I am thankful and overwhelmed that my VA family did this for me.”

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Veteran Millie Dunn Veasey was honored with a celebration of her 100th birthday by the Durham VA Health Care System’s Home Based Care personnel.

Durham VA Now Offering “Self-Referral” Oncology Scheduling for Eligible Veterans

By Durham VAHCS | PUBLIC AFFAIRS

Durham VA Health Care System (DVAHCS) is proud to announce that the organization now offers eligible Veterans with active cancer the ability to “self-refer” to make an initial oncology appointment. Previously, Veterans had to receive a consult or referral from a primary care provider prior to scheduling an appointment with a cancer specialist, but through patient self-referral direct scheduling (PSDS), eligible Veterans with active cancer will be able to get enrolled and schedule an appointment to see a cancer specialist directly.

“Patient Self-Referral Direct Scheduling is improving timeliness for Veterans accessing specialty services,” Dr. Susan Kirsh, VHA National Clinical Director, Practice Management and Access, said. “I am excited to see sites who are getting rid of unnecessary consults and helping Veterans get the care they need.”

Durham, North Carolina-area Veterans with active cancer who are not yet enrolled in VA can call 1-833-309-1349 to find out if they are

eligible for VA health care benefits and make an appointment to see a cancer specialist. Previously, this process required multiple phone calls with different offices, followed by an appointment with a primary care provider to receive a referral to see a cancer specialist. The goal of this initiative is to improve clinic access and reduce wait times, as well as enhance Veteran care and satisfaction. Veterans with cancer face many challenges, and accessing the care they earned should not be one of them. “We want to provide Veterans facing the challenges of a cancer diagnosis a streamlined path to see the care providers they need,” said Dr. Michael Kelley, DVAHCS Chief of Hematology and Oncology, who is leading the health care system’s implementation effort.

Currently, this self-referral scheduling process is available at select VA facilities, with Durham VA being one of them. If successful, the process may roll out nationwide, as well as branch out to other care specialties. This is just one of the many ways that VA is evolving and adapting to make sure that Veterans get the care they need, when they need it.



Network Director Comments



Not only do we celebrate Valentine’s Day in February, but it is a special month for us at VA as we host National Salute to Veteran Patient events throughout our facilities. It’s a time when Voluntary Service plans fun, heart-felt events for our Veterans to show our appreciation.

When I was a facility director, I remember walking throughout the hospital in February, seeing the hundreds of handmade cards. I would watch the faces of our Veterans light up as 3rd graders handed out valentines with messages like; “You are brave,” “I want to be like you one day,” or “Is war scary?” There wasn’t a single person that didn’t go to their appointment without a smile on their face. This is such a simple but impactful gesture that connects the community to our Veterans and increases awareness of all their sacrifices.

Another focus of National Salute month is appreciating the importance of our VA volunteers and how we need more people to donate their time. This is a comment from one of our volunteers about how giving back changed his life:

“I have listened to a great many stories — stories that were likely told

for the last time. My favorite conversation was with a World War II Veteran who remembered the construction of the Duke Chapel. Even on an ordinary day, I still have the pleasure of talking with Veterans and helping them eat lunch, an opportunity that I am so lucky to have had. These past two years, I have looked forward to going to the VA; it has been my chance to give back to the community that has given me so much. For that, I am ever grateful.”

As we all know, this is just one of many testimonials why being a VA volunteer is so powerful. We have one of the largest volunteer programs in the federal government and most of the time it is the volunteers who have the first experience with our Veterans.

Thank you for taking a little extra time this month to participate in one of the many National Salute to Veteran Patient events. And when you see a volunteer, say “thank you” for making our hospitals a home.

Sincerely,
DeAnne M. Seekins
VSN 6 Network Director



Employee Gives Coat to Veteran in Need

By Salisbury VAMC | PUBLIC AFFAIRS

With a low of 23 degrees, the week before Christmas was unseasonably cool for North Carolina. It wasn't unusual for a Veteran to come to the Mental Health desk and ask to see someone in the homeless program. The program provides a range of services, from housing assistance to connecting Veterans in need with resources. In this case, the Veteran just wanted a coat.

Shadarius Barksdale, an advanced medical support assistant who was scheduling and checking in Veterans at the Mental Health desk that day, called the homeless program social worker on duty who came and assisted the Veteran. But, the Veteran returned empty handed.

"They didn't have his size," Barksdale said. "He was a bigger guy. As you can see, I'm a big guy ... my coat was a 5x, and he looked like he was about 4x." So, Barksdale took his coat and handed it to the Veteran. "It was right around Christmas time so I was like, 'Merry Christmas.'"

Azjah Stallings, another MSA, was working that day. "It was cold then, and Shadarius just offered his coat," Stallings recalled. According to her, the Veteran asked 'are you sure?' and Shadarius just replied, 'Yes, I'm sure. Trust me, it's fine.'

According to Stallings, "That's just his character. He's a very giving person."

For Barksdale, it was just the right thing to do, even though it was his only coat. "I always try to put myself in other people's shoes. I treat people the way I want to be treated," Barksdale said. "What you put out is what you get back."

For the Veteran, the coat might not have come at a better time. The week of Christmas, Salisbury had a low

temperature of 15° F, but North Carolina experienced one of the longest cold snaps in recent history. The temperature in Salisbury dropped to a low of 3° the first week of January, with an average temperature of only 20°.

For his selflessness and compassion, Barksdale has since received several recognitions, including a small monetary award to help reimburse him for the new coat he had to purchase.

"Shadarius is a shining example of the caring and compassionate employees who go above and beyond while serving our Veteran population every day," said Interim Director Linette Baker. "He is a testament to our entire staff, and we're proud to have him."

If you see, or know of, a Veteran who is homeless or at risk of homelessness, call or share the number for the National Call Center for Homeless Veterans: 877-4AID-VET (877-424-3838), which is available 24/7, or [visit www.va.gov/homeless](http://www.va.gov/homeless) for 24/7 online chat support.

While the cold snap may be over, the Salisbury VA Health Care System is always looking for men's and women's clothing to serve homeless and in-need Veterans.

Clothes, shoes and other donations can be dropped off at the Salisbury VA Medical Center campus to the Voluntary Services department, located in Building 6. For specific information about donation needs, call 704-638-9000 ext. 13409.

ABOVE // Shadarius Barksdale, advanced medical support assistant at the Salisbury VA Health Care System, checks mental health clinic availability on Jan. 10 to schedule a Veteran patient on a later date. (Photo by Salisbury VAMC Public Affairs)

Jonathan Forte Named New Greenville HCC Director

Mr. Jonathan P. Forte is the Administrator for the Greenville Health Care Center (GHCC), appointed in January 2018. Prior to that, he served as Associate Administrator at the Greenville HCC since November 2016. As the Administrator, Mr. Forte is responsible for ensuring that Veterans in Eastern North Carolina receive timely access to high quality, comprehensive health care at the Greenville VA HCC, Morehead City VA Community Based Outpatient Clinic (CBOC) and the State Veterans Home in Kinston, NC.

Prior to coming to North Carolina, he served as Assistant to the Director for the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Office of Emergency Management in Washington, D.C., where he oversaw the daily operations of 100 field and headquarters staff, working tirelessly to ensure the continuity of health care operations for Veterans throughout the VHA in 1,600 sites of care during hurricanes, wildfires, mass casualty events and other incidents.

Mr. Forte began his VA Career as an Administrative Fellow in the VA Graduate Health Administration Training Program (GHATP) in 2010. As a Fellow in the VISN 5 Network Office in Baltimore, he served as a project manager responsible for developing and implementing various initiatives across a network of 7 VA Medical Centers and 27 Community Based Outpatient Clinics throughout Maryland, West Virginia and Washington, D.C. He was also responsible for the design, development and management of the first Joint VA/Department of Defense Patient Centered Medical Home Clinic in the Mid-Atlantic. Upon completion of his Fellowship, he spent 3 years at the VA Maryland Health Care System as the Health System Specialist for Operations.

Mr. Forte graduated from the University of Scranton, in Northeast Pennsylvania, where he earned a Bachelor of Science degree in



Biology and a Master's degree in Health Administration.

In December 2017, he obtained Board Certification in Health Care Management as a Fellow of the American College of Health Care Executives.

Jonathan P. Forte has been appointed the Administrator for the Greenville Health Care Center.



ABOVE // Marine Cpl. Dustin Braun and his wife Samantha met in high school in Evansville, Ind., and married in March of 2014. They were stationed in Okinawa, Japan, for three years, and Dustin has deployed to the Philippines and South Korea. A baby shower was held for them at the Richmond Fisher House on Nov. 28, the day before their first son, Hunter was born. (Photo by David Hodge)

Richmond Fisher House Celebrates First Baby

By Patrick Gordon

RICHMOND VAMC PUBLIC AFFAIRS

Marine Cpl. Dustin Braun, 24, a field radio operator, was in a car accident June 23 in Okinawa. The accident left him with a traumatic brain injury and confined to a wheelchair. He is currently recovering in McGuire’s polytrauma center, where he is regaining his ability to speak and walk. His wife Samantha gave birth to their first son, Hunter Curtis Braun, on Nov. 29.

The day before, a baby shower was held to make things easier for the new mother at the Richmond Fisher House, where Samantha and her mother are staying while Dustin recovers. This was the first baby born to a family while staying at the Fisher House.

The morning of Nov. 28, Dustin Braun spoke his first words since the accident. He greeted and thanked guests at the baby shower.

“I appreciated it,” said Samantha Braun. “I can’t even tell you how much it meant to me and how truly special of a day it was for both of us. The experience itself was amazing and something I’ll never forget.”

Cont’d from front page

Iconic Female WWII Veteran Celebrates 100

Veasey served in the Women’s Army Corps during WWII as a member of the “Six-Triple Eight” Central Postal Battalion. This was the only all-black, all-female battalion to serve overseas during WWII. The unit sorted and routed mountains of mail for millions of American service members and civilians. She served in both England and France.

Upon her return to North Carolina after the war, she attended and graduated from St. Augustine’s University in Raleigh, NC, and eventually became a civil rights pioneer. She became the first female president of the Raleigh NAACP chapter. She was very active in the civil rights movement and even got to meet Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

In 2016, she was recognized by President Barack Obama. Mrs. Veasey currently lives in Raleigh, NC, and is a member of the Disabled American Veterans and American Legion.



RIGHT PHOTO // The Durham VA Health Care System’s Home Based Care honored Veteran Millie Dunn Veasey on the occasion of her 100th birthday.

VA Celebrates African-American Veterans throughout February

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced several events in celebration of African-American History Month. “All of our Veterans have a story to tell,” said VA Secretary Dr. David J. Shulkin. “It’s an honor to be able to celebrate the accomplishments of African-Americans who, despite myriad challenges, have made a profound, lasting impact in the story of our nation.”

This year’s national theme is “[African Americans in Times of War](#),” which calls attention to the heroic contributions of African Americans during the nation’s military conflicts, from the Revolutionary War to present-day operations.

VA Center for Minority Veterans (CMV) in partnership with Blacks In Government and the Congressional Black Caucus (CBC) Braintrust will host a reception at the African American Civil War Museum located at 1925

Vermont Ave., NW, on Feb. 21 from 5:30-8:00pm. The event will include a reception, a showing of short films celebrating African-American Veterans, an update on the CBC Veterans Braintrust and a four-member panel of Veteran speakers with an opportunity for questions. The event is free and open to the public. Attendees must register at the following link: [CMV Reception](#).

In continued celebration of African American History Month, Barbara Ward, director of Center for Minority Veterans, will moderate a roundtable discussion on the Vets Speaks radio program hosted by the Kentucky National Association for Black Veterans. The roundtable is scheduled for Feb. 12, from noon to 12:30pm.

Additionally, CMV, in partnership with Women In Military Service For America Memorial Foundation and The Center for



Women Veterans, will host a luncheon at the Women’s Memorial located at Arlington National Cemetery on Feb. 27, from 11:30am to 1:00pm. The event will feature guest speaker, Verna Jones, executive director of the American Legion, followed by a series of short films celebrating African-American women Veterans. This event is free and lunch will be provided. Attendees must register at the following link: [CMV Luncheon](#).

Medical centers and clinics in VISN 6 are also holding special events to celebrate our diversity and the contributions of African Americans in our society. Please check with your local facility for dates and times.

Vet Scared Straight to *MOVE!*

By Salem VAMC | PUBLIC AFFAIRS

We all need help from time to time. Battling weight issues for many years, Clyde Nicholson decided finally that something had to be done, and that the MOVE! Program was it.

Starting out at 347 lbs., his doctor told the 73-year-old Veteran that he was morbidly obese. When Nicholson asked what that meant, the doctor explained, “You could have a heart attack and die at any moment.” At that moment, startled by the gravity of the news, Nicholson began taking weight loss seriously. He began participating in the MOVE! program at the Salem VAMC.

MOVE! is a weight management, health promotion program designed to improve the lives of Veterans. MOVE!’s core ideas — encouraging healthy eating behavior, increasing physical activity, and promoting even small weight losses — are easy to follow and based on the latest in nutrition science.

“I heard about it through the ads at the VA, and my brother is in the program in Northern Virginia,”

Nicholson declared.

Nicholson had been in other weight-loss programs over the years, but he had not gotten involved in MOVE! before. His brother

had lost 178 lbs., participating in MOVE! in Northern Virginia. So, he decided to give it a try himself. As any Veteran can, to join a MOVE! Program in their area, Nicholson contacted the MOVE! Care team at his local VA Medical Center, in this case it is the Salem, VAMC.

Afraid of what the consequences of not improving his health might be, Nicholson participated in his first MOVE! class Aug 28, 2014. His goal was not to be Morbidly Obese anymore. He started walking more, applying what he was learning in class. The weight started coming off. He made some healthy eating changes as well. For example, although his wife prepares mac ‘n’cheese daily, he



Inspired by his brother’s success with the MOVE! Weight Management Program — and a doctor’s warning — Veteran Clyde Nicholson tried it and reduced his waist size by 18 inches.

decided to just not eat it anymore.

Nicholson now walks 6 miles a day, and if the weather is bad he walks inside the mall. The results of his effort reflect his dedication. He started with a 59-inch pant size, and he now measures a 41-inch waist, and weighs in at 212 lbs!

He says now he doesn’t have to figure out which way to lean to tie his shoes anymore. His general rule was to just stop eating all the white foods. The list of white foods that aren’t healthy to eat include white sugar, white flour, salt, potatoes, white rice, butter and white bread. There are a lot of other foods on the list, too. Nicholson says his cheat food, when he lets himself stray from his diet, is rice.

With his success, Nicholson is no longer on any blood pressure medication. He has lost 135 lbs. and his waist has slimmed by 18 inches. His BMI — overall fat percentage on his body — is at 30 and his goal is 29. He and his brother are true MOVE! success stories. His advice for others who seem to be in his former situation is to “apply what you learn. It does work!

The MOVE! Weight Management Program is supported by VA’s National Center for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention (NCP). Now in its second decade, MOVE! includes the most up-to-date approaches for weight management. For more information, [click here](#).

VA, Health & Human Services Partner

To Prevent Fraud, Waste, Abuse

WASHINGTON — The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) has announced a partnership to share data, data analytics tools and best practices for identifying and preventing fraud, waste and abuse.

This newest partnership enhances ongoing efforts between the country's two largest public-private health-care payment organizations to help America's Veterans by leveraging the gains made by CMS.

"The VA-HHS alliance represents the latest example of VA's commitment to find partners to assist with identifying new and innovative ways to seek out fraud, waste and abuse and ensure every tax dollar given to VA supports Veterans," said VA Secretary Dr. David J. Shulkin. "This effort marks another step toward achieving President Trump's 10-point plan to reform the VA by collaborating with our federal partners to improve VA's ability to investigate fraud and wrongdoing in VA programs."

CMS continues to focus on reducing and eliminating fraud, waste and abuse in Medicare, and in 2010, it established the Center for Program Integrity to help with this work. CMS estimates that its program integrity activities saved Medicare operations \$17 billion in fiscal 2015. Other HHS combined efforts — including law enforcement — contributed to greater program savings.

VA plans to capitalize on the advancements in analytics CMS has made by concentrating on its use of advanced technology, statistics and data analytics to improve fraud detection and prevention efforts. Additionally, in November 2017, VA invited industry experts to provide information on the latest commercial sector tools and techniques to enhance VA's fraud detection capabilities. In April, VA will invite these industry experts to demonstrate their capabilities for detecting and preventing fraud, waste and abuse and recovering improper payments.

"We have a special obligation to keep America's promise to those who have served our country and ensure that Veterans receive high-quality and accessible health care," said CMS Administrator Seema Verma. "CMS is sharing lessons learned and expertise to support VA to identify waste and fraud and eliminate these abuses of the public trust. Using state-of-the-art data analytics, CMS is partnering with VA to better detect and prevent wrongdoing in its programs."

By using CMS' successes in its program integrity protocols, VA will be able to close existing gaps in its own claims payment process.



Seekins Introduces VISN Plans to Working Group

VISN Director DeAnne Seekins joined VBA Regional Office Associate Director Leigh Ann Skeens and her VBA team in presenting status updates to the North Carolina Governor's Working Group on Military and Veterans and Their Families (NCGWG). Seekins spoke to NCGWG members about VA Secretary David Shulkin's five priorities: Greater Choice for Veterans; Modernizing our Systems; Focusing Resources More Effectively; Improving Timeliness of Services; Suicide Prevention. She discussed initiatives being implemented in the VISN to meet those priorities, like the Southeast Market Plan to more closely coordinate and integrate services at Fayetteville and Durham VAMCs with community partners. Ms. Seekins has joined the NCGWG as a Co-Chair, with North Carolina Secretary of Military and Veterans Affairs Larry Hall and others. The NCGWG facilitates collaboration and coordination among federal, state and local community agency and private organization partners that touch veterans' lives in the state of North Carolina. According to their website, the "Working Group" is making government work for our Vets."

VISN Director DeAnne Seekins recently presented VISN plans to the North Carolina Governor's Working Group on Military and Veterans and Their Families.



U.S. Rep. Ted Budd (R-NC-13) shares a moment with a Veteran during a recent visit to the Salisbury VAMC. During his visit, Budd received an in-depth in-brief from facility leaders and toured the facility, making stops at the Hospice, where he greeted Veterans and the Community Living Center, in addition to Main Street, a reconfiguration of the Building 42 atrium featuring a general store, sidewalk café, theater, town hall meeting room, kiosks, barber shop, wellness center and other shops with benches — all in a park-like setting with professional landscaping, a pond and waterfall. Pledging his support for the facility to continue improving its service and access to care for Veterans, the congressman noted many gains had been made in recent years. **(Photo by Steve Wilkins)**

VA's National PTSD Brain Bank Collaborates With PINK Concussions Group

Women Veterans Urged to Donate Brains for Research

WASHINGTON — The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) recently announced a collaboration between its National Center for PTSD and the nonprofit organization PINK Concussions, encouraging women to donate their brains for the purpose of research of the effects of traumatic brain injury (TBI) and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

"In the past, the focus of TBI and PTSD brain research has primarily been based on male brains — without any active recruitment for women," said Dr. Carolyn Clancy, executive in charge of VA's Veterans Health Administration. "We have a lot to learn about how the female brain deals with TBI and PTSD, which makes this effort long overdue."

Katherine Snedaker, founder and executive director of PINK Concussions, and

a brain injury survivor, also applauded the collaboration.

"We are so grateful to partner with VA to launch the first active recruitment of female Veterans, as well as active-duty members and civilian women to be a part of brain injury and PTSD research," Snedaker said. "VA continues year after year to be one of our most valued partners in our ongoing mission to improve pre-injury education and post-injury care for women with brain injury."

While there is postmortem brain tissue available for study of injury in men, there has been almost none for women. There is also a lack of research on Chronic Traumatic Encephalopathy, also known as CTE, in women. In all published literature on CTE, only two peer-reviewed journal articles (both

published in the early 1990s) have focused on women.

Women Veterans interested in participating in the brain bank may take the PINK Concussions pledge. Though tissue donation may occur many years or decades from now, enrollment will allow researchers to learn as much as possible about the health of an enrolled female participant and how things may change over the years.

For more information about the effort, visit www.pinkconcussions.com. For more information about the VA's National PTSD Brain Bank, visit www.research.va.gov/programs/tissue_banking/PTSD/default.cfm or call 800-762-6609.

VA Announces Aggressive New Approach for Low-Performing Medical Centers

WASHINGTON — The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) recently announced steps that it is taking as part of an aggressive new approach to produce rapid improvements at VA's low-performing medical facilities nationwide.

VA defines its low-performing facilities as those medical centers that receive the lowest score in its SAIL star rating system, or a one-star rating out of five. VA currently has 15 such one-star facilities:

Hampton (Virginia); Harlingen (Texas); Roseburg (Oregon); Washington (DC); Big Spring (Texas); Denver (Colorado); Dublin (Georgia); El Paso (Texas); Jackson, (Mississippi); Loma Linda (California); Memphis (Tennessee); Murfreesboro (Tennessee); Nashville (Tennessee); Phoenix (Arizona); and Walla Walla (Washington).

The steps VA is taking to produce rapid improvements at its low-performing facilities include: Central, national accountable

leadership – VA has designated Dr. Peter Almenoff, Director of VA's Office of Reporting, Analytics, Performance, Improvement and Deployment (RAPID) Healthcare Improvement Center, to oversee improvement at each of the centers. Dr. Almenoff reports directly to Dr. Carolyn Clancy, Executive in Charge of the Veterans Health Administration (VHA).

- **Comprehensive analysis and identification of improvement targets** – VA is employing a new initiative, known as Strategic Action Transformation (STAT), that uses a rigorous and formal approach based on clinical performance indicators to identify vulnerabilities in each low-performing facility and set specific targets for improvement.
- **Provision of national resources for improvement** – VA's RAPID team of experts will use sophisticated statistical tools to track the progress of improve-

ment against these targets, and, where warranted, will dispatch a team of expert improvement coaches quickly to the medical centers to assist them in meeting the goals.

- **Accountability for results** – VA's Central Office will review each of the facilities quarterly, and if the facilities fail to make rapid substantial progress in their improvement plan, VA leadership will take prompt action, including changing the leadership of the medical center.
- "President Trump has made it clear that our Veterans deserve only the best when it comes to their healthcare, and that's why we are focusing on improving our lowest performing facilities nationwide," said VA Secretary David Shulkin. "We will employ tight timelines for facilities to demonstrate improvement, and if low performance persists, we will make swift changes — including replacing facility leaders — until we achieve the rapid improvements that Veterans and taxpayers expect from VA."



LEFT PHOTO // Navy Veteran Donald Patrick, middle, holds up an old pair of pants with wife Jennifer, left, and VA Social Worker Holly Harris, right, after losing 97 lbs. in the VA Aspire program. (Credit: Scott Pittillo)

Vet Aspires to Success

By Scott Pittillo

For most of us, embarking on a weight loss effort is a light-hearted affair, filled with good intentions and limited resolve. There is no shortage of diets and programs from, “food for cave men” to “drink nothing but juice.” Obviously, these aren’t the actual names of the diets, and each has its own pros and cons, but for most of us they are just fads that fade away. For Navy Veteran Donald Patrick, of Lawndale North Carolina, weight loss wasn’t just a fad — it was life and death after suffering from a stroke.

“My mobility was severely limiting. I couldn’t walk more than a couple hundred feet before I’d have to sit down,” Patrick said. “When you go to the grocery store, if they didn’t have one of those electric buggies, I wasn’t going.”

At one point Patrick weighed 465 lbs., and he wasn’t able to drive because he couldn’t comfortably get behind the steering wheel. His wife Jennifer Patrick was deeply concerned about her husband, afraid that she would lose him and encouraged him to take advantage of the weight-loss programs that had been offered by his VA providers.

With his provider’s help, Patrick decided on the Aspire program. Aspire is a year-long, evidence-based weight management program developed by Laura Damschroder and her team at VA’s Health Services & Research Development. Aspire was new at the Asheville VA, brought to staff by VA Psychologist Elizabeth Lima, the local

Aspire trainer who spent months learning the program from Doctor of Education David Goodrich, an Implementation and Evaluation Specialist at the VA Center for Evaluation and Implementation Resources. Lima then trained facilitators in Asheville to teach the program using patient-centered coaching skills to help Veterans set small goals along the way to increase confidence and effectiveness.

From the Veteran’s perspective, it’s a big commitment to change their life. Veterans participating in Aspire attend weekly sessions for the first four months; attend twice per month during the second four months, and monthly during the last four months of the program. The hour-and-a-half sessions are in a group setting and caregivers are invited to attend.

“Aspire encourages small reachable goals, because if you are going into it thinking that, ‘I have to lose 100 lbs.’ that’s hard, but if it’s, ‘I need to increase my steps by 50 this week,’ that’s doable and when you can see yourself doing it and believe that you can do it you are more likely to do it,” said VA Social Worker Holly Harris, the facilitator for Patrick’s group. “It’s easier to follow; it’s not complicated. It takes that temptation to be a perfectionist and eases it off some.”

According to Harris and Patrick, the group setting was one of the keys to success. It brought motivation through competition and accountability between group mem-

bers. Group members reported progress and goals during each session.

“There is a book that you keep where you log what you eat and how many steps you took. At the beginning of each class you report those numbers, and at the end of the class you set goals. He did it — he filled that book out. He paid attention to it. He kept that log and brought it in,” said Harris about Patrick’s commitment to the program.

“When I initially started, I couldn’t do more than 200 steps. My goal per day was about 500 steps in the beginning. I ended up at 13,000 steps per day,” said Patrick. “It breaks it down into achievable goals — something that’s attainable. Something that’s not outside the rules of reality. I was doing laps around the island in our kitchen to get the steps in.”

Patrick says his overall health changed so much that when he saw his primary care doctor again, the doctor almost didn’t recognize him. By the program’s completion, Patrick had lost an additional 97 lbs.

Generally, providers at the Asheville VA recommend the Aspire program for Veterans with a Body Mass Index greater than 40 percent, so Veterans who are interested should talk to their providers to see if it is the best choice for them. Emphasizing a comprehensive approach to weight loss, the medical center and its community clinics also offer the MOVE program, a less intensive intervention that encourages the principles of healthy eating behavior, increasing physical activity and promoting weight loss by implementing successful behavioral strategies. The strength of collaboration is evident in the multidisciplinary staff involved in the medical center’s Aspire and MOVE programs: Nutrition, Physical Therapy, Social Work, Clinical Pharmacy, and Psychology. Any Veteran receiving care through the Asheville VA and its clinics can sign up for MOVE, which even participates in direct scheduling so they don’t have to go through their provider to get started right away.

Dr. Elizabeth Lima assisted in creating this feature.

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

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