Durham, N.C. - VISN 6 Director Paul Crews participated in a solemn morning Memorial Day ceremony May 30, held by the Durham County Department of Veterans Services at the Durham County War Memorial. According to organizers, roughly 75 people attended the ceremony, which is the first live ceremony in two years since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The ceremony honored the sacrifices of our fallen warriors and individually named the 375 soldiers from the county who had lost their lives for our country since the formation of Durham County in 1881.

LEFT PHOTO: VISN 6 Director Paul Crews speaks to the Durham County Memorial Day ceremony audience, May 30.
Moving into summer this June, let's reflect on the concept of civility. This month we observe occasions intended to raise our consciousness in caring for one another. Civility, as courteous or civilized conduct, can help people feel safe. It can calm tension during difficult conversations and enable us to overcome challenging times.

This month is Pride Month. VA recognizes Pride Month 2022 and promotes the general wellbeing and overall health of our LGBTQ+ Veteran community and employees. Civility dictates that even if we don't agree with a way of life, we don't get in the way. VA recognizes everyone's right to flourish and live their best lives.

"Pride Counts" at VA is meant to inspire, educate, and inform Veterans that VA provides a sensitive, respectful environment where they can feel comfortable talking openly with their VA providers. We want all our Veterans to know that we provide comprehensive care that includes LGBTQ+ Veterans.

When a person feels threatened, their mental, emotional, and intellectual wellbeing is compromised. That can affect their health and longevity. When we harass or cajole, belittle or insult people, we are causing harm that not only threatens, but impacts a person's ability to thrive. We must be intentional from moment to moment that we are not causing anyone harm. That sort of harm is avoidable and comes from a conscious decision. For our Veterans' safety, we can't allow ourselves to make those decisions.

Juneteenth is June 19 this year, after being ratified a federal holiday by the Senate last year. In the wake of racially motivated violence and the gaslighting that continues to undermine progress toward racial harmony and equality, more than ever it is critical to mark this occasion. President Biden said, "All Americans can feel the power of this day and learn from our history." I agree. Each of us can listen to one another's story a bit more closely to help understand our common plight, and thereby live more harmoniously. Civility calls us to pause before responding to something we see or hear, and think compassionately about the origins and the consequences of negatively engaging other human beings.

Join me in promoting civility whenever we deal with difficult situations. Without it, we may cause trauma, having an effect not unlike some of the other traumas Veterans and other people may experience. Believe me, I am not suggesting that calling someone a name or not using the right pronoun is anything like a combat experience. I am suggesting that when we have the choice, be kind.

June is also Mental Health and PTSD Awareness Month. The Veterans Know campaign features Veterans of various backgrounds and identities who deliver the hopeful message that a healthier life is possible. The campaign uses shared military experiences to help overcome the stigma some Veterans associate with common mental health challenges. Posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is a mental health problem. PTSD can only develop after you go through or see a life-threatening event.

It's normal to have upsetting memories, feel on edge, or have trouble sleeping after a traumatic event (also called "trauma"). As I mentioned earlier, the causes vary widely and could be combat-related or domestic, and as seemingly benign as harassment.

We can help by making the pledge to raise PTSD awareness. Or, join us for the second annual Step Up for PTSD Awareness Virtual Walk by completing 30 minutes of exercise any time during the month of June. Take a photo or video and post it online, explaining why you're doing it, and tag the National Center for PTSD. For the first time this year, June 27 is designated as national PTSD Screening Day. It's a day we mark to spread the word about self-screening.

Wishing you the best through the summer months, I will also caution you to continue washing, waiting and wearing as COVID is still with us, hydrate and cover to guard against sunlight and heat, and stay abreast of weather reports during what has been predicted to be a busy hurricane season. I look forward to seeing you out and about.

PAUL S. CREWS
MPH, FACHE, VISN 6 Network Director

Room to Grow: New Morehead City CBOC Officially Opens

By Joshua Edson
DURHAM VAHCS PUBLIC AFFAIRS

Community leaders, Veterans, and local political representatives joined Executive Leaders from the Durham VA Healthcare System (DVAHCS) and the VA Mid-Atlantic Health Care Network Tuesday, May 17, to celebrate the official opening of the new VA Community-Based Outpatient Clinic (CBOC) in Morehead City, N.C. After a brief ribbon-cutting ceremony, attendees were treated to a guided tour of the new facility.

“This new space shows how far we’ve come,” Marion Cumbo, Nurse Manager of the Morehead City CBOC, said. "We were a bit limited in what services we could offer Veterans at our old location. Now, we can offer our patients so much more.”

Open to Veterans since late February, the ribbon cutting was a culmination of at least three years of effort to expand the Morehead City CBOC, which currently serves about 5,000 Veterans across Carteret County and the surrounding area. Morehead City lies only a few miles from Marine Corps Air Station Cherry Point. The area became a popular location for Veterans to settle after their service.

“We have so many Veterans entering the VA Healthcare System,” says Sarah Fredrickson, Interim Assistant Director of the Greenville VA Healthcare Clinic. “Especially here in Carteret County. We needed a location that could give us the space to accommodate the surging Veteran population and their unique health care needs.”

Some of the health care options
SALEM, N.C. — Dr. Charles de Comarmond, Salisbury VA Health Care System Chief of Medicine and lead consultant for infectious diseases and infection prevention, recently was selected as the 2021 Mark Wolcott Awardee for Excellence in Clinical Care Leadership. Established in 1996, this award recognizes outstanding Veterans Health Administration practitioners who deserve special acknowledgment for their contributions in enhancing clinical care.

This award is given once per year to the top clinician and top leader in clinical care for the entire VA and recognizes a lifetime of service, not just one year. After being selected, de Comarmond felt humbled.

“My first reaction was disbelief, given that this is one of the VHA’s most prestigious clinical awards,” he said. “As a physician, every day is a lesson in humility — especially when you think of how much our Veterans have sacrificed.”

According to de Comarmond, this award reflects Salisbury VA HCS’s journey.

“Salisbury has attracted a talented workforce where one is surrounded by highly skilled colleagues who make award-worthy changes happen,” said de Comarmond. “I am grateful that Salisbury VA leadership shared what we have done over the past 15 years, and I thank the Wolcott Award review committee for recognizing and believing in the hard work and dedication of our team.”

Some of the highlights of de Comarmond’s time with Salisbury VA include creating a hematology/oncology service from the ground up; expanding gastroenterology and endoscopy; starting a chronic dialysis program; developing the only freestanding cardiac catheterization program in VHA; and significantly improving the Infectious Disease service and network-wide Infection Control Program. Under his leadership, Salisbury VA’s cancer care program became the first in VHA to be certified by the American Society of Clinical Oncology.

“The list of Dr. de Comarmond’s accomplishments and contributions to this health care system cannot be overstated,” said Interim Salisbury VA Executive Director Ronald Johnson. “Going above and beyond the scope of his duties … that’s just what he does. It’s who he is.”

His work is done with a certain sense of joy. He approaches each day with the goal of improving the lives of Veterans. Any recognition he receives is a bonus.

“Since my arrival here, patient care has been my number priority,” said de Comarmond. “Improving Veteran lives is always in my thoughts. They have given us so much.”

For more information, please contact Salisbury VA Public Affairs Officer Todd Goodman at Christopher.Goodman2@va.gov or (704)-775-1109.

Several nurses of the Salem VA Health Care System were recognized in May as annual award winners during Nurses Week celebrations, including one nurse who will proceed to a national competition.

On May 9, the 2022 Nursing Excellence Awards were presented to:

- Ray Weir, Nursing Assistant
- Sarah Bryant, LPN
- Sharon Stanley, RN
- Mike Raczynski, RN in an Expanded Role

After the awards were presented, Lisa Shear, Chief Nursing Officer for VISN-6 Mid-Atlantic Health Care Network, called Nurse Raczynski back to the stage and presented him with the Secretary’s Award for Excellence in Nursing as an RN in an Expanded Role for the entirety of VISN-6. Raczynski will now compete with other VISN recipients for VA-wide honors.

“I was definitely surprised by the awards,” Raczynski said. “I’m happy to receive the award on behalf of all the staff, providers, and volunteers at Salem HCS. Infection Prevention really is a team effort that involves everyone, and everyone has a role to play in protecting our Veterans. I have been blessed to have many experienced staff at Salem, the VISN, and at VACO that work together every day to provide care and promote evidence-based practices. As a Veteran, I speak first-hand to the amazing care I have received at Salem. This award is really a recognition of all they do every day to care for our Veterans. I am proud to work with such a great team.”

Raczynski served as a member of the U.S. Army from 1987-1992, and has been an RN for 26 years, working in specialties including med-surg, ICU, ED, Nursing Supervisor and manager. He has served on a number of VISN and national boards, committees and workgroups, and is the Chair of the VHA National Infection Preventionists, and Vice-Chair of the VHA National Infectious Disease Service Infection Prevention and Control Field Advisory Board.
Room to Grow: New Morehead City CBOC Officially Opens

that have benefitted from the additional space are physical therapy, laboratory services, women’s health, and mental health. Additionally, a brand-new kitchen at the location allows nutrition staff a chance to teach Veterans and their caregivers how to prepare healthier meals. Telehealth services have also expanded, a critical component in a state where many Veterans live in rural locations with limited health care options.

“Now, our Veterans have a greater option of choice,” said Cumbo. “They don’t just have care in the community. They can stay local, without having to travel hours to get their care in Greenville or Durham.”

With more breathing room, Morehead City CBOC plans to hire more staff. Expanding services often bring additional people on board, something difficult to do when a facility is hamstrung by space. More mental health and physical therapy provider positions are being created, strengthening the DVAHCS’ ability to offer cutting edge care to a population of rural Veterans that have traditionally underserved when it comes to health care.

“I was one of the first patients at the Morehead VA when it opened back in 2003,” says Vietnam Veteran and retired Marine Corps Sgt. Maj. Norman Kidd, who was also an honored guest at the ribbon-cutting event. “This is the first time I’ve seen the new place up close. I’m really impressed. This is a great day for Carteret County Veterans, and I encourage them to come in and enroll. This place has so much to offer.”

Qualified Veterans in Carteret County and the surrounding area are encouraged to visit the new Morehead City CBOC. Please visit https://www.va.gov/durham-health-care/locations/morehead-city-va-clinic for hours and location.

Hefner VA Staff Participates in Cheerwine Festival

STORY AND PHOTO BY TODD GOODMAN

Thousands of people flocked to downtown Salisbury for the annual Cheerwine Festival on Saturday, May 21. The all-day event was full of food trucks, live music, and Salisbury VA staff.

“It was a blast to be a part of the event,” said Human Resources Specialist James Grimm, a retired Navy Veteran of 25 years. “The festival began officially at 12:00pm, but we were helping people at our booth at least an hour prior to that.”

HR staff were there to recruit potential employees and to help folks navigate the federal hiring process.

“One of the misconceptions when applying to a government job over a private sector job is the resume,” said Grimm. “Government resumes must be very detailed about each of the positions you have held, while private sector resumes are briefer, with fewer details. In many cases, Veterans leave out important information about their military service.”

Other programs showcased at the festival included Eligibility, Suicide Prevention, Whole Health, Caregiver Support, and M2VA.

Whole Health Director Dr. Christina Vair spent two hours in the heat and humidity touting the benefits of a holistic approach to care, which includes acupuncture, clinical hypnosis, tai chi, yoga, and more.

“It was a great experience and offered an opportunity to connect with members of our community, including Veterans who access VA care as well as those who don’t,” said Vair. “Being out there allowed us to encourage Veterans to consider applying for VA care and gave us the opportunity to answer questions and dispel misinformation as well.”

Outreach events like this are a great way to remind the public that VA is here and ready to serve, not just with patient care, but job opportunities as well.

“Large events such as these provide an opportunity to share the benefits, contributions, and successes of our health care system,” said Interim Salisbury Executive Director Ron Johnson. “It’s important to do this, whether it’s with a small Veteran gathering or with thousands like we had at the festival. Outreach is an important tool to ensure we are reaching as many Veterans and family members as possible. If we can positively change the course of one life, then all of our efforts are worth it.”
With more than 5 million cases diagnosed in the United States each year, skin cancer is the most common cancer in America. Fortunately, it is also one of the most preventable cancers. To observe Skin Cancer Awareness Month, Hampton VAMC Cutaneous Oncology Center staff held an awareness event on Friday, May 13, to educate our community about the signs of skin cancer and the dangers of unprotected sun exposure. Staff also presented highlights of a unique skin cancer management program in our facility, combining the expertise of dermatology with the technical capabilities of plastic and Mohs micrographic surgery. There are very few programs like ours in the United States, with the Cleveland Clinic boasting a similar model. After the encouragement we received from former VA Secretary Robert Wilke during his visit, the Cutaneous Oncology Center has expanded to hire another board-certified dermatologist, Dr. Emily Osier, who is also Hampton’s new Teledermatology Program Director. Teledermatology has improved our access to care and our timely diagnosis of skin cancer, and had a great reception among patients and referring providers. We look forward to expanding our services to all the community-based outpatient clinics, and to serving even more Veterans. Hampton VA staff partnered with Dr. Valerie Harvey, Director of the Hampton University Skin of Color Research Institute, and EVMS medical students from the Dermatology Interest Group for the event. With their help and insight, they educated the community on different presentations of skin cancer in patients with skin of color, and the importance of sun protection and routine skin exams. Department leadership said they are grateful to all who made this event possible.

Dr. Karina Parr, Director of the Cutaneous Oncology Center, addresses the audience assembled at the opening of the Skin Cancer Awareness Forum. (Photo by Dr. Robert Hersh)
Annie Thomas reached into a photo album and produced an old, yellowed news article to show her daughter. The bold headline read, “Small Girls with Big Ideas Plan Sale to Aid Soldiers.” The Richmond News Leader published the story in 1944 about Thomas and her friends doing a good deed for Veterans.

Thomas, whose maiden name is Hardiman, was just 11 years old when she volunteered with a group of children from the Barton Heights neighborhood. They called themselves the Junior War Workers, following a popular sentiment to support the U.S. war effort. At a school assembly, the Red Cross inspired the group to take action and help the local VA hospital that was soon to open.

The Junior War Workers got organized. They planned a rummage sale to help raise funds for Veterans returning from war in Europe. The group raised and donated $221 to go toward personal items for Veterans receiving medical care.

Sharon Thomas O’Donnell, Thomas’s daughter, remembered the old newspaper clipping and how her mother was the treasurer of the group, while neighbor Audrey Bertram was president. Her mother, now 88 years old, is still friends with Bertram today.

A few years after the war, Thomas married the love of her life on Valentine’s Day in 1952. In 1954, that man, James Earle Thomas, was drafted to serve in the Korean War.

“Dad retired as a lieutenant colonel in the Army and would visit the VA hospital for his health care needs,” O’Donnell said. “He was always treated with great dignity and kindness.”

Today, the Central Virginia VA Health Care System treats more than 70,000 Veterans from 52 counties and cities in the central part of the state.

“She dedicated her life to supporting us,” O’Donnell said. “It’s wonderful knowing the VA hospital that she donated to in 1945, would one day give back and care for the needs of her soldier.”

### By Megan Kon
CENTRAL VIRGINIA VAHS PUBLIC AFFAIRS

A group of neighborhood girls organized a rummage sale to gather funds for the local VA hospital totalling $221 in 1945. The Central Virginia VA Health Care System operates a main hospital in Richmond and five community clinics in Fredericksburg, Charlottesville, Emporia and Henrico.

Small Girls With Big Ideas Plan Sale to Aid Soldiers

The rummage sale scheduled to begin at 8 A.M. Saturday in the storeroom at 2423 East Main St, is sponsored by the Junior War Workers’ Club. Proceeds will go for the “little personal things” needed by wounded soldiers at McGuire General Hospital, to be opened June 13.

Members of the club number 10. All are students of the 5th grade at the E. E. Stuart School. Their relatives come from the Barton Heights neighborhood. Minutes are taken by Mrs. Gordon Wright, and her daughter, secretary of the group, are president, Janet Wright.

The club is organized in February and meetings are held around the dining-room table at 2510 Fondall Ave. home of Audrey Bertram, 11, president. Audrey’s mother works every day, but her grandmother, Mrs. Grace Higginson, says she always tries to be busy in the kitchen while the little girls are meeting because she enjoys hearing them.

### GIRLS WITH BIG IDEAS

The girls are small in size, but they have big ideas. They expect to take the proceeds from rummage sale and the $21 they’ve raised out of the possession of Annie Hardiman, their treasurer, and buy tooth paste, razor blades, comb, small games, ash trays and playing cards for the wounded soldiers at McGuire General Hospital.

For the past week the little girls have been rummaging up old clothes of every description from home in their neighborhood, and even spent $5 at a local cleaning shop. Here they bought three large boxes of unclaimed dresses and suits for the sale.

“Lots of the things are hanging in our pantry, our bedrooms and in the garage,” Mrs. Higginson said yesterday as she proudly told of how the collection of clothes for the sale was increasing.

The idea for the boxes for the wounded soldiers came to the club members in a school assembly back in March. A Red Cross speaker was talking about the opening of the hospital, and asked all the Stuart school pupils to bring in clothing and to save pennies so ash trays could be bought for the soldiers.

### TIME AGAIN TO HELP

The Junior War Workers, all Barton Heights neighborhood children, had conducted two paper salvage drives, a tin can salvage campaign and sold carnations for the Virginia chapter of the American War Mothers. And they felt it was again time for them to help on the home front.

The other members of the patriotic group are: Ann Marie Watson, Gisela Andrews, Ann Porter, Joyce Ross, the secretary, and her little sister, “Tookie” Ross. Soon they will have arm bands bearing the words “Junior War Workers” made for them by Mrs. Wright. Only Joan and Audrey will be on hand Saturday to help with the rummage sale, because there would be too much confusion with all 10 of them,” Mrs. Wright said. Sometimes they get a little noisy at their meetings.
Crews addressed several local dignitaries in the audience, including County Manager, Dr. Kimberly Sowell and North Carolina Veteran’s Council President Larry Coleman. In his address, Crews recounted the sacrifice of Army PFC Diego Rincon, who had plans to take his oath of citizenship with his father upon his return from fighting in Afghanistan, but who instead was killed by a suicide bomber. Crews said he related that story to help us remember that our “Freedom is not free.”

While Crews spoke about Private Rincon, Veterans Service Officer Linzie Atkins held up a photo of him for the audience to see.

Crews went on to discuss the nation’s responsibility to the soldiers, sailors, airmen, Marines and others who gave their lives so that Americans could thrive. He continued, adding that VA helps to fulfill the nation’s commitment to its military and Veterans every day, to ensure they receive the best care, live their best lives, and are honored upon demise. Crews ended his remarks by emphasizing VA’s devotion to caring for Veterans no matter what it takes.
WASHINGTON — The Department of Veterans Affairs Health Administration launched three operational levels called VHA COVID-19 Health Protection Levels to provide a consistent, nationwide approach at its medical centers.

VA applied the three-tier safety protocol standard effective May 23, enhancing safety for Veterans, visitors and employees during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

The levels align with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Community Transmission Levels designed for use by health care facilities.

“The VHA COVID-19 Health Protection Levels provide transparent and flexible guidelines for local facilities to help Veterans and staff know what to expect when entering a facility, despite the unpredictability of COVID-19,” said Deputy Under Secretary for Health, performing the delegable duties of the Under Secretary for Health Steven L. Lieberman, M.D. “This allows VHA facilities to provide maximum reliable access to safe, timely and quality care by adjusting safety protocols based on the fluctuation of COVID-19 levels in the community.”

Each VHA COVID-19 Health Protection Level includes guidance on personal protective equipment, screening, testing, visitation, waiting rooms, group care/therapy and staffing.

The levels are on a low, medium to high scale as described below:

- Low (when community transmission level is low): Visitors are welcome, self-screening allowed and physical distancing not required.
- Medium (when community transmission level is medium or substantial): Care partners are welcome, self-screening allowed and physical distancing not required.
- High (when community transmission level is high): Visitors are limited to the discretion of the care team on a case-by-case basis, facilities may choose to screen at the door and physical distancing required.

Masking and employee screening testing, as applicable, will remain in effect at all VHA medical facilities, regardless of health protection levels and consistent with CDC guidance for health care facilities. The VHA COVID-19 Health Protection Levels do not impact current requirements regarding testing and masking for employees.

Levels will be monitored weekly at each facility and updated to reflect any changes on Mondays. VHA will notify Veterans and staff by displaying signage at all facility entrances, updating levels on their local facility websites and social media. All medical center voice-mails will include VHA COVID-19 Health Protection Levels as well.

Use the VA medical center locator to find its current level and learn more about VHA Health Protection Levels.

WASHINGTON — The Department of Veterans Affairs issued a correction to the Notice of Funding Opportunity for the Staff Sergeant Parker Gordon Fox Suicide Prevention Grant Program.

The correction clarifies requirements regarding the provision or coordination of a baseline mental health screening to participants.

Under section 201 of the Commander John Scott Hannon Veterans Mental Health Care Improvement Act (Public Law 116-171) and regulations VA published at 38 CFR part 78, VA will award grants to eligible entities that apply for such assistance to provide or coordinate suicide prevention services for Veterans and other eligible individuals at risk of suicide and their families.

The NOFO provides information about how to apply for financial assistance under the Staff Sergeant Parker Gordon Fox Suicide Prevention Grant Program. Applications must be submitted by 11:59pm ET, June 10, 2022.
WASHINGTON — As part of the Department of Veterans Affairs’ national homeless prevention efforts, VA published an Interim Final Rule which allows VA to enhance the provision of legal services for Veterans experiencing or at risk for homelessness.

Under section 4202 of the Johnny Isakson and David P. Roe, M.D., Veterans Health Care and Benefits Improvement Act of 2020, VA will, through the Legal Services for Homeless Veterans and Veterans At-Risk for Homelessness Grant Program, offer up to 75 grants each year to eligible entities, with at least 10% of funding being utilized for women Veterans.

These grants will also satisfy section 5105 of the Act, which requires VA to partner with outside organizations to provide legal services to women Veterans.

“Providing full access to justice and legal services for Veterans takes unified, interagency partnerships, from the federal level down to states, cities and communities at the grassroots-level, where Veterans work and live,” said VA Secretary Denis McDonough. “This first-of-its-kind grant will ensure that legal services are available nationwide to Veterans in need.”

LSV-Homeless builds on existing legal services offered to Veterans through partnerships between VA and legal service providers in communities across the U.S. Services provided by the new grants will support Veterans’ legal needs related to such housing, family law issues, income support, criminal defense, and requests to upgrade the characterization of a discharge.

A Notice of Funding Opportunity with instructions on how to apply for a grant is expected to be published in September 2022, once the Final Rule for the grant program is complete.

Get information on LSV-Homeless, The Interim Final Rule for the Legal Services for Homeless Veterans and Veterans At-Risk for Homelessness Grant Program.
WASHINGTON — President Biden has stated that we have a sacred obligation to support Veterans, their families, caregivers and survivors. As part of his first State of the Union address, he identified supporting Veterans as a key pillar of his Unity Agenda, and an issue that can unite the country. The Sergeant First Class Heath Robinson Honoring our Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxics (PACT) Act makes good on that promise.

In my recent press conference, I spoke in detail about the Department of Veterans Affairs’ strong support of the PACT Act because the bipartisan bill will help us advance one of the department’s top priorities: getting more Veterans into VA care. President Biden has also been clear about his commitment to getting more VA health care to Veterans impacted by toxic exposures, which is why we need Congress to send the PACT Act to his desk.

Study after study demonstrates that Veterans in VA care do better — and this legislation could bring up to 3.5 million more Veterans into our care. The PACT Act would be one of the largest substantive health and benefit expansions in VA’s history, comparable in scale and impact to the Agent Orange Act. It would codify many of the ongoing efforts by the department to improve its process for establishment of presumptions of service connection due to toxic exposure, reducing the burden for Veterans and increasing transparency.

We support the expansion of access to VA health care in the PACT Act and will work to ensure that the expansion of eligibility for health care does not result in the delay or disruption of care for those Veterans already receiving health care from VA.

I want to personally thank Senators Jon Tester (D-MT) and Jerry Moran (R-KS) for beginning to address the operational impact on VA by investing heavily in VA claims processing, VA’s workforce and VA health care facilities. These investments and more are necessary for us to deliver the timely, quality services, benefits and care our Veterans deserve.

As always, we encourage Veterans to continue to file their claims for disability compensation and other benefits as we anticipate this legislation so VA can provide the benefits and care they have earned and deserve.

View the full press conference.

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WASHINGTON — As part of the Department of Veterans Affairs’ 10-year strategy to reduce Veteran suicide, VA invites innovators across the country to participate in Mission Daybreak — a $20 million challenge designed to help VA develop new suicide prevention strategies for Veterans.

Those interested are encouraged to submit their detailed concept papers via missiondaybreak.net to VA no later than July 8, 2022.

The effort supports the goals of President Biden’s Unity Agenda and aligns with the priority goals and implementation principles of the White House strategy on reducing military and Veteran suicide.

“To end Veteran suicide, we need to use every tool available,” said VA Secretary Denis McDonough. “In the most recent National Veteran Suicide Prevention Annual Report, more than 45,000 American adults died by suicide — including 6,261 Veterans. That’s why Mission Daybreak is fostering solutions across a broad spectrum of focus areas to combat this preventable problem.”

Proposed solutions for Mission Daybreak should seek to address one or more of the designated challenge focus areas outlined in the Mission Daybreak webpage. During Phase 1 all challenge participants will have access to a collection of open data, surveys and reports on Veteran suicide prevention as they prepare their concept papers. Innovators and collaborators are also invited to join the Mission Daybreak solver community, which helps solvers to expand and augment their teams with interdisciplinary expertise.

To learn more and hear from experts, solvers are encouraged to register for the upcoming virtual information session and topical webinars.

Forty teams will receive awards ranging from $100,000 to $3 million which will be distributed across two phases. Visit missiondaybreak.net for more information on the challenge.

Reporters covering this issue can download VA’s Safe Messaging Best Practices fact sheet or visit ReportingOnSuicide.org for important guidance on how to communicate about suicide.

If you’re a Veteran having thoughts of suicide or you know one who is, contact the Veterans Crisis Line 24/7/365 days a year. Call 1-800-273-8255 and Press 1, chat online at veteranscrisisline.net/chat or text to 838255.
Challenge to Reduce Veteran Suicide

VA Launches $20 Million Innovation Earned by Veterans

VA Mid-Atlantic Health Care Network.

stephen.wilkins2@va.gov or call 919-956-5541

Questions or comments about the newsletter, email Voices of VISN 6 is published monthly by VISN 6 Newsletter

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