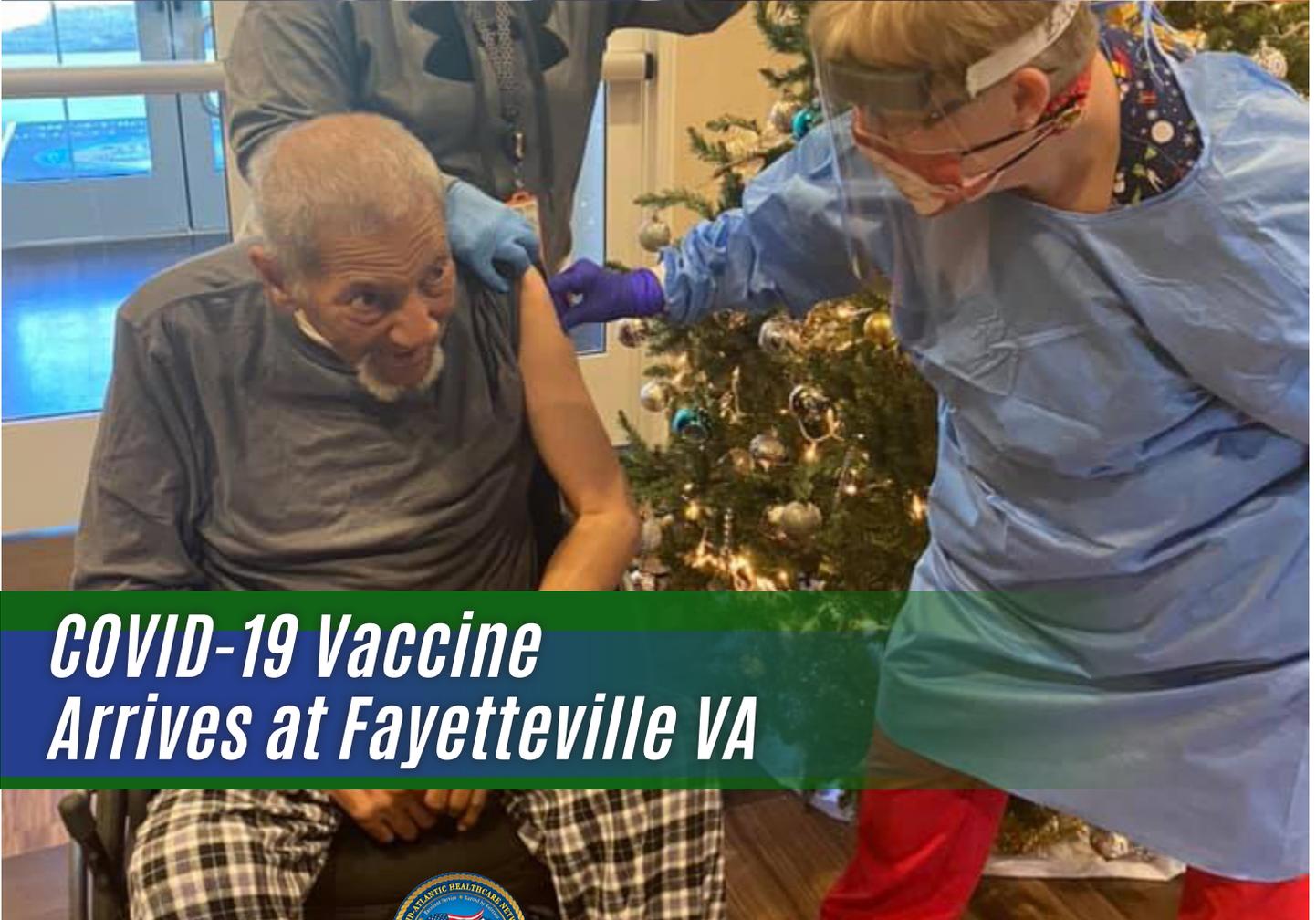


VOICES OF VISN 6

— Excellent Care — Earned by Veterans — Delivered Here —



COVID-19 Vaccine Arrives at Fayetteville VA



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Fayetteville VA Medical Center staff humbly and gratefully vaccinated some of its most vulnerable population and those who care for them — 16 Veteran residents and four staff members of the medical center’s community living center, with the COVID-19 [#moderna](#) vaccine.

The first to be vaccinated at the medical center was 88-year-old Richard McLeod, our oldest Veteran, who served in the United States Air Force during the Korean War.

The facility began vaccinating front-line staff and other Veterans Dec. 23.

All seven VISN 6 medical centers and several clinics are offering vaccinations of either the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine or the [Moderna COVID-19 vaccine](#) to Veterans and staff, according to a priority schedule set by the CDC. Everyone is encouraged to take the vaccine when they are able to get it. Veterans can get up-to-date information on [VA’s VA COVID-19 vaccine webpage](#), which launched on Dec. 11, 2020, and sign up to receive regular updates on the vaccine on the VA’s [Stay Informed](#) page.

TOP PHOTO: USAF Korean War Veteran Richard McLeod, 88, was the first to receive the COVID-19 vaccine at the Fayetteville VA Medical Center.



MESSAGE FROM OUR ACTING NETWORK DIRECTOR

Greetings,

First, I would like to thank everyone for the warm welcome as I cover the VISN 6 network director position following Ms. Seekins retirement in December. There is a lot to learn, but I have a great team to assist during this transition.

We've heard it all before, 2020 was a year for the books — and coming from the field, I can tell you, it's true. I have never been prouder to work for such a collaborative and forward-thinking organization. I watched our staff across North Carolina and Virginia work tirelessly to care for and protect our 415,000 Veterans from COVID-19.

We started our year not knowing an ounce of information about COVID; we learned, responded, and closed out 2020 with COVID-19 vaccines available at all seven of our healthcare systems across the region. As I write this, we have vaccinated more than 19,000 employees and Veterans in less than six weeks — and we are

just getting started. Following the CDC's vaccine priority guidelines, we are opening the vaccine availability to more and more Veterans every day, and we won't stop until everyone who wants the vaccine has received it.

While responding to COVID-19, we watched our telehealth appointments expand to areas and services that were once unimaginable in less than 10 months. We have managed and protected our most vulnerable Veterans at our state's Veterans' nursing homes and our community living centers. I am proud to watch our staff become the ultimate protectors of their health and well-being, warding off anything that would increase the risk of spreading the virus.

In December, Dr. Richard Stone, VHA's executive in charge, and VISN 6 leadership met with community hospital executives in Durham, N.C., to solidify their commitment to care for our Veterans in their community health care systems when needed — especially in the areas of organ transplants and cancer treatment. We were very successful in moving these partnerships along. We took it a step far-

ther and signed an unprecedented VISN 6 sharing agreement with Walter Reed National Military Medical Center to provide cutting-edge health care treatments to our Veterans, especially those recently returning from services. These are just a few of our latest accomplishments as we move the needle forward — and 2021 is only going to get better.

In closing, please welcome Dr. Colleen Noe. She comes to us from James H. Quillen VA Medical Center as its associate director. She will be acting in my stead at Charles George VA Health Care System during my detail as the VISN Director. We've included more information about Dr. Noe elsewhere in the newsletter.

I want to wish you a happy and healthy 2021. I look forward to working with all of you as we stay the course to successfully reduce the threat of COVID-19 and continue on our path to modernizing health care for the Veterans we serve.

Stephanie Young
Acting VA Mid Atlantic Health Care
Network Director, VISN 6

Secretary Wilkie Visits Southeastern N.C.

VA Secretary Robert Wilkie toured Southeastern North Carolina Dec. 7 and 8. During the visit he met staff, discussed plans for expansion and improving Veteran health care in the area, and reviewed clinic operations during the COVID-19 era. He also discussed collaboration and proposed Memos of Understanding with Fort Bragg, Seymour Johnson AFB and Camp LeJeune. The Secretary visited the Brunswick Community-based Outpatient Clinic, Jacksonville CBOC and Morehead City CBOC. He conferred coins recognizing excellence in performance to several staff members. **The list includes:**

BRUNSWICK CBOC	JACKSONVILLE CBOC (Con't)
<p>Kimberly Spivey - Nurse Manager Christopher Austin - PSA for the Fayetteville Telehealth program Stewart Daniels - EMS Heike Steinle - Social Worker Sheryl Cunningham - MSA Supervisor Regina Wilson - PACT RN Dr. Jane Shaw - MD</p>	<p>Dr. Brittany Higgins - Psychologist Ms. Kuniko Kuroso, NP Sylvia Love, PACT Social Worker Police Officer Edward Pelsler Police Officer Sam Curlee Police Lt. Greg Radcliff</p>
JACKSONVILLE CBOC	MOREHEAD CITY
<p>Rickey Ruffin, RN, and Tommie Bennett, RN Marquita Rambert - MSA Marcus Freeman - MSA Steve Bonk - MSA Supervisor</p>	<p>Dr. Lance Sweeney, Medical Director Marion Cumbo, Nurse Manager Chanel Barksdale, Supervisory MSA James Cotton, DNP, PACT Provider Mayka Swales, Lab Technician</p>



VA Secretary Robert Wilkie (2nd from left) confers with Durham VA Health Care System Executive Director Paul Crews (3rd from left) as they review plans for proposed new location of the Morehead City Community Based Outpatient Clinic. Wilkie toured Southeastern North Carolina health care facilities in early December.



VA Secretary Robert Wilkie (left) observes COVID-19 safety protocols when greeting personnel at the Brunswick Community-based Outpatient Clinic, Jacksonville CBOC.

Nurses often serve as gatekeepers who work to keep infections at bay when Veterans are in the hospital. Hospital acquired pneumonia (HAP) is the number one hospital-acquired infection. HAP is preventable, especially when good oral hygiene is performed regularly.

With the help of the Hospital Acquired Pneumonia Prevention by Engaging Nurses — or HAPPEN team — at the Central Virginia VA Health Care System (CVHCS), swift actions have led to dramatic reductions in these types of infections.

“Central Virginia VA Health Care System was one of the early adopters of the hospital-acquired pneumonia prevention initiative: HAPPEN,” said Shannon Munro, the National HAPPEN Implementation Lead as a VA Diffusion of Excellence Initiative. “CVHCS demonstrated a statistically significant decrease in non-ventilator associated hospital acquired pneumonia (NV-HAP) of 79 percent on the CLC units at last reporting.”

Nurse champions are implementing HAPPEN across the country. Their goal is to improve Veteran safety and quality of care by providing consistent oral care (e.g., toothbrushing and denture cleaning). Oral care is one of the simplest ways to cut the risk of



The HAPPEN Team encourages staff to continue their efforts to prevent Hospital Acquired Pneumonia.

pneumonia in half for hospitalized Veterans and long-term-care residents.

CVHCS was one of seven VA hospitals to originally participate in the HAPPEN project. When CVHCS first initiated it in July 2018, the research revealed that CVHCS had 29 cases of NV-HAP located on the medical/surgical units. The cost estimate for these 29 cases was \$1,160,000. Non-ventilator hospital-acquired pneumonia (NV-HAP) represented more than 60 percent of cases at CVHCS. Each case is estimated to cost \$40,000, with five cases costing \$200,000. This is a significant health cost and attribute to increased hospital stays and death rates for Veterans.

Carol Aldridge led this initiative at

CVHCS.

“In fiscal year 2020, we anticipate a decrease in NV-HAP rates of 40 percent on the medical surgical units,” said Aldridge, a Registered Nurse and spearhead for the project.

The HAPPEN team continues to empower nurse champions to continue sustainment of the initiative with added measures to account for nurse documentation, accountability and processes to continue the supply chain and staff re-education.

As of September 2020, CVHCS had zero NV-HAP compared to when this project began.

“These performance initiatives improve patient safety and the quality of life for Veterans,” Aldridge said.

HAPPEN was one of the VA innovative practices recognized by the Gears of Government President’s Award and the practice has spread to 84 VA hospitals with more sites planning to deploy in the coming months. For more information: <https://www.va.gov/INNOVATIONECOSYSTEM/views/solutions/happen.html>

For more information about project happen, visit VA’s Market place. (LINK: <https://marketplace.va.gov/practices/project-happen>)

Valet Service, VEText Mobile Check-in offer ease, Convenience

By Vance Janes

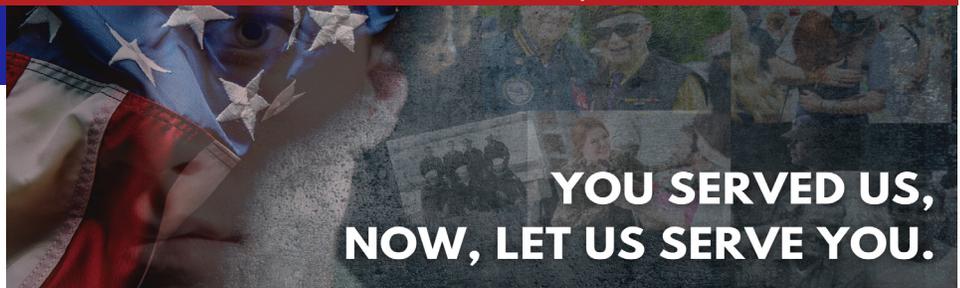
ASHEVILLE VAMC PUBLIC AFFAIRS

ASHEVILLE, NC — The Charles George VA Medical Center has free valet service, and Veterans can still use VEText Mobile Check-in if they opt to take advantage of the service.

There’s no need to sit in a waiting room when Veterans can turn their vehicle into a virtual waiting room.

It’s simple. All a Veteran must do is use the cell phone he or she has on file to text “Here” to 53079. Then they can wait in the comfort of their own vehicle until it’s time for their appointment. Once they receive a text telling them they are ready to be seen, or they are ready to enter the facility, they just pull up to the main entrance, and the valet staff will park their vehicle for them.

Once they have completed their appointment, the valet staff will retrieve the Veteran’s vehicle in three to seven minutes. There is a process for staff to assist Veterans in and out of vehicles once the Veteran arrives at valet.



ABOUT VETEXT MOBILE CHECK-IN:

Veterans must have a text-capable cell phone number on file with the VA. If a Veteran is unsure if his or her number is on file, he or she should contact their care team or verify the information when they’re contacted to schedule an appointment. The number used to text from must be the same number in a Veteran’s file.

Once Veterans arrive to the facility for their scheduled appointment and park, they will text the word “here” to 53079. That will alert the care team that the Veteran is at the facility and is waiting to be called to his or her

appointment. The Veteran will receive a text response verifying that the care team is aware that he or she is on site.

Once the care team is ready, Veterans will receive a text instructing them to enter the building and proceed to their appointment. When the Veterans enter the facility, they will report to the clinic as scheduled.

“This program provides a way for us to see more Veterans while complying with the CDC guidelines regarding physical distancing,” Janes said. “It increases the safety for the Veterans and staff, and it reduces the wait time inside the facility.”

Note: If a Veteran does not have a text capable cell phone or a vehicle to wait in, he/she can proceed to the entrance to receive assistance from our screeners. Veterans should allow enough time for COVID-19 screening and report to the clinic of their scheduled appointment no more than 15 minutes before the appointment time.

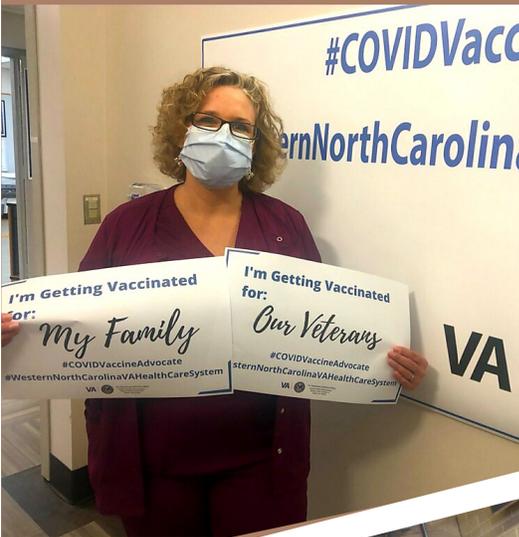
VISN 6 Administers Vaccine



VA employee Michele Roberts receives the first dose of COVID-19 vaccine at the Richmond VA Medical Center, Dec. 15, 2020. Roberts works in the emergency department as a registered nurse. Richmond VA Medical Center is part of the initial group of [37 VA medical centers across the country](#) that received the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine. Arneica Crawford, registered nurse, administers the vaccine in a special clinic set up at the facility. (Photo by David Hodge, Public Affairs)



Dan Tassone, pharmacist, draws syringes of the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine at the Richmond VA Medical Center, Dec. 15, 2020. Richmond VA Medical Center is part of the initial group of [37 VA medical centers across the country](#) that received the COVID-19 vaccine. (Photo by David Hodge, Public Affairs)



Thirty-seven VA medical centers began offering the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine to health care personnel and Veterans Dec. 14. VISN 6 facilities in Durham and Richmond received shipments of the Pfizer BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine and began vaccinating critical staff Dec. 15.

With little time between the announcement of the vaccine approval, training that capped off the courses they'd already taken and receipt of the vaccine at the facility, execution of the process appeared a model of efficiency. Overall, the biggest takeaway was the need for agility and willingness to change-up mid-stream. "When different vaccination areas had different degrees of efficiency, we actively diverted patients to the more efficient rooms."

Fifteen additional VA facilities received an allocation of Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine the week of Dec. 21, including Salisbury VA Health Care Center.

Salisbury VA, with other VISN 6 facilities Asheville, Fayetteville, Hampton and Salem, are among a group of 113 VA Medical Centers across the country to receive the first limited supply of the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine. Sites were identified based on need for the vaccine according to CDC's IA prioritization and capacity to store the vaccine at -20 C.

VISN 6 officials received approval to transport and distribute packages of the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine, in accordance with Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidance, to several VA Health Care Centers in North Carolina. The facility redistributed the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine to five VA health care centers in North Carolina the week of Dec. 28.

The VA Health Care Centers receiving the vaccine in Charlotte, Fayetteville, Greenville, Kernersville and Wilmington, N.C., are large, multi-service outpatient facilities the size of small hospitals, with capacity to serve tens of thousands of patients annually. They are staffed by hundreds of clinicians and adminis-

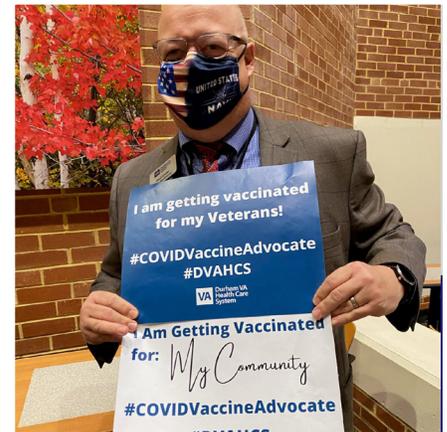
trators serving Veteran health care needs daily.

VA announced Jan. 5 that it has administered initial COVID-19 vaccine doses to more than 14,000 Veterans at high risk of getting COVID-19 infection, and more than 132,000 health care employees as of Jan. 4. To date, the list of vaccination sites has grown to 195 VA facilities spread out across the country, with more being added.

"This is a massive undertaking that is happening at rapid pace," said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie. "This week, the initial 37 sites that received the first limited Pfizer-BioNTech allocations are beginning to administer the second dose."

The second dose of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine should be administered 21 days after the first vaccination, while the second Moderna dose should be administered 28 days after the first. Both vaccines require two doses for maximum efficacy. VA's ultimate goal is to offer COVID-19 vaccinations to all Veterans and employees who want to be vaccinated. As vaccine supplies increase, VA care teams will reach out to eligible Veterans to schedule vaccinations.

Durham VA HCS Executive Director Paul Crews received his vaccination on Friday, Dec. 18, 2020. Durham is also promoting vaccination through a program that allows Veterans and staff to pose for a photo after receiving their shot, with a sign that declares why it is important for them to have the vaccine. On social media they ask the question, "What are your reasons for getting vaccinated? Family, spouse, children, Veterans?" As a navy Veteran and Durham VA executive leadership, Mr. Crews was vaccinated for our Veterans and for the community. Thanks for leading the way, Mr. Crews.



(LEFT-TOP PHOTO) The Western North Carolina VA Health Care System has now vaccinated 1,000 people — employees and Veterans — in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic. On Dec. 31, Leslie Anderson, a Primary Care nurse at the Charles George VA Medical Center, became the 1,000th person to receive the vaccine at a little after noon. She said she did so for her family and our Veterans. As a reminder, we will contact Veterans directly when they can receive the vaccine. There is no need to preregister or come in to sign up. The Moderna vaccine was 94-percent effective in preventing COVID-19 based on data presented to the FDA on Dec. 17. VA will administer the vaccine in two doses, 28 days apart. The side effects appear similar to those of other vaccines, and generally go away or resolve in 72 hours. (Photo by Amanda Graves). (LEFT PHOTO) The first shipment of Moderna COVID-19 vaccine arrived at the Charles George VA Medical Center on Tuesday, Dec. 22. Initial vaccination was earmarked for most vulnerable Veterans in the hospital and frontline health care staff. As vaccines become available for more groups of Veterans, VA care teams will reach out to eligible Veterans to schedule vaccinations. There is no need to preregister or come to a facility to sign up. Veterans can get up-to-date information on VA's VA COVID-19 vaccine webpage, which launched on Dec. 11, 2020, and sign up to receive regular updates on the vaccine on the VA's Stay Informed page. (Photo by Rod Doty)





PHOTOS ABOVE: (LEFT-PHOTO) On Dec. 15, the Fayetteville VA VA NCHCS Women's Health Maternity Care Program held a drive-thru baby shower for 30 expecting and new mothers who were part of the program. **(RIGHT-PHOTO)** Pictures were a part of the fun at the Fayetteville drive-thru baby shower Dec. 15.

Fayetteville Offers a Baby Shower COVID-Style!

Fayetteville VA VA NCHCS Women's Health Maternity Care Program hosted a drive-thru baby shower for 30 soon-to-be moms and new moms enrolled in the maternity care program at the Fayetteville Healthcare Center, Dec. 15.

Medical Center staff were not about to let

COVID or bad weather dampen the spirits of new Veteran mothers. They joined with community partners and put together a celebration that was joyous and socially acceptable in the COVID era.

Each Veteran mother-to-be received a bag full of baby necessities — from diapers

and wipes to clothing outfits, handmade hats and blankets — from Volunteer Services and the DARS organization.

The families were also given a sweet treat to enjoy on the way home from Burney's of Fayetteville. What an exciting event!!

CLC Holiday Cards Prove a Picture Is Worth 1,000 Words

By Vance Janes | WESTERN NORTH CAROLINA VA HEALTH CARE SYSTEM PAO

ASHEVILLE, N.C. — Sometimes just looking at your surroundings can spark a great idea.

And that's exactly what happened in the Charles George VA Medical Center Community Living Center recently when one of the CLC employees just happened to notice a resident sitting in a chair by the facility's Christmas tree.

According to Kristie King, Geriatrics and Extended Care Chief Nurse, the staff member said it would make for a great holiday card.

"The idea of capturing a recent picture to send to family and friends of Veterans in the Community Living Center had such appeal," King said.

After kicking the idea around, the idea took off.

"With visitation continuing to be restricted due to COVID-19 pandemic risks, the staff felt a recent photograph mailed to the residents' loved ones would be a really nice present," King said. "I reached out to Rod Doty, CGVAMC Digital Library Technician and Historian extraordinaire, to discuss the project and the need for professional-looking photographs." Doty was quick to respond.

"I manage the archive of *The Oteen*, (the former VA Post Newspaper) and have practically every edition over the course of a few years," Doty said of finding the ad in a 1918 edition. "The funny thing is, I just happened to be looking at one when I got the email from Kristie."

Doty said he felt like the old advertisement would be a perfect way to package it. King agreed.

"It all happened so quickly," King said. "He quickly found the



Kristie King, Geriatrics and Extended Care Chief Nurse, holds one of the holiday cards meant to bring happiness to the WNC VA Health Care System Community Living Center Residents' families this year. (Photo by Vance Janes)

advertisement, and it perfectly suited the intent of the Christmas Card — to provide a bright spot for a dull day.

"The results are beautiful," King said. "The hope of the CLC staff is that although this Holiday Season was not the same as it has been in the past, the Veterans were still able to extend their best wishes, their smiles, and their love to their families and friends."

VISN 6 Holds Virtual Nursing Collaborative Conference

By VISN 6 NPDP and Public Affairs



VISN 6 Nursing Professional Development (NPD) and Simulation Educators celebrated a first in 2020 — their first virtual conference. The VISN 6 collaborative team had not met face to face since 2014, and had their sights set on an October 2020 in-person gathering in Durham until plans were waylaid by COVID-19.

These individuals have promoted collaboration across facilities for more than a decade. They did not give up. Instead, they realigned plans and paved the way for a new tradition, a Webex conference bringing everyone together for learning and sharing in a virtual environment.

Asheville Education Specialist in Learning Resources Cathy Hebert joined VISN 6 Simulation Champion Mary Holtschneider and Durham VA Chief Nurse Executive, Nursing Education and Medicine, Gwen Waddell-Schultz to plan the event. The group relied on Richmond VA Simulation Operations Specialist Jonathan Nguyen and VA contractor CAE simulation company for behind-the-scenes technical support, and Elizabeth Nichols and Emily Shaw expertly managed

the platform while the team managed the content for what became a three-day event slated for Oct. 28-30.

Over the three days, VISN 6 leaders joined the conference to provide dynamic presentations:

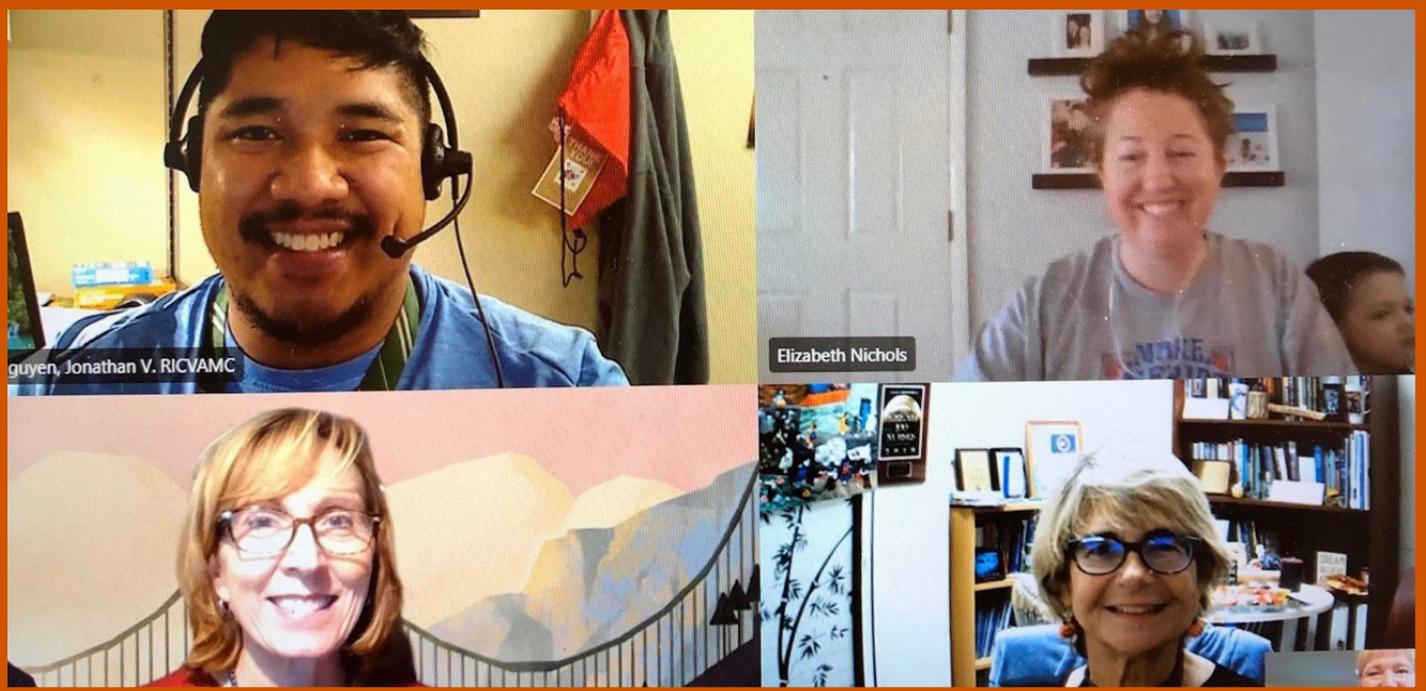
- VISN 6 Designated Learning Officer Dr. Nancy Lee shared perspectives on the extensive leadership and safety programming occurring VISN-wide.
- VISN 6 High Reliability Organization Coordinator Kate McCrimmon reviewed the incredibly important role of education and simulation within an HRO.
- Timothy Whitaker and the CAE team presented guidance on virtual programming.
- Mary Holtschneider shared the framework for Nursing Professional Development Scope and Standards of Practice, and updated the group on the national VA Association for

Nursing Professional Development (ANPD) Affiliate.

Participants were able to share best practices and learn from one another in breakout sessions for specialties and programs covering topics including but not limited to Hospital-wide education, Education management, Mental Health, Preceptor programs and Scholarships.

On the last day of the conference, Emily Shaw from CAE took the team through Situation, Background, Assessment, Recommendation (SBAR) analysis, which introduced them to new ways of organizing their simulation education program needs. Emily has worked with many VA facilities on their analysis implementation. Jonathan Nguyen discussed Richmond VA's experience with the SBAR process throughout 2020. VISN 6 TMS Coordinator Richard Kiehn made sure that the event content was properly accredited. VISN 6 has many stellar programs and events occurring across our region, and we are always better when we brainstorm and share.

(Top left: Jonathan Nguyen, Top right: Elizabeth Nichols, Lower left Cathy Hebert, Lower right, Mary Holtschneider, and lowest right, Emily Shaw)





VISN 6 Participates in VA's Veterans Health Administration Celebrating 75 years

This year, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) commemorates 75 years of the Veterans Health Administration (VHA).

Originally established in 1946 as the Department of Medicine & Surgery to care for Veterans returning from World War II, VHA has evolved to meet the unique challenges and care needs of Veterans from every era and at every stage of their lives.

To mark this occasion, VISN 6 medical centers are hosting various events and campaigns to highlight VHA's long-standing commitment to putting Veterans at the center of the care experience, recognizing its world-class, mission-driven health care professionals and highlighting its contributions to medical science. With other facilities throughout the nation, VA Health Care facilities across North Carolina and Virginia will hold a variety of events throughout the year to celebrate the observance. The observance kicks off January 12.

"As we celebrate this historic milestone, we are presented with an opportunity to look back on VHA's contributions to Veteran health care as part of VHA's 75-year history," said VISN 6 Acting Director Steph Young. "It is also a fitting occasion to recognize the extraordinary efforts of VISN 6 staff and volunteers, especially this year during the COVID-19 pandemic, a testament to our providing Veterans with efficient, quality health care."

Since VA's inception, facilities in VISN 6 have made vast and wide-reaching contributions as part of VHA's rich 75-year history to improve the health of Veterans and the entire nation by providing services and technologies that have changed the way health care providers across the country practice medicine.

Thousands of health care providers have received medical training at VISN 6 facilities since their opening and the advent of the VA medical training program. The skills and knowledge they learn from VHA are implemented in hospitals and clinics across the country. VHA is currently leading the nation in telehealth services and increasing telehealth usage exponentially during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Look for more information and coverage of VHA 75th Anniversary events on VA's website and social media pages.

After Getting Help, Vet Looks to Help Others

By Todd Goodman | Salisbury VA HCS Public Affairs

All was going well for Army Veteran Felix Wallace. He'd been married 18 years and had a good job as head groundskeeper for a local college. Then he came home from work one Saturday to find his house empty and his wife nowhere to be found.

"She took everything," he said. "I had to foreclose on the house ... couldn't afford it on my own." Suddenly, Wallace found himself homeless.

He kept doing his job and the chancellor of the college was nice enough to let him stay in a dorm room for a while. Eventually, depression and anxiety set in, getting so bad that he didn't know what to do. A 2014 stroke made things worse and he simply gave up — on himself, on everything.

Wallace found help at the Salisbury VA Medical Center (VAMC) when he was admitted for 30-day inpatient mental health care. A team of doctors helped him with his depression and anxiety. A social worker assessed his psychosocial needs, connected him to outpatient services, and located housing, so he wasn't sleeping on the streets. They connected him to outpatient Health Care for Homeless Veterans (HCHV) social workers for case management service after discharge.

"I'm really grateful because without them I don't know where I would have been or what I would have done," said Wallace. "Man, I'd been through a lot."

Salisbury VA's Social Homeless Veteran Services drastically change Veteran lives, helping each client develop a comprehensive, recovery-focused plan to improve their quality of life, as defined on the Veteran's terms.

VA's Grant & Per Diem program, enabling transitional housing for homeless Veterans, recently grew from 91 to 128 beds. Combined with 56 contract beds, Social Work Service now can help more Veterans than ever.

"We have some homes that can house six Veterans," said Natalie Shaver, supervisor of Homeless Community-Based Programs. "Veteran need really determines which option is best."

Grant & Per Diem beds can be used for up to two years, while contract beds can be used for up to four months. "Maybe they just got out of a divorce and are trying to prioritize their funding," Shaver said.

"Or they may need a contract for four months to allow them to regain their funds and secure permanent housing."

"We don't say, 'These are the goals we have for you,'" said Tiffany Price, HCHV Program director. "We'll [talk] with them about what stability and stable housing look like for them."

For some Veterans, it's about repairing relationships with family. Mending relationships and being able to move back in with family can offer much-needed support.

"Some Veterans need that stability to realize substance abuse is a huge part of why they are homeless," said Price. "We're helping them build motivation to enter treatment and see their goals might be different after that." It will look different for every Veteran.

Achieving stability is difficult for the homeless population. The first step is to help them find housing. Once stable housing is found, the social work team can connect clients with mental health or substance abuse treatment and other services. Case managers help Veterans stay on track, making their VA appointments, applying for disability and looking for jobs.

Wallace's case manager "would check on my hygiene, talk about goals, make sure I made my appointments, things like that," said Wallace. "I'm just grateful. Those case workers are great. They make sure you are okay."

Wallace filed for disability, graduated from group home living, bought a vehicle, and now has his own place through the Housing and Urban Development-VA Supportive Housing program.

"I'm doing great," he said. "Got my own apartment, just doing what I have to do."

Stories like Wallace's are what drive social workers in the Homeless Veteran Program to do what they do. "We get a lot of Vets who come back to thank the social workers who have worked with them through their journey," said Shaver. "It's great to see. It's heartwarming."

And some Veterans, like Wallace, want to do more. They want to pay it forward. "My goal is to become a Peer Support specialist for homeless Veterans," he said. "I want to help them the same way I've been helped."

PREVENTS Kicks Off in North Carolina



VISN 6 Mental Health Chief Dr. David Buyck joined Brian Sangutei, VISN 6 Suicide Prevention Coordinator, Governor Roy Cooper and officials from around the state to welcome Dr. Barbara Van Dahlen to a virtual meeting kicking off the President's Roadmap to Empower Veterans and End a National Tragedy of Suicide (PREVENTS) campaign in North Carolina. Doctor Van Dahlen is the national executive director of the three-year inter-agency campaign designed to change the culture around mental health and prevent suicide — among not just Veterans but all Americans. President Trump signed executive order 13861 March 5 that created the program.

Van Dahlen says that efforts will focus on finding partners and partnerships, identifying methods of success and tracking outcomes, and meeting the challenges and barriers to curtailing and preventing suicide in America. The program's aspiration is to prevent suicide within the Veteran community and lead the way in preventing suicide for all Americans — by employing a public health approach to empowering every individual through a nationally driven, community implemented, four-part integrated strategy.

Organization leaders from agencies like NCServes, Veterans Home Bridge, the Cohen Network, the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services, The NC Department of Military and Veterans Affairs, and the collection of regional VA Community Veterans Experience Boards talked with others about what is already in place and how their efforts, with pre-established programs like the Women Veterans Summit, Veterans Experience Action Center and Veterans Coffees will supplement and strengthen PREVENTS campaign efforts to reduce Veteran suicide holistically.

Using research, communications, a variety of programs and establishment of policies, PREVENTS seeks to change the culture surrounding mental health and suicide prevention through enhanced community integration, prioritized research activities, and implementation strategies that emphasize improved overall health and wellbeing.

Within PREVENTS is a more personal campaign encouraging each of us to commit to helping those in need. REACH (<https://www.reach.gov/pledge/>) beckons us to look around, take notice and pledge assistance by reaching out to those in need and encouraging individuals at risk to ask for help.

For information go to <https://www.va.gov/PREVENTS/EO-13861.asp>



VISN 6 to Gain New Fisher House Locations



Two locations in VISN 6 have been approved for construction of Fisher Houses on their campuses. Durham and Fayetteville VA Medical Centers, citing procedures and conditions requiring Veterans and active duty military to remain in their facilities for extended periods among a variety of reasons that justify need to place extended stay facilities there. Fisher House Foundation builds comfort homes where military & veterans' families can stay free of charge, while a loved one is in the hospital.

Located at military and VA medical centers around the world, Fisher Houses might have up to 21 suites, with private bedrooms and baths. Designs for the two new facilities are still in the planning stages.

According to the web site, "A Fisher House is "a home away from home" for families of patients receiving medical care at major military and VA medical centers." The houses are close to medical centers, so it is easy to walk over for a visit with a loved one. There is never a charge to stay at a Fisher House.

With the approval, the Durham and Fayetteville projects are part of a current prioritized list of Fisher House applicants. Planning will begin soon, and an informational call between officials and VISN and Facility planners is tentatively scheduled for early 2021.

Typically, the houses are 5,000

to 16,800 square foot homes donated by the Fisher family and Fisher House Foundation. Each house is designed to provide 8 to 21 suites. All are professionally furnished and decorated in the tone and style of the local region. The houses can accommodate 16 to 42 family members. The newest houses are 100% handicap accessible and include elevators. A Fisher House is a temporary residence and is not a treatment facility, hospice or counseling center.

While there are two Fisher Houses on military installations in North Carolina, the nearest VA Fisher Houses to Durham and Fayetteville are in Charleston, S.C., Murfreesboro, Tn. and Richmond. Richmond is currently the only VISN 6 site with a Fisher House, having recently opened a second one on its campus. Richmond is currently the only VA with 2 Fisher Houses on site.

Since inception, the Fisher House program has saved military and veterans' families an estimated \$500 million in out of pocket costs for lodging and transportation. There are 91 Fisher Houses located on 25 military installations and 41 VA medical centers. Many more houses are under construction or in design. The program began in 1990 and has offered more than 10 million days of lodging to more than 400,000 families.

VA Expands Access to Telehealth Services During COVID-19 Pandemic for Older, Rural and Homeless Veterans

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) recently announced that its Digital Divide Consult has helped more than 12,000 Veterans to obtain Internet access or a video-capable device for their health care needs.

As part of the program, VA providers refer Veterans to a VA social worker, who determines eligibility for various programs to assist with getting the Internet service or technology needed for VA telehealth — ensuring that older Veterans, those living in rural areas and Veterans who are homeless or in temporary housing have the opportunity to participate.

According to the Journal of the American Medical Informatics Association, Veterans with lower incomes, more severe disabilities and more chronic con-

ditions are more likely to use virtual care during the pandemic; but Veterans older than 45 and Veterans who are homeless, or who live in rural areas are less likely to use video care. The Digital Divide Consult provides a solution for these Veterans to access video care when needed.

“The pandemic has tested VA’s workforce like never before, and innovations like the Digital Divide Consult highlight the ingenuity and resilience that have been hallmarks of the department’s successful response to this national emergency,” said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie. “As our virtual care infrastructure continually improves, so does the quality and accessibility of Veterans’ care.”

VA’s Digital Divide Consult and other initiatives are prime reasons the use of



telehealth services by Veterans continues to rise. In mid-November, a total of 196,116 telehealth video visits to Veterans in their homes or other off-site locations were completed over a seven-day period, representing a 1,653-percent increase in weekly VA Video Connect visits since the end of February. The number of video appointments held per day peaked at more than 41,000.

To further enable Veterans to participate in telehealth, VA facilities are establishing test-call services to support Veterans ahead of their first video visit. Additionally, VA is partnering with Microsoft’s Airband initiative to educate Veterans on essential digital skills. VA intends to update the Digital Divide Consult as opportunities for future broadband and device discounts become available.

VA Resumes Overpayment Notifications While Continuing Relief Options for Veterans

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has announced its nationwide plan to resume mailing notification letters to Veterans for benefit overpayments placed in suspension from April 3 through Jan. 1, 2021.

The collection of these overpayments was deferred to provide financial relief to Veterans due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

“VA recognizes Veterans and ben-

eficiaries may still experience financial distress from COVID-19, and it will continue to offer enhanced relief options for impacted Veterans,” said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie. “These include extending repayment plans, waivers, compromises and temporary hardship suspensions. Most importantly, the department will pause collections through October 2021 for Veterans who remain in financial hardship and request relief.”

Veterans and beneficiaries with questions regarding benefit overpayments may submit requests or call 800-827-0648. Call volume is generally lower Tuesday-Friday.

For health care co-payment debts, Veterans should contact the Health Resource Center at 866-400-1238 or <https://www.pay.gov> for payments.

NATIONAL WEAR RED DAY

FOR WOMEN’S *heart* HEALTH

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 05, 2021



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 | 888-878-6880
www.durham.va.gov

Fayetteville VAMC

2300 Ramsey Street
Fayetteville, NC 28301
910-488-2120 | 800-771-6106
www.fayettevilleenc.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

Clayton CBOC

11618 US Hwy 70 Business Highway West,
Suites 100 & 200
Clayton, NC 27520

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

Hamlet CBOC

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

Hickory CBOC

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

Hillandale Rd. Annex

1824 Hillandale Road Durham
North Carolina 27705
919-383-6107

Jacksonville CBOC

2580 Henderson Drive
Jacksonville, NC 28546
910-353-6406

Jacksonville 2 VA Clinic

306 Brynn Marr Road
Jacksonville, NC 28546
910-353-6406

Jacksonville 3 VA Clinic

4 Josh Court
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
910-272-3220

Rutherford County CBOC

2270 College Avenue, Suite 145
Forest City, NC 28043-2459
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) 361-6419

Roanoke Vet Center

1401 Franklin Rd 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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