

# VOICES OF VISN 6

— Excellent Care — Earned by Veterans — Delivered Here —



## ACTING VA SECRETARY VISITS FAYETTEVILLE

### VA HEALTH CARE CENTER ONE OF FIRST OFFICIAL VISITS

Acting Secretary Robert Wilkie (right), a Fayetteville, N.C., native, walks through the Fayetteville Health Care Center with Fayetteville VA Medical Center Director James Laterza and VISN 6 Director DeAnne Seekins during a recent visit. (Photo by Steve Wilkins).

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## FEATURE COVER STORY

Fayetteville Health Care Center had the distinction of hosting acting Secretary of Veterans Affairs Robert Wilkie April 18 for one of his first visits as VA's top official.

No doubt the acting Secretary is no stranger to Fayetteville VA. His father, an

Dr. Lynn Weaver, Fayetteville VAMC chief of surgery (center) and Ruth O'Berry chief nurse of surgery discussed various ambulatory outpatient surgeries available at the Fayetteville VA Health Care Center with Acting VA Secretary Robert Wilkie during his visit to the HCC. (Photo by Steve Wilkins).



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# Message from the Network Director - Public Service Week



In May we honor and recognize our VA employees for accepting the challenge and gratification of public service to our nation and its military Veterans. Most, if not all people who go into public service do so because they want to help others; they know there is a mission larger than oneself.

I've had the honor of working for VA for 34 years, and I know it's the people that make this work gratifying. In 1984 my family turned to VA to assist them with providing care to my WWI Grand Father, Earl Haddock. After seeing him receive care at VA, I knew that I could give back to my country by serving those who have served us. The VA honored his service with dignity and respect, while providing him with high quality medical care. I was inspired.

My father then turned to VA as a WWII Veteran and spent his final days at the Durham VA Hospice unit. When he passed, I was overwhelmed by the compassion and empathy of those who took care of him. As a network director, I've seen firsthand that it's the people who make us great. Time and time again, as I visit all sites across VISN 6 and talk with our Veterans — I know and see the great care that you provide.

You won't always have the latest equipment or space, but that never stops you. Our employees consistently outperform the private sector on several metrics, including manage-

ment of chronic conditions, cancer screening, and several aspects of hospital care. Each of you in some capacity makes that happen. I am reminded, when I walk through the halls of our hospitals and see the faces of our Veterans and fellow employees, why we do what we do. We have a mission as public servants. We have a greater purpose.

U.S. President Abraham Lincoln said in the Gettysburg Address that we are a government of the people, by the people, for the people. You are the people who make the VA and the nation run. On days that you feel as though your work does not matter or the

process is not moving as fast as we would want, remember who you are doing this good work for — our Veterans. Your commitment and enthusiasm to serve our 390,808 Veterans with more than 6.2 million appointments is unmatched, and I am so proud to serve alongside you.

Sincerely,  
**DeAnne M. Seekins**  
 VISN 6 Network Director



**PUBLIC SERVICE**  
 RECOGNITION WEEK

“We are in an arena where real change can happen. It is an arena where real leadership matters. It is an arena where a good idea can touch the lives of millions of Americans.”

— Bill Corr, Career Federal Employee and Former Deputy Secretary at the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)



Addressing Opioid Alternatives: Fayetteville VAMC Director James Laterza (Right) participated in a Senate Armed Services Personnel Subcommittee Roundtable discussion on the management of opioid-prescribing practices and pain management hosted by Senator Thom Tillis (R-N.C.). The meeting brought together representatives from military, (Ft. Bragg Womack Medical Center Commander pictured, left), local elected officials, the Defense Health Agency, VA and civilian health care systems. According to Tillis, there were 1,956 deaths in North Carolina stemming from opioid overdoses. The meeting was intended to initiate a larger, longer dialogue. (Photos by Jeff Melvin).

# North Carolina and Southern Virginia Receive \$761K for Homeless Veterans

By Tara Ricks | VISN 6 PUBLIC AFFAIRS

Twenty-one counties in VA's Mid-Atlantic Health Care Network (VISN 6), received \$761 thousand dollars' worth of housing vouchers for Veterans from the Department of Housing and Urban Development and the Department of Veterans Affairs as continued effort to end Veterans homelessness.

The director of VISN 6's homeless program, Jeff Doyle says the vouchers will help Veterans with clinical services and case management through VA and rental assistance from HUD.

"We want to ensure that our facilities in North Carolina and Virginia have the resources they need to help our homeless Veterans," said Doyle. "The HUD-VASH vouchers awarded to the counties in our network will help homeless Veterans obtain affordable housing. These vouchers are critical tools in ending homelessness."

VISN 6 VA medical facilities work individually with homeless Veterans before referring them to local housing agencies to access vouchers. Decisions are based on a variety of factors, most importantly the duration of homelessness and the need for longer term, more intensive support in obtaining and maintaining permanent housing. The HUD-VASH program includes both the rental assistance the voucher provides and the comprehensive case management that VAMC staff offers.

"We have a responsibility and a duty to care for our nation's Veterans," said DeAnne Seekins, VISN 6 Network Director. "We have to continue with past momentum to end

Veteran homelessness — these vouchers will allow our facilities to do just that."

Veterans participating in the HUD-VASH program rent privately owned housing and generally contribute no more than 30 percent of their income toward rent. VA offers eligible homeless veterans clinical and supportive services through its medical centers across VISN 6 in North Carolina and Virginia.

## VISN 6 Numbers in FY17:

Homeless programs provided services to 3,643 homeless Veterans. Additionally, the VA Supportive Services for Veteran Families, a community grant program to local non-profits, saw 1,340 homeless Veterans. Across all services there were 1,577 permanent housing placements.



Hampton VAMC Chief of Staff Dr. Priscilla Hankins (left) joined Joseph J. DeFelice (center), Region III Regional Administrator of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Norfolk Redevelopment and Housing Authority Executive Director John C. Kownack and others to announce awards benefitting veterans in the Hampton Roads area of the Commonwealth of Virginia. During the presentation Dr. Hankins stated, "Hampton VA Medical Center is grateful for the all the partnerships we have forged over the years with community agencies that have dedicated time and resources to making sure Veterans get services they need." Prior to taking on the Chief of Staff role Dr. Hankins served as Hampton's Chief of Mental Health Services with oversight of the Homeless Program. She has been involved with the HUD/VASH program from its beginning.

NORTH CAROLINA			
Chatham County Housing Authority	Durham	5	\$37,745
Eastern Carolina Human Services Agency, Inc	Fayetteville NC	15	\$66,245
Housing Authority of Lumberton	V06/Fayetteville NC	5	\$15,270
Housing Authority of the City of Durham	Durham	10	\$55,181
Housing Authority of the City of Goldsboro	Fayetteville NC	5	\$15,636
Housing Authority of the City of Greenville	Durham	5	\$29,380
Housing Authority of the City of High Point	Salisbury	15	\$68,418
North Carolina Commission of Indian Affairs	Durham	5	\$18,279
Orange County Housing Authority (NC)	Durham	5	\$29,553
Sanford Housing Authority	Fayetteville NC	5	\$18,40
The City of Hickory Public Housing Authority	Asheville	24	\$89,151
Western Carolina Community Action	Asheville	5	\$20,000
<b>North Carolina Total</b>		<b>104</b>	<b>\$463,268</b>

VIRGINIA			
Charlottesville Redevelopment and Housing Authority	Richmond	5	\$35,369
Chesapeake Redevelopment & Housing Authority	Hampton	5	\$34,821
City of Virginia Beach	Hampton	5	\$39,161
James City Council Office of Housing & Community Development	Hampton	5	\$29,164
Newport News Redevelopment & Housing Authority	Hampton	5	\$35,663
Norfolk Redevelopment & Housing Authority	Hampton	5	\$39,661
Richmond Redevelopment & Housing Authority	Richmond	1	\$6,858
Roanoke Redevelopment and Housing Authority	Salem	5	\$24,043
Virginia Housing Development Authority	Richmond	7	\$53,293
<b>Virginia Total</b>			<b>\$298,033</b>

## McGuire Unveils New Wheelchair Training Area

By David Hodge | HUNTER HOLMES MCGUIRE VAMC PUBLIC AFFAIRS



In March, the McGuire VA Medical Center unveiled a unique training area dedicated to helping Veterans with spinal cord injuries.

Hospital leadership, Veterans and representatives from the Paralyzed Veterans of America cut the ribbon on the latest addition to the facility's extensive services in Spinal Cord Injury & Disorder (SCI&D).

"The new space gives Veterans a dedicated location and therapeutic resources to allow them to be more independent in the community," said Dr. Timothy Lavis, Chief of SCI&D at McGuire. The area will give Veterans confidence to overcome barriers many people take for granted.

The McGuire VA Medical Center unveiled a wheelchair training area, March 19, that brings an important resource to Veterans who have new spinal cord injuries. The course helps them navigate common obstacles found in society. From left: Robert Satterwhite, Paralyzed Veterans of America (PVA); John A. Brandecker, Director at McGuire; Dr. Timothy Lavis, Chief of Spinal Cord Injury & Disorder; Dr. Ajit Pai, Chief of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation; Peter S. Gaytan, Associate Executive Director of PVA. **(Photo by Jason Miller).**

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Marine Veteran Josh Burch navigates a short staircase with the assistance of Ricky Hawkins, a physical therapist at the McGuire VA Medical Center at the unveiling of a wheelchair training area for Veterans, March 19. (Photo by Jason Miller).

In the general public, people are more hesitant to attempt something they are unsure of, or feel at risk of falling, Lavis added.

The area houses many of the common obstacles found in society in close proximity to the spinal cord unit, hidden out of view of the public, which gives Veterans more confidence to navigate certain obstacles in the presence of a therapist who can help to educate and redirect Veterans as they learn new skills.

The 5,200-square-foot area features two different ramps, a short staircase, curb sections of various heights, and several surface textures that include gravel, rock, grass and pavement.

"It allows the patient to experience situations they will face in life upon return home," said Ricky Hawkins, physical therapist at McGuire.

Hawkins worked closely with Marine Veteran Josh Burch during a demonstration of the new area during the opening.

"Patients have really enjoyed the area," Hawkins said about the space since it opened. "It was definitely needed for wheelchair training and makes training safer and more effective."

To the untrained eye, the new addition may seem somewhat ordinary. For a Veteran learning to adjust to life after a spinal cord injury or disorder, descending the steep non-ADA ramp can be a challenging task.

ADA refers to the Americans with Disabilities Act, which is a civil rights law passed in 1990 (revised in 2010) that regulates accessibility standards for state and local governments, public accommodations, and commercial facilities.

"Nothing is ADA in the city," Burch said lightheartedly about Richmond. "When by myself, it was difficult. So, I usually have a friend with me to help bump me up a curb or something like that."

Burch said the new space will be a great learning experience for those who are adjusting to their new injuries.

Accessibility is always a concern, he added.

The SCI&D unit at McGuire VA continues to expand its space and services to meet the growing number of Veterans in central and northern Virginia.



## Charles George VA Honors Volunteers

By Steve Wilkins | VISN 6 PUBLIC AFFAIRS

"Knock Our Socks Off!" was the call April 20 in Asheville, as Charles George VA Medical Center honored volunteers for a job well done.

Culminating a week of national VA volunteer recognition, the medical center brought its volunteers together for a luncheon, giving leadership the opportunity to say thank you to more than 70 volunteers attending. The grateful message is intended for each individual donating many of hours of service to Veterans over the years, whether they could attend the event or not.

The medical center counts on volunteers to help things run smoothly every day. With an operating budget of more than \$365 million, delivering health care to nearly 48,000 Veterans through 546,340 visits last year, the assistance volunteers provide the medical center is invaluable. They provide administrative help to staff, escort Veterans and offer wayfinding services, they man information desks, and help in various offices and labs.

**"I don't know what we'd do without these generous souls," said Craig Doane, Charles George Chief of Voluntary Service.** Doane added that the facility has truly come to rely on the consistent presence of volunteers, year in and year out. "If we didn't have volunteers to rely on, the facility would need to hire more

than 52 staff, he said. So, according to Doane, VA recognizes a significant cost savings, in addition to the compassionate care our Veterans gain from their presence.

The 98,000-plus combined service hours donated by volunteers throughout the Charles George system amounts to an impact exceeding \$2 million. Our volunteers average service ranks in the top five percent nationally. This is a huge contributing factor to why Charles George is rated one of the best places to work in VA, and leads the nation in customer satisfaction.

National Volunteer Week began in 1974 to recognize and celebrate the efforts of VA's incredible volunteers. Since that time, the week has become a nationwide effort to urge Americans to volunteer in their communities. In fiscal year 2017, nearly 67,000 active volunteers contributed more than 9.7 million hours of service to Veterans at VA medical facilities across the country. The week at Charles George also includes a one-on-one training series to prepare volunteers for service during the coming year.

During the luncheon volunteers were recognized for all of the great things they do and the time they spend helping serve our nation's heroes. Awards were also presented to David Tubergen, the Volunteer of the Year and others,

(TOP PHOTO) At a Recognition Luncheon for Volunteers, Charles George VA Medical Center Director Steph Young (left) and Dr. Molly McGaughey, (3rd from left) presented recognition certificates to volunteers Madeline Pflaumbaum (VAVS 5600 hrs Certificate), Sondra Peterson (VAVS 5400 hrs Certificate), Michael Koon (VAVS 19,000 hrs Certificate), Larry Fowler, (VAVS 10,700 hrs Certificate), Joan Kelly (VAVS 8,000 hrs Certificate), Craig Doane, Chief of VAVS.

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**Brett Robbins** | SALEM VAMC PUBLIC AFFAIRS

Veterans Timothy Thacker and Milton Twitty overcame homelessness recently, only to face another challenge: long and complicated commutes to work in rural Southwest Virginia. Thacker's bus ride and walk to work lasts about 50 minutes. Twitty's commute to his night-shift job often takes more than 35 minutes, after his shift ends at 5:00a.m.

The situation concerned Tanyia Jones, Salem VA Medical Center's Health Care for Homeless Veterans Coordinator and Dominic Austin, Community Employment Coordinator. They help Veterans find housing and competitive employment in the Roanoke, Va., Valley and other nearby towns.

Another Veteran, Paul Powell, also knows firsthand the value of effective transportation. He overcame homelessness through recovery and employment, with a bicycle being his "link in the chain of progress," leading him to work as a peer support specialist in Salem VA's Homeless Veterans Clinic.

Understanding their problem, Jones says resources can be barriers to affordable and reliable transportation facing many Veterans looking for work, or already working. "My thought was: 'Is there an easier way to help Veterans with their daily commute?'"

Relying on the example of an earlier campaign coordinated earlier by the Central Alabama Veterans Health Care System and Goodwill Industries of Central Alabama, Salem VA officials collaborated with Goodwill Industries of the Valleys (GIV) on the "Bikes for Vets" donation drive. They accepted bicycle donations through April at GIV in Salem, for distribution to Veterans needing transportation for work.

Carma Heitzmann, director of VA's Homeless Veteran Community Employment Services program explained that "Innovative projects such as the Bikes for Vets Campaign help to mitigate [the transportation] barrier and pave the way for increased independence and integration into the local community."

Among the first to receive a donated bike, Twitty looks forward to a faster, more fun ride to work, saying "this will cut down my commute time tremendously." In addition to getting to the grocery store and running other errands." Biking also adds health benefits to their commutes. Thacker said he is looking forward to the low-impact exercise he will get, adding, "I could stand losing a little more weight and riding a bicycle to and from work and around town will help."

"This partnership between Goodwill and Salem VA Medical Center is a perfect example of the way that community partners are able to contribute to the goal of ending homelessness among Veterans," said Rebecca Stackhouse, Director for Salem VA Medical Center.

"We know the good work the Salem VA Medical Center does to help homeless Veterans achieve self-sufficiency and a great future," states Mary Ann Gilmer, Vice President of Mission Services at GIV. She added, "When the VA brought this project concept to us, we loved it and were excited to participate. Here at Goodwill, we strive to help individuals in our community get the support they need to re-enter the workforce or find a better job. It has been a great way to support Veterans who have sacrificed so much for us through their service to our nation. We're proud to be part of the campaign."

Goodwill hopes to collect at least 50 bikes, but could accept many more to address the great need here in our community. The bicycles will be donated to Veterans during Salem VA's annual VA2K event scheduled for Wednesday, May 16. Salem VA Credit Union has secured funding to buy helmets for the bike recipients.

For more information about employment initiatives and other programs for Veterans exiting homelessness, visit VA's website. Veterans who are homeless or at imminent risk of becoming homeless may call 1-877-4AID-VET (1-877-424-3838).



U.S. Army Veteran Milton Twitty (Photo credit Paul Powell, Salem VA Medical Center).



U.S. Marine Corp Veteran Timothy Thacker (Photo credit Tanyia Jones, Salem VA Medical Center).



**Charles George VA Honors Volunteers** [STORY CONT'D FROM PAGE 4](#)

signifying Community Partnership, KEY and Cornerstone Awards. Twenty-one Veterans Service Organizations were recognized for their participation in voluntary service committee meetings, some for as many as 60 years. Notable too, was recognition of Ronald Piercy for more than 10,000 hours of service and Robert Scruggs for more than 25,000 hours of service.

Dr. Molly McGaughey, Charles George VA Medical Center GE&C Chief (left) stands with Medical Center Director Steph Young and Ronald Piercy, a Volunteer recognized for his more than 10,000 hours of service, with Voluntary Service Chief Craig Doane during the recognition Luncheon for Volunteers April 20.

# Salisbury VA Growth Among Top in Nation

SALISBURY, N.C. — With less than half of the fiscal year complete, Salisbury VA has already broken its goal for appointment growth, leading the VA with the second largest growth in patient encounters compared to this point last year.

So far, the Salisbury VA Health Care System, which is made up of the W.G. (Bill) Hefner VA Medical Center in Salisbury, the Kernersville VA Health Care Center (HCC), the Charlotte HCC and the Charlotte Community Based Outpatient Clinic (CBOC), has grown by more than 30,422 appointments from October to April over last year.

“This shows the great work that our staff are doing across the board,” said newly appointed medical center director, Joseph Vaughn. “More Veterans are coming to Salisbury’s clinics, coming frequently for appointments, or some combination. The bottom line is that Veterans are choosing to get their care at Salisbury, and that makes me proud to be the director.”

Nationwide, VA has a goal of adding 1 million more Veteran appointments in fiscal year 2018, which ends in October. As part of that goal, every Medical Center has a local goal based on previous growth, patient population, and other factors.

North Carolina has been one of the fastest-growing regions for Veterans over the past 15 years, and continues to see growth, which is reflected in enrollment and visits at VA Medical Centers across the state.

The Veterans Health Administration is the largest integrated health care system in the United States, providing care at more than 1,200 health care facilities, including 170 VA Medical Centers, serving more than 9 million enrolled Veterans each year.

For further information about VA services, visit [www.explore.va.gov](http://www.explore.va.gov) or like us on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/VASalisbury](https://www.facebook.com/VASalisbury).

## VA Mid-Atlantic Health Care Network Scheduled to Finalize Rollout of VEText by End of May

Tara Ricks, Director of Communications

VA Mid-Atlantic Health Care Network (VISN 6) is scheduled to finalize the rollout of VEText by end of May for the majority of medical centers. VEText is a text message appointment reminder service for enrolled Veterans. The service will also allow enrolled Veterans to cancel and confirm future appointments and offer an option to download an appointment reminder to a calendar file.

The majority of Veterans enrolled in VISN 6 will be opted-in automatically. Veterans can easily opt out at any time by replying “STOP” to end the messages. All appointment reminder messages contain instructions on how to end messages.

Private health information and/or personally identifiable information will not be included in the text reminder. Veterans without mobile phones will continue to receive appointment reminders by mail and home phone.

For a preview of the messaging system, text ‘Demo’ to (909) 245-9443 from a mobile phone. Standard text messaging rates may apply.

### Frequently Asked Questions

#### How do Veterans receive text messages from VEText?

Veterans will need to have an updated phone number on file.

#### How do Veterans update their phone numbers with the VA?

Veterans can update their phone numbers

during the check-in or -out process during an in-person appointment, at any kiosk or by contacting their primary care team.

#### What if the cell phone number is listed as home number?

VEText pulls from the cell phone field first. If the patient does not have a cell phone, it will attempt to use the home phone.

#### Are there any costs incurred by the Veteran?

VEText does not cost the Veteran anything, except for any text messaging charges associated with the Veteran’s cell phone carrier. Please contact your mobile provider for more information.

#### If a Veteran accidentally opted out, can they restart the SMS appointment reminders?

Yes. Veterans can opt-in by replying “START” to a previous reminder message or text START to 909-954-0651.

#### Can Veterans reply by text message to confirm or cancel their appointment?

Yes. Veterans can confirm or cancel their appointment by responding to the appointment reminder.

#### Can VEText be used for Community Care appointments?

No. Currently, VEText is not configured to send SMS appointment reminders for Community Care appointments.

#### Will Veterans receive reminder text messages for all scheduled appointments?

Veterans will receive text message reminders for all outpatient clinic appointments at the medical center and at all seven satellite clinics throughout South Florida. Veterans will not receive text message reminders for appointments in Lab, Community Care, Research, Telephone Clinics, and Home Based Primary Care.

#### What if Veterans have multiple appointments on the same date?

If a Veteran has multiple appointments on the same date, the system will send a single text message identifying both appointments individually and providing separate options for confirming or cancelling each appointment individually.

#### What happens if Veterans don’t respond to the text message?

If Veterans do not respond to the text message reminder, the appointment will remain scheduled.

#### Will Veterans still receive phone call and post-card reminders?

Yes. VEText will not replace letters or phone call reminders. The text messages will serve as an additional reminder.

#### Who can Veterans contact if they have questions about VEText?

Veterans can reach out to their primary care teams or clinics for assistance. Questions regarding text messaging charges must be referred to Veterans’ cell phone carriers.



T-shirts from the Military Sexual Trauma Clothesline Project were on display at the Fayetteville VA April 23.

## Fayetteville VA Medical Center

### Clothesline Project Raises Awareness of Military Sexual Trauma

On April 23, from 10:00a.m. until 2:00p.m., visitors to the Fayetteville VA Medical Center Ramsey Street location were able to view displayed T-shirts from the MST (military sexual trauma) Clothesline Project. These T-shirts are not for sale but serve as an awareness campaign for military sexual trauma, sexual assault and sexual abuse. These displays reflect the personal experiences of those who created the T-shirts — the survivors of sexual trauma.

The Clothesline Project serves several purposes. First, the project allows survivors to speak up about experiences that they may have previously kept silent. Second, the project raises awareness and acts as an educational tool for those who come to view the Clothesline. Lastly, the project allows those who are still suffering in silence to understand that they are not alone.

“The focus of this year’s Clothesline Project highlights the VA’s national focus on recovery and commitment to military sexual trauma survivors,” said Dr. Yvonne McKeithen, Military Sexual Trauma Coordinator at the Fayetteville VA Medical Center.

“VA is concerned about sexual violence because we know that any type of trauma can affect a person’s physical and mental health,” said McKeithen.

Military sexual trauma

(MST) is the term used by the VA to refer to sexual assault or repeated, threatening sexual harassment experienced by a service member during active duty, active duty for training, or inactive duty training. Approximately one in five women and one in 100 men seen in VA medical facilities reported experiencing MST when screened by their VA healthcare provider. MST can affect Veterans’ physical and mental health for many years afterwards. Fortunately, people can recover from experiences of MST, and the VA offers effective services to help Veterans do this.

“VA is strongly committed to ensuring that Veterans have access to the help they need in order to recover from MST,” McKeithen continued. “Treatment for physical and mental health conditions related to MST is available at every VA facility and is provided to Veterans free of charge. Veterans may be able to receive free MST-related care even if they are not eligible for other VA services.”

No documentation is required, and Veterans do not need to be service-connected or be receiving VA disability compensation, Dr. McKeithen added.

To find out more information about the Fayetteville VA Medical Center’s MST Program, contact coordinator Dr. Yvonne McKeithen at (910) 488-2120 x7593.

## Hampton VA to Implement Huddle Boards to Promote Strong Employee Engagement

HAMPTON, Va. — Best practices are hard to deny, they are measurable, notably successful and replicable. As the saying goes, “there’s no need to reinvent the wheel” and within VISN 6, Continuous Improvement (CI) Boards have been recognized as a best practice.

By May 7, the Hampton VA Medical Center will fully adopt this best practice, known as Huddle Boards, to facilitate daily communication in a highly visual and interactive manner.

The purpose of the Huddle Boards is to promote and strengthen employee engagement, promote collaboration and ownership. The boards provide a concentrated opportunity for staff to provide ideas on how their service and the hospital can improve. It promotes two-way communication and will keep employees informed on steps being made to move forward on an idea as well as engage employees to help in bringing changes to fruition.

The boards were submitted by the Salisbury VA as a best practice in 2015, and since its inception more than 1,800 ideas have been submitted with more than 830 of those ideas being implemented. Hampton expects to find similar success.

“Our leadership has acknowledged that many times, front-line staff have insight and solutions to many of the challenges facing

VA,” said Angela Vargas, Hampton VAMC’s Systems Redesign Coordinator. “Now they will have a clearly defined process to have those ideas heard and see them carried out.”

The Huddle Boards align with VA/VHA priorities and directly impact SAIL and Employee Survey Scores. Hampton VAMC leadership has directed the Services to launch the program with daily huddles and will revisit progress at the end of 90 days.

The goal of the Huddle Boards is to ensure that all staff members take turns presenting the ideas on the board as it is “owned” by all. Vargas, who is leading the effort, said conversations around the suggestions should take place in a constructive and positive manner, with honest and polite feedback encouraged.

The Huddle Board structure also provides an avenue for Services to provide feedback to other Services to encourage cross-departmental communication. Not only is it a chance to collaborate on ideas, but it also allows an avenue for Services to receive and/or provide clarification to recommendations.

“We look forward to not only strengthening communication and interpersonal relationships, but enhancing our processes, patient care and customer service,” said Vargas.



Staff participated in a Build-A-Board Event April 19, to support the May 7 deadline in which all Services will be required to implement the use of the Huddle Board. The initiative is being led by Angela Vargas, Hampton VAMC’s Systems Redesign Coordinator who, upon request will also help facilitate Services through a Huddle Meeting to ensure supervisors and staff fully understand the Huddle process and what ways it can be used for information sharing, collaboration and effective communication. (Photo by John Rogers, ADPCS Administrative Office).

## Acting VA Secretary Makes Fayetteville VA HEALTH CARE CENTER ONE OF FIRST OFFICIAL VISITS

Army artillery officer, served at Fort Bragg, and the young Wilkie graduated from Reid Ross High School, which is only a stone's throw from Fayetteville's Main Campus. It's clear the acting Secretary calls Fayetteville his home.

Having served in the U.S. Navy and the Air Force Reserve, one might say that wearing two uniforms has prepared Wilkie for wearing two hats, as he is concurrently serving as the Department of Defense's undersecretary for personnel and readiness, a position he has held since November 2017. He has a long history of public service in the Pentagon and congress, including a stint as Sen. Thom Tillis' senior adviser.

Scheduled to give the keynote address at an Association of the U.S. Army luncheon in Fayetteville, Wilkie used the occasion to don his VA hat and meet with Fayetteville Medical Center and VA Mid-Atlantic Healthcare Network leaders for a familiarization briefing, followed by a tour of the Fayetteville VA Health Care Center.

VISN 6 Network Director Mrs. DeAnne Seekins and Fayetteville Medical Center Director Mr. James Laterza, along with rest of the Fayetteville's Executive Leadership Team, presented a snapshot of VISN 6, which has consistently led the nation in rate of Veteran population growth for nearly a decade, and the medical center, the growth rate of which mirrors that of its parent network, maintaining a steady 6 to 7 percent growth since 2010.

After asking network and medical center leadership, "What can I do for you?" Secretary Wilkie listened intently as Ms. Seekins and Mr. Laterza laid out challenges and barriers slowing or impeding their quest to deliver

area Veterans the quality care they deserve. High on their needs list: increased flexibility/authority over local leases and renewal of CHOICE (care in community) funding.

"My No. 1 objective is getting CHOICE legislation passed," said Wilkie as he expressed his understanding of the vital role care in the community programs play in helping VA meet Veterans healthcare needs. "It (CHOICE legislation) is a fight worth fighting."

He also shared his thoughts regarding privatization, commenting, "There are things that VA does that can't be replicated anywhere else." VA leadership agreed.

Also high on VISN 6's and Fayetteville Medical Center's needs list were help with Recruitment, Retention & Relocation, and flexible resource and budget allocation that would consider population shifts, increasing Veteran population rates and similar factors in the equation. While many areas of the country are experiencing declining growth rates, areas like Fayetteville VAMC are experiencing soaring rates not reflected in commensurate budget increases, Seekins and Laterza pointed out.

Ms. Seekins highlighted the extensive partnerships that are being sought between Fayetteville Medical Center, Durham VA Medical Center and Womack Army Medical Center to increase services to Veterans, Graduate Medical Education (GME) programs and staff/resource sharing all with an overall goal of providing the best quality care to region's Veteran population.

Director Laterza then shared several highlights about the Fayetteville enterprise. Highlights such as:



Dan Kelly, an Army Special Forces Veteran working at the Fayetteville Health Care Center receives a Challenge Coin from Acting Secretary Robert Wilkie during his recent visit to the Fayetteville area. (Photo by Steve Wilkins).

- SAIL rating increased from 1 to 3 stars in a 12-month period
- 65% reduction of opioids use across the enterprise (2nd in the nation)
- the 4th fastest growing health care system in VA
- stand-alone dialysis clinic – earning a gold rating
- earning designation as a top 15 sites of care for Women's Health growth along with meeting or exceeding national performance measures in cervical cancer screenings, and breast cancer screening rates
- extensive partnerships with DoD sites of care, and our academic affiliations with top universities in North Carolina.

Following the conference room briefing, the Secretary toured the HCC, stopping at the optometry, audiology and women's clinics, as well as prosthetics, the surgical suites, imaging, and the chapel.

The Secretary then presented coins to outstanding Fayetteville VAMC employees and took photos with leadership and staff before departing.

## Good Posture, Good Health on VA WIN in May

Good posture is more than just how you sit; it's also about how you move.

Posture is about how you move and go about your daily life, according to the National Institutes of Health. It can also have an impact on your health as you age.

You can improve your posture by being mindful of not only how you sit, but other daily activities like walking – instead of looking down, look up. Taking time to

stretch throughout the day will also help your posture. Maintaining a healthy weight is important too.

Another tip is to have strong abdominal muscles which can help support your back.

Improving your posture for better health will be just one of the articles on VA WIN on VA Pulse (<https://www.vapulse.net/groups/va-win>) in May. There'll also be articles on what's the best time to exercise, how to

brighten your outlook, safe grilling tips and a look at tick bites and Lyme disease.

VA WIN on VA Pulse (<https://www.vapulse.net/groups/va-win>) isn't just articles, you'll also find daily activity and nutrition tips along with a healthy and tasty recipe each week.

Another plus to VA WIN is that it's a community. It's a place where you can share information with other VA employees who are focused on improving their personal health. Join in at <https://www.vapulse.net/groups/va-win/>



## VA Holds Community Partnership Summit April 19

HAMPTON, Va. — In an effort to strengthen community relationships, the Hampton VA Medical Center held a Community Partnership Summit in Bldg. 83 April 19.

“The Community Partnership Summit was a great success,” said Carla Garcia, Hampton VAMC Business Manager for the Office of Community Care.

“We could have not done this without the support of the clinical and administrative service as well as the Claims Adjudication and Reimbursement and HealthNet. Knowledge is power and we could deliver a succinct message to our Community Providers and that is, we cannot offer services alone — we need our Community partners.”

The event focused on the future of the Office of Community Care and provided briefs on eligibility, approval processes, authorizations and provider agreements as well as nursing coordination, prosthetics and medical equipment and radiology services. Representatives from the various services at

Hampton were present as well as representatives from the Claims Adjudication and Reimbursement, Office of Community Care regional office and HealthNet Field Operations.

Although many of the community partners’ questions were answered throughout the event, a question-and-answer session was held at the end to ensure clarity. Many of the partners provided positive feedback and asked the Hampton VAMC OCC to hold the event annually.

“We are committed to providing our eligible veterans the right care, at the right time, with the right provider,” said Ronald Johnson, Hampton VAMC Director. “We are also committed to continuing to strengthen our relationships with our community partners who are able to provide services we may not have, or additional appointment options when they are needed. When it comes to Veteran care we both need and appreciate the support of our community.”

**TOP PHOTO:** In an effort to strengthen community relationships, the Hampton VA Medical Center held a Community Partnership Summit in Bldg. 83 April 19. Dr. Karin Soobert, Chief of the Hampton Office of Community Care and Carla Garcia, Hampton VAMC Business Manager for the Office of Community Care welcomed community partners and introduced Ron Johnson, Hampton VAMC Director (right). (Photo by Eddie Hughes, Program Support Assistant)



In an effort to strengthen community relationships, the Hampton VA Medical Center held a Community Partnership Summit in Bldg. 83 April 19. (Photo by Eddie Hughes, Program Support Assistant).

REACH OUT HOLD ON

Did you know that with an **iPhone** you can simply say, **“Siri, call the Veterans Crisis Line,”** and it will do so automatically, even if you do not have the number already saved in your contacts (1-800-273-8255)?

Remind our patients help is always available.

May Patient Safety Tip of the Month

## Smart Phones and Suicide Prevention

# 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 Ct., 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 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

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 Elstree Lane  
Raleigh, NC 27617  
919-856-4616

### Roanoke Vet Center

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

### Virginia Beach Vet Center

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

## VISN 6 Newsletter

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

Questions or comments about the newsletter, email [stephen.wilkins2@va.gov](mailto:stephen.wilkins2@va.gov) or call 919-956-5541

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