

VOICES OF VISN 6

— Excellent Care — Earned by Veterans — Delivered Here —



NATIONAL DISABLED VETERANS *Winter Sports Clinic*

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FEATURE COVER STORY

Navy Veteran Brenda Trussler enjoys the view, accompanied by volunteer staff while snowshoeing up Snowmass Mountain during the National Disabled Veterans Winter Sports Clinic (NDVWSC). Several Veterans from facilities in VISN 6 participated in the Winter Sports Clinic March 31- April 5. The NDVWSC promotes sports therapy and rehabilitation through adaptive Alpine and Nordic skiing, rock climbing, sled hockey and other adaptive physical activities and sports. It is hosted by the Grand Junction Veterans Healthcare System as part of VA's Rocky Mountain Network. The NDVWSC is sponsored by VA and DAV (Disabled American Veterans). For more information go to: <https://www.wintersportsclinic.org/>

TOP-PHOTO: Navy Veteran Brenda Trussler enjoying the view while snowshoeing up Snowmass Mountain.



Message from the Network Director

In staying aligned with the priorities established by Secretary Wilkie, the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) is embarking on the journey of becoming a High Reliability Organization (HRO). The Executive in Charge of the VHA, Dr. Stone, has voiced how critical this journey will be to ensure the Secretary's priorities are accomplished. Becoming a High Reliability Organization means striving to avoid harm to customers and staff by becoming proficient in Leadership Commitment, Safety Culture, and Continuous Process Improvement. While we embrace this journey, it is important for us to remember that zero harm in healthcare refers to the goal that no patient will experience harm caused by avoidable human or system error. Despite operating in highly complex, high-risk environments, the

organization will experience fewer than anticipated accidents or events of harm.

The Veterans Health Administration prides itself on being able to consistently provide our Veterans with high-quality healthcare; and now, as we embrace this journey, we will begin a cultural transformation across the entire organization! In an effort to ensure our success as a VISN, I feel it is important to remind each of you, your voice matters and our team is committed to this journey. Additionally, there are five principles that are imperative for you to know as we take this journey together: 1) Sensitivity to Operations – *Focus on front-line staff and care processes* 2) Preoccupation with Failure – *Anticipate risk-Every staff member a problem solver* 3) Reluctance to Simplify – *Get to the root causes* 4) Commitment to Resilience – *Bounce back from mistakes* 5) Deference to Expertise – *Empower and value expertise*

and diversity.

As one of the fastest growing networks within the country, I am proud to share with you that the Durham VA Health Care System was selected as the HRO pilot site for VISN 6. They will undergo an on-site assessment and multiple training sessions, prior to full implementation. As they move forward, there will be opportunities for us to share lessons learned and tips to success, within the network and across the country.

Most importantly, with VISN 6 striving towards high reliability, we can dramatically improve the way we deliver care to our Veterans. They will ultimately be safer and have more reason to trust us and the care provided by the VA.

– DeAnne M Seekins
Network Director

Eastern North Carolina Veterans selected for VA's New suicide prevention initiative, Together with Veterans

By Joshua D. Edson | DURHAM VA HCS PUBLIC AFFAIRS

North Carolina's total suicide rates per 100,000 are 17.1 percent with Veteran suicide rates at 25.2 percent. To reach Veterans in crisis, the Department of Veteran Affairs has a new intervention program to identify those who are at risk of suicide and get them the help they need and deserve.

"Together with Veterans" (TWW) is a community partnership with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs' Rocky Mountain Mental Illness Research and Clinical Center (MIRECC), the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education Behavioral Health Program (WICHE BHP) in partnership with local organizations run by or serving Veterans. With focus on Veterans living in rural locations, the program is up and running in three states: Colorado, Montana and now eastern North Carolina.

The coalition is charged with guiding the community through identifying Veterans and other key partners; learning about suicide prevention and specific community strengths and needs; and developing and carrying out an effective local Veteran suicide prevention action plan.

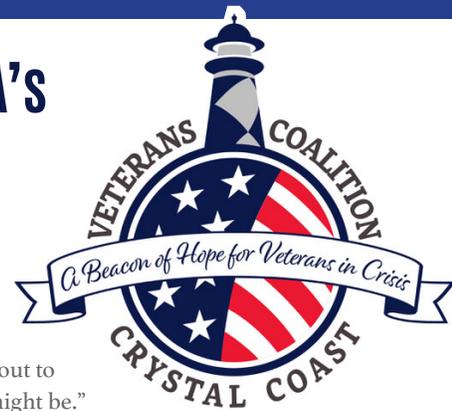
Laura McCarthy, a social worker and Suicide Prevention Coordinator at the Morehead City Community Based Outpatient Clinic (CBOC) says targeting Veterans not enrolled in VA care is key. "The emphasis of our work is to get Veterans who are not receiving VA care

into the VA system. We found that most Veterans that commit suicide were not enrolled in VA care. So, we do our best to reach out to Veterans at risk, wherever they might be."

When an at-risk Veteran is identified, TWC coordinators work with the Veteran and their families to help them navigate the VA system of care. This can be as simple as assisting the Veteran with transportation to their appointments to encouraging Veterans to become more involved in the healing and therapeutic process.

For Marc Brown, a Veteran receiving care through the Durham VA Health Care System, his experiences with the program is an indicator that the TWC program is on the right track. An Army Veteran with tour in Iraq under his belt, Marc had trouble reintegrating after his honorable discharge six years ago.

"I can't say I was at rock bottom," says Marc. "But I was certainly heading there. There were days where I found myself asking what the point (of life) was. I'm not sure what I would have done had I not had the courage to reach out. I wouldn't be here today if it weren't for the good folks at the Durham VA Health Care System who took the time to listen and kept me believing in myself."





Hampton Utilizes Cutting Edge Technology: *Meet Da Vinci*

By John Rogers | HAMPTON VAMC PUBLIC AFFAIRS

The Hampton VA Medical Center Robotics program was officially approved in September 2018. With delivery of the Intuitive DaVinci Xi platform on December 27, 2018, Hampton VAMC planners went into overdrive to get the clinical program going.

Led by Dr. Sridevi Maddineni, and with the extensive help of nursing, biomedical engineering, logistics, contracting, leadership, and many others, the first operational procedures were scheduled for March 4th and 5th.

After extensive training, including two off-campus hands-on training sessions in Raleigh, N.C. and Atlanta, Ga., Dr. Maddineni carefully selected four patient candidates for robotic surgery. With two experienced surgeon proctors present to monitor the procedures, three veterans with hernias underwent successful robotic surgery on March 4 and another case involving partial colectomy on March 5. The robotic platform worked flawlessly, and all patients are doing very well.

The two proctors were very complimentary of nursing staff expertise as well as Dr. Maddineni's skill level for these first procedures.

The DaVinci robotic platform represents the most advanced technology for the operating room today. The procedures are laparoscopic, but the operating surgeon is controlling up to 4 arms from a seated 3-D console. The console and robot arms allow for 360 degrees of rotational movement at the tips of the instruments, allowing the operating surgeon to perform surgery by actually rotating hands and moving fingers in a completely natural series of motions that are conveyed to the machine.

The Hampton robotics program is currently expanding in general surgery, with plans to transition all abdominal cavity cases to this approach within a year. Ultimately, four surgeons will be trained.

The next step will be program development in Urology, where at this time, outside the VA, virtually many prostate resections and kidney removal procedures are done robotically.

Hampton VA Surgical Service invites all interested employees to see the console and observe actual cases, as space and time permit.



(TOP-PHOTOS) LEFT-PHOTO: Dr. Sridevi Maddineni is assisted by a daVinci proctor during robotic surgery. RIGHT-PHOTO: Dr. Wiebke & PA Elliot assist with Hampton's first robotic surgery

Meet the Gills, couple renews vows at VA on Valentine's Day



By Keith Gottschalk | RICHMOND VAMC PUBLIC AFFAIRS

Eleven years can pass slowly or in the blink of an eye, in a marriage. Or it can pass in such bliss, time doesn't seem to be a factor at all.

Matthew and April Gill are married Veterans who pay little attention to time except to recall the day they renewed their wedding vows at Richmond's McGuire VA Medical Center was the day of their first date 11 years ago – Valentine's Day 2008 at VA's National Creative Arts Festival in Washington DC.

April, a singer, writer, musical composer, artist and comedian won several gold medals at the competition. Matthew brought his gifted singing voice and won too.

Although it may sound a bit like a fairy tale, the Gills' relationship started at a VA, was nurtured at a VA and now, during McGuire's Valentine's Day vow renewal ceremony, with three other couples, re-committed again at the VA.

One more thing: the Gills were married six years ago at the VA chapel in Washington DC, near where they reside.

"The VA is the reason we met, and it cemented our relationship," said Matthew. "We used the relationship techniques taught at the VA to help each other through some traumatic experiences."

The vow renewal ceremony in the McGuire VA Chapel was the brainchild of Voluntary Service Chief Kristy Coie-Day,

who brought the idea with her from a former position at VA Pittsburgh.

"This is part of recognizing the sacrifices of Veterans and their spouses," said Coie-Day. "We bring them back together to show our support through their union."

Three other Veteran couples took part in the ceremony which featured a rose petal covered aisle, music, wedding bouquets and a reception with wedding cakes and candlelight.

The Gills didn't need all the glitter, but April said the whole presentation "gave me butterflies all over again." While she was waiting in the hallway, Matthew came from behind his bride with his first surprise – a bouquet of roses. A second surprise revealed during their ceremony had Matthew breaking into an acapella verse from K-Ci & JoJo's hit song 'All my Life'.

The Gills are one of the couples that seem to be on the same thought wave all the time. They often complete each other's sentences.

"To say we're in love is an understatement," said April.

As for the traumatic experiences Matthew mentioned, there have been many. Both the Gills deal with PTSD and depression and April is working through military sexual trauma. April served in the Army as an ammunition weapons specialist from 1981-89 and Matthew was a Lieutenant in the Navy

where he served as a surface warfare officer from 1985-1991.

But their biggest challenge occurred last fall, when Matthew was struck by a car in his wheelchair, throwing him several feet across the street. After being stabilized, Matthew was taken to McGuire's spinal cord unit. Since December 7, April has been here as well, living in the Fisher House on campus. "When he was injured that day, it changed everything for us but our love for each other," said April.

The offer to renew their vows was an unexpected happy surprise – "an opportunity to say I love you again," said April. The couple hopes that if the ceremony is offered in VA hospitals across the nation, that others will jump at the chance.

"I think it will give people, especially if they have a spouse that's fading, an opportunity to say, 'I love you' one more time," said April.

To Matthew, the ceremony carries out a vital mission that VA fulfills for its Veterans.

"What the Richmond VA did for us was what VAs across the country should do," said Matthew. "look for ways to enrich a Veteran's life."

TOP-PHOTO: Matthew and April Gill at their vow renewal ceremony and reception, Feb. 14 at the Richmond VA Medical Center.

DURHAM VA MEDICAL CENTER AND SANFORD HEALTH

Announce Free Pharmacogenetic Testing For Veterans

DURHAM - The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and Sanford Health have announced free pharmacogenetic testing for Veterans to explore how genetics affect a patient's response to medications in a press conference at the Durham VA Medical Center March 15.

The initiative is aimed at improving patient care and lowering costs related to adverse reactions to medications. The new program's pilot site will originate at the Durham VA Health Care System where it will initially reach 1,000 Veterans. Testing will eventually expand to 250,000 U.S. Veterans at 125 sites by the year 2020.

"Ultimately we can use what we will learn with this research to best treat all Veterans, 9.5 million of them, who receive their care from VA," VA Secretary Robert Wilkie said, during a press conference in Washington, D.C.

Speakers during the announcement in Durham included Deepak Voora, M.D., Director of the Veterans Administration PHASeR Program and Associate Professor, Department of Medicine, Center for Applied Genomics & Precision Medicine at Duke University School of Medicine, and Allison Suttle, M.D., Sanford Health Chief Medical Officer.

"Using this information, doctors can prescribe the right medication the first time and then get them on their way to recovery, after all, this is what our Veterans deserve," Sanford Health CEO Kelby Krabbenhoft said.

The pharmacogenetic testing that we are going to be using as a result of a \$25 million gift from T. Denny Sanford and a matching fundraising effort from Sanford Health, is critical for our VA physicians in prescribing the proper medications and an optimized dosage based on the patient's genetics, Wilkie said.



Durham VAHCS Director Paul Crews spoke with local media during a press conference March 15 at the medical center, announcing free pharmacogenetic testing for Veterans to explore how genetics affect a patient's response to medications. The initiative, through a partnership between VA and Sanford Health, Inc., is aimed at improving patient care and lowering costs related to adverse reactions to medications. Behind Crews, Deepak Voora, M.D., Director of VA's PHASeR Program and Duke University School of Medicine Associate Professor, Department of Medicine, Center for Applied Genomics & Precision Medicine converses with Sanford Health Chief Medical Officer Allison Suttle, M.D.

Legendary Boxer Visits Fayetteville VA

Fayetteville VA Community Living Center residents received a surprise visitor March 20, former pro boxer James "Lights Out" Toney.

During a career that spanned more than three decades and 90-plus fights, Toney held titles in three different weight classes, IBF (International Boxing Federation) middleweight, super middleweight and cruiserweight divisions. He also fought twice for the world heavyweight title.

Visiting Fayetteville for an event at Fort Bragg, the boxer asked the event promoter to arrange for him to visit some hospitalized Veterans. Veterans and staff enjoyed the opportunity to meet and shake hands with the former title contender. Fayetteville VA recreation therapist Andrea Jones said Toney commented that he enjoyed his visit and would love to visit the Veterans again.



Unlike his business-like, no nonsense ring persona, the former world champion was very gracious and accommodating during his visit, posing for pictures and chatting with CLC residents. (Photos by Brad Garner)

Fayetteville Caregiver Support Program Gets a Boost

By Jeff Melvin | FAYETTEVILLE NC VA HCS PUBLIC AFFAIRS

Fayetteville VA Medical Center is one of three VA facilities partnering with Operation Family Caregiver, a program administered by the Americus, Ga.-based Rosalynn Carter Institute for Caregiving. OFC is also serving military families at VA facilities in Tucson, Arizona, and Central Texas.

Operation Family Caregiver (OFC) provides support to the families of returning service members and Veterans. Specially-trained coaches teach military families the skills they need to overcome challenges and cope more effectively with problems.

"We are thrilled to have been chosen as one of the pilot sites in the U.S. to have a Caregiver Coach through Operation Family Caregiver," said Fayetteville VA Medical Center Caregiver Support Program Coordinator Tiffany Puckett. "We are excited to have this excellent resource established locally for our medical center to utilize."

FVAMC's OFC designated Caregiver Coach is Mrs. Jessica Maples. Mrs. Maples is a Veteran who served in the Army for 5 1/2 years. She comes from a long line of family members who served in the military, including both her parents and husband. Prior to working with Operation Family Caregiver, Mrs. Maples worked with an organization that sought to identify homeless Veterans and provided them with housing and other community services. The years of experience Mrs. Maples spent assisting her husband with his

challenges from serving in the military gave her a keen insight into the types of struggles that Veterans and their caregivers face.

Maples has started providing services to Caregivers of disabled Veterans referred by VA Caregiver Support Coordinators registered at Fayetteville VAMC. These evidenced-based practices may include helping Caregivers with problem solving, stress management and coping with their "new normal" following the Veterans civilian life transition. Maples works remotely and interacts with the caregivers by phone, face-to-face in the community (where the Caregiver chooses) or by video-conference (i.e. Skype).

"We know that family caregivers are critical members of a Veteran's treatment team, and OFC is doing a fantastic job providing them with all the tools they need to care for their Veteran and also for themselves," said VA National Director of the Caregiver Support Program Meg Kabat. "It is in all of our interests to make the program an integral part of a Veteran's healthcare."

Puckett shared similar sentiments. "VA values the sacrifices Caregivers make to help Veterans remain at home," she said. "Caregivers are partners in the care of Veterans and VA is dedicated to providing them with the support and services they need. We can't thank Caregivers enough for the vital role they play in helping Veterans recover from injury and illness".



Fayetteville VA has 574 enrolled Caregivers including 367 general and 207 comprehensive/paid Caregivers.

Interested Veterans and their caregivers can find more details and secure an application at www.caregiver.va.gov. To reach a FVAMC Caregiver Support Coordinator, please dial the local office at (910) 488-2120 ext. 7558.

For additional information about the Rosalynn Carter Institute for Caregiving, visit www.rosalynncarter.org. For more information about Operation Family Caregiver, visit www.operationfamilycaregiver.org.

VA offers \$15 million in grant funding to support adaptive sports for disabled Veterans

Online applications for community organizations now open

WASHINGTON — Today, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced the availability of up to approximately \$15 million in grants for community organizations that provide adaptive sports, including therapeutic recreational opportunities for disabled Veterans and disabled members of the armed forces.

VA awards grants to qualifying organizations to plan, develop, manage and implement programs serving Veterans.

"Grants help our nation's Veterans by increasing and expanding the quantity and quality of adaptive sports opportunities at community organizations across the country," said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie. "The independence, challenge and enjoyment of sports and recreation play a critical role in their successful rehabilitation and can improve their health and well-being."

VA will make award decisions this fall based on a competitive selection. In fiscal year 2019, VA awarded approximately \$9 million in Adaptive Sports Program grants to 103 organizations, estimated to serve more than 10,000 Veterans throughout all 50 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico.

Details of the Notice of Funding Availability, including how to apply, can be viewed under the "Grant Program" tab online at [VA Adaptive Sports Grant Program](http://VA.AdaptiveSportsGrantProgram). All submissions will be accepted online at www.grants.gov. The deadline for applications to be submitted is May 14.

Follow VA Adaptive Sports on Instagram, Twitter or Facebook at [@Sports4Vets](https://www.instagram.com/Sports4Vets).



LEFT-PHOTO: Dr. Keisha Smith, Dr. Candace DeCaires-McCarthy, Dr. Elizabeth Howarth, Dr. John Hall and Dr. Nancy Furst stand in front of the poster presentation they shared with participants March 7-9 at the Southern Trans Health & Wellness Conference in Winston-Salem, N.C. **RIGHT-PHOTO:** Nancy Furst from the Charlotte Health Care Center presented a seminar about Couples Therapy at the Southern Trans Health & Wellness Conference in Winston-Salem, N.C.

VISN 6 Gender Support Leads Present at Conference

By John W. Hall, LGBT Veteran Care & Transgender Support Team

SALISBURY VA HCS, CHARLOTTE COMMUNITY BASED OUTREACH CLINIC

VHA and its excellent care for transgender Veterans were well-represented at this year's Southern Trans Health & Wellness Conference March 7-9 in Winston-Salem, N.C.

Bringing together international experts in transgender care, the conference welcomed hundreds of attendees for three days of keynote presentations and workshops about the latest in providing care to transgender individuals.

The LGBT Veteran Care Coordinators from the Salisbury, Hampton, and Fayetteville VA medical centers (John Hall, PhD, Tiffany Lange-Altman, PsyD, and Lori K. Hall, PsyD,

respectively) offered a poster presentation on "Starting Transgender Services: Examples from Three Veterans Administration Hospitals."

Additionally, six staff members from the Salisbury VA Healthcare System offered well-received presentations. Stephan Muff, MD offered one of the first workshops of the conference, covering basics needed to provide competent care to transgender individuals. Candace DeCaires-McCarthy, PsyD, Elizabeth Howarth, PhD, and Keisha Smith, PsyD, joined to offer an in-depth look at providing group therapy to this population, based

on their experiences starting transgender Veteran groups in Salisbury and Kernersville. Nancy Furst, PsyD, offered a look at working therapeutically with transgender individuals and their spouses. Finally, John W. Hall, PhD, offered a workshop on the unique challenges and strengths brought by transgender individuals who were also Veterans.

As the medical community recognizes the health disparities faced by transgender individuals and particularly transgender Veterans, the VHA will continue to offer the most up to date care and research to help them live their healthiest lives.



Students from Kaohsiung Medical University visited the Richmond VA Medical Center in March in partnership with Virginia Commonwealth University. Approximately 35 students who are part of healthcare administration courses in Taiwan learned more about American medicine and medical practices. This year marks the seventh year the group has visited Richmond VA. **Photo by Jason Miller, medical media**

“A Coke and a smile,” “Come Alive!” and “Wouldn’t you like to be a Pepper, too?” were slogans for soft drink products, created by pharmacists. That’s right, Coke, Pepsi and Dr. Pepper were created by pharmacists.

Even though we know now that soft drinks aren’t good for everyone, the producers wanted to make people feel good consuming their product and wanted patrons to believe their products were good for them. In fact, Pepsi even suggested, “Pepsi’s Got Your Taste for Life!” But, slogans and soft drinks aside, would you ever really trust a pharmacist to offer comprehensive health care, to actually see patients?

It is happening in VA. Pharmacists (Doctors of Pharmacy with approved scopes of practice) work as clinical pharmacy specialists (CPSs), advanced practice providers serving as core collegial members of the typical Patient-Aligned Care team (PACT). Beyond dispensing medications and warning people about pharmacological side effects, in VA, CPSs are treating patients.

Of course, in the operations pharmacy, where veterans pick up their medications, pharmacists review and verify orders; evaluating for drug-drug interactions, allergies, appropriateness of dosage and duration, etc. They also provide patient education and counseling.

But then, VA uses clinical pharmacy

“I absolutely love the opportunity to support our staff and improve the health of our veterans as they work to manage chronic diseases,”

— *chimed pharmacist Angela Porter*

Angela Porter currently Associate Chief for Pharmacy and Clinical Services at Charles George VA Medical Center in Asheville, N.C.

She can do that because she has been trained, as other modern-day doctoral pharmacists in a curriculum (about 4 years undergraduate + 4 years doctorate + 1-2 years residency + a possible 1-3 years fellowship = 8-13 years of academic and practical training, before testing for licensure) that has prepared her to engage patients and offer advanced-level care. All pharmacists are now required to complete their education at the doctoral level, although not everyone is allowed by their employers to exercise the advanced level of practice.

VA encourages further training, with an additional year of post graduate (PGY-1) clinical training after graduation and licensure. Less than five percent of VA’s CPS are estimated to lack the enhanced training. Some

in its use of clinical pharmacist specialists (CPS). He says that CPSs perform their drug management functions via what is known as a scope of practice, defined by the Chief of Pharmacy and approved by the medical staff.

Completing the scope process at their medical center, they are credentialed and presented to the facility professional standards board (Generally comprised of physicians). Once the CPS has a scope of practice, which includes the ability to order labs, imaging and initiate/change/ discontinued medications as appropriate they undergo a scope renewal every two years and a clinical care review every six months. Porter maintains the staff and Veterans at Asheville have solid confidence in CPS performance.

To help drive the point home, Porter emphasized, “who better for chronic medication management, than a pharmacist with specialized focus in clinical care?”

On a recent morning that Navy Veteran Michael Parker saw Pharmacist Angela Pentecost in the Charles George VAMC anticoagulation clinic, he declared, “My pharmacist is awful nice. She treats me well.”

Having pharmacists join with nurse practitioners and physician assistants means more qualified individuals can work with patients whose conditions are less critical. It defrays the cost of health care by enabling medical doctors to concentrate on cases for which they are uniquely qualified.

So, with prudence VA can staff more clinics and will find itself with less provider shortages. Porter adds, “They improve the overall health of our veterans with management of chronic disease states (asthma, COPD, diabetes, gout, hypertension, thyroid disease, HF, vitamin deficiencies, etc) and medication monitoring. They can prescribe and titrate medications as needed and as appropriate, autonomously order medications, lab tests, consults and perform physical assessment.”

Consultation with a primary care or specialty provider is conducted for advanced patient care management if outside of the pharmacists’ scope when the patient is acute, requires diagnosis or is deteriorating.

Coombs stressed, “Team collaboration is paramount for positive outcomes for our Veterans, and we have wonderful teams to work with, who truly put the veterans first.” Navy Veteran Parker summed up his care, saying, “I am very thankful for the VA. I would not have any health care if it wasn’t for the VA. The nurses and docs are top-notch.”



During a recent visit in the anticoagulation clinic at Charles George VA Medical Center, Pharmacist Angela Pentecost sits with Navy Veteran Michael Parker and reviews his bloodwork.

specialists or pharmacy providers, embedded in primary and specialty clinics, with appointment slots for veterans. In a PACT the Primary Care Provider (PCP) determines if the veteran would benefit from a pharmacist provider follow-up, instead. This type of appointment can increase access to PCPs.

have completed a second year (PGY-2) clinical training in a more focused sub-specialty (cardiology, mental health, infectious disease, oncology, etc).

According to VISN 6 Chief of Pharmacy Steve Coombs, [VA] is very progressive

Celebrity Chef Cooks Up Something Tasty For Veterans And Staff At Salem

By Brett Robbins | SALEM VAMC PUBLIC AFFAIRS

Hell's Kitchen season 14 front runner and season 18 celebrity chef Torrece Gregoire – better known as Chef T, heated things up at Salem VA Medical Center on March 13 in support of National Nutrition Month and Registered Dietician Day. Chef T prepared a hearty cauliflower chowder paired with a hot turkey and cheese melt sandwich for Veterans and staff that stopped by her cooking demonstration.

“I enjoyed showing Veterans and Salem VA Medical Center staff how to prepare a healthy meal that is quick and easy and doesn't use a lot of ingredients,” said Chef T.

“We were excited to have Chef T come to the Salem VA Medical center to show Veterans, staff and visitors first hand that healthy cooking can be very tasty,” said Alex Abel, Salem VA Medical Center's Chief of Nutrition and Food Service. “The cooking demonstration is part of our National Nutrition Month and National Registered Dietitian/Nutritionist Day celebration, where we take the time to highlight the importance of healthy nutrition and our valuable team of dietitians.”

Chef T is scheduled to return to Salem VAMC for the annual VA2K on May 15, to fire up the charcoal grill and prepare something tasty for participants and Veterans attending the event.

Chef T plans to perform a Canteen Take Over event where she will bring a taste of Hell's Kitchen to Salem VA Medical Center's Canteen Chefs.

Chef T explains to a crowd of Veterans and staff at Salem VA Medical Center that cooking healthy doesn't have to be difficult, you can make cooking healthy fun.



North Carolina's Congressional Delegation Trains To Prevent Suicide



20 Staff members from eight North Carolina congressional offices gathered in Greensboro, N.C. for a Suicide prevention training session. The event was organized by Jerome Malloy, Constituent Liaison for U.S. Rep. Mark Walker. “We were concerned that two hours was going to be too long, but it looks like we could have used a few more minutes,” Malloy related about the training, which he felt was very successful. Concentrating on motivations, identifying signs and engaging individuals who appear to be ready to harm themselves, or have voiced the potential for harm to themselves or others were elements of the training session presented by Tiffany Hall, a social worker at the Salisbury VA Health Care System. Malloy added that, “This was the first such event but, it doesn't have to be the last.” Similar training can be provided for groups through the Suicide Prevention Coordinator at your local VA medical center. Should you encounter someone who appears to be in crisis, please refer them to the

Crisis Line – 800-273-8255, and press 1 if they are a Veteran.

Women Veterans Welcome

By Marlous Black | SALISBURY VA HCS PUBLIC AFFAIRS

“Veterans and non-veterans are typically surprised when they learn of all the services we provide for Women Veterans in the Salisbury VA healthcare system,” said Penny Greer-Link, the Women Veteran Program Manager for the past 13 years. “and a lot of women don’t know what benefits they’re eligible to receive.”

March is Women’s History Month. February is Women’s Heart Health Month. October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month and May is Women’s Health Month, but every day is women Veterans day in the Salisbury VA. The Women’s Health program includes primary care and gender specific care through designated women’s health providers, 3D mammography, gynecological services, bone density testing, and referral for maternity care.

Salisbury VA has 21 Women’s Health providers and 45 Women’s Health liaisons, and Greer-Link explains, “Women Veterans should come to the Salisbury VA system because we provide great service. From notification, to screening and testing, to coordination with other services in the VA, we strive to provide the best care for Women Veterans.”

“The VA has long been known as a ‘men’s hospital’, but we want women to know it’s not. Salisbury has worked to change that, and I’ve seen that change,” Greer-Link con-

tinued. From adding family-friendly waiting rooms, to making training for women’s health staff more comprehensive, Salisbury VA’s Women’s Health continues to pursue excellence and comfort for women Veterans. Last year, Salisbury VA treated almost 9,000 women Veterans, and that number is projected to continue growing.

Even the Emergency Department staff are going to receive additional training. “Salisbury VA has received a mini-residency grant to train emergency department teams in women-specific care this May,” according to Greer-Link. “We are thrilled to host the training not only for our staff, but for staff from several other VA Medical Centers in our region.”

Ensuring women Veterans receive exemplary healthcare is paramount to Medical Center Director Joseph Vaughn as well. “I want our women Veterans to know that Salisbury VA is committed to providing the best possible care for their specific needs. Our oath to serve encompasses them, and we will do everything in our power to provide the care they have earned and deserve.”

For further information about VA services visit www.explore.va.gov or like us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/VASalisbury.



BULL CITY
RUN WALK ROLL 5K

SERVING AMERICA'S VETERANS

Fifth Annual VA BULL CITY RUN, WALK, ROLL

5K *Saturday*
May 4, 2019

Starts/Ends at the Durham VA Medical Center
508 Fulton Street, Durham, NC

The Durham Veterans Affairs Health Care System, in partnership with the American Legion Auxiliary Unit 175 and the Knights of Columbus Assembly #3552 Saint Francis of Assisi, is proud to announce the fifth annual VA Bull City Run, Walk & Roll 5K! The event will be held on Saturday, May 4th, 2019 at 8:00 am. We are inviting all communities to celebrate Veterans, their families, and loved ones through a healthy, fun-filled and family-friendly event. The event will begin and end at the Durham VA Health Care System located at 508 Fulton Street in Durham, NC. The route will be accessible for participants to run, walk, or roll. The course will take participants through the beautiful Watts Hospital-Hillandale area near the VA campus and will be open to participants of all skill levels. Throughout the course there will be race support personnel to assist with any equipment or grade challenges. Make plans to join us. Contact Kendra Monden at 919-286-0411 extension 17-6591 for more information and to register for the event.

Sponsored by:



From left to right: Dr. Lorraine Gauthier (Salisbury VA Women’s Health Medical Director), Penny Greer-Link (Salisbury VA Women Veterans Program Manager), and Sophia Hill-Smith (Salisbury VA Women’s Health RN Care Coordinator) pose for a photo in front of a wall depicting women Veterans at Salisbury VA.



From left, Occupational Therapist Kate Ponce, Chief Nurse Vernadine Hampton, Certified Nurse Assistant Saretha Cannon and Nurse Manager Jacquelyn Claude of the Hampton VA Community Living Center.

Hampton Nurse Covers Veteran for Comfort, Security

By Keith Gottschalk | HAMPTON VAMC PUBLIC AFFAIRS

For five years, staff at the Hampton VA Medical Center's Community Living Center (CLC) worked with a Vietnam-era Veteran suffering from PTSD, anxiety and dementia. Working with dementia patients can often present challenges, but in the last three months, the situation with this 68-year-old Veteran had changed – noticeably.

“He became restless, agitated, yelling out and physically aggressive,” said nursing assistant Saretha Cannon. “He would wake up and wander the halls during the night, then sleep during the day.”

A medication adjustment did not work. Changing his activity plan didn't seem to help much either. His wife wrote him love letters,

showing she still cared about him. But nothing seemed to help.

But then Cannon remembered a previous experience with a similar patient – maybe it would help this Veteran.

Wearing a weighted vest helped her previous patient with his anxiety and agitation. Weighted blankets are also available, and both have been used for people with nervous conditions, autism and other disorders.

The idea behind weighted blankets and vests is that they provide deep-pressure touch, which stimulates the release of serotonin and dopamine -- two neurotransmitters that tend to relax people. Many people with sensory-processing disorders are hypersensitive to

touch, and deep pressure can help desensitize and calm them.

The blankets and vests are generally made with pouches filled with either plastic or heavier metal weights, which are then sewn together. The weight of the vest can be adjusted so the wearer can find the right amount of pressure.

Occupational therapist Kate Ponce ordered the vest, and the staff gradually introduced it to the Veteran. The change in his behavior was clear and convincing.

“He started participating in his exercises and his mobility, range of motion and agility improved,” said Ponce. “He was far less disruptive as well. The vest was part of a total team effort using other techniques and methods.”

Cannon said the Veteran preferred the vest over a weighted blanket, and with the patient's mobility, the vest was a better choice.

“The Veteran wanted to walk the hallways, and the vest provided both comfort and pressure while he was walking,” said Cannon.

As the hospital works to have the vests fully implemented, patients can test the vests to see if they are beneficial.

Nurse Manager Jacquelyn Claude applauded Cannon's idea and the way the nurse team handled it. “This is something new to our VA, so they really worked through it as a team,” Claude said. Soon, “we'll help the rest of the hospital determine standards for care and best practices.”



From left, Certified Nurse Assistant Saretha Cannon and Occupational Therapist Kate Ponce pose with an example of a weighted vest.

VISN 6 Sites Of Care & VA Vet Centers

MEDICAL CENTERS

Asheville VAMC

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

Durham VAMC

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

Fayetteville VAMC

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

Hampton VAMC

100 Emancipation Dr.
Hampton, VA 23667
757-722-9961 | 866-544-9961
www.hampton.va.gov

Richmond VAMC

1201 Broad Rock Blvd.
Richmond, VA 23249
804-675-5000 | 800-784-8381
www.richmond.va.gov

Salem VAMC

1970 Roanoke Blvd.
Salem, VA 24153
540-982-2463 | 888-982-2463
www.salem.va.gov

Salisbury VAMC

1601 Brenner Ave.
Salisbury, NC 28144
704-638-9000 | 800-469-8262
www.salisbury.va.gov

OUTPATIENT CLINICS

Albemarle CBOC

1845 W City Drive
Elizabeth City, NC 27909
252-331-2191

Brunswick County CBOC

18 Doctors Cl., Units 2 & 3
Supply, NC 28462 | 910-754-6141

Charlotte CBOC

8601 University East Drive
Charlotte, NC 28213
704-597-3500

Charlotte HCC

3506 W. Tyvola Rd.
Charlotte, NC 28208
704-329-1300

Charlottesville CBOC

590 Peter Jefferson Pkwy
Charlottesville, VA 22911
434-293-3890

Chesapeake CBOC

1987 S. Military Highway
Chesapeake, VA 23320
757-722-9961

Danville CBOC

705 Piney Forest Rd.
Danville, VA 24540
434-710-4210

Emporia CBOC

1746 East Atlantic Street
Emporia, VA 23847
434-348-1500

Fayetteville HCC

7300 So. Raeford Rd
Fayetteville NC 28304
910-488-2120 | 800-771-6106

Fayetteville Rehabilitation Clinic

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

Franklin CBOC

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

Fredericksburg CBOC

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

Fredericksburg at Southpoint CBOC

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

Goldsboro CBOC

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

Greenville HCC

401 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

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

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 Ellistree Lane
Raleigh, NC 27617
919-361-6419

Roanoke Vet Center

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

Virginia Beach Vet Center

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

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

VISN 6 EDITORIAL

DeAnne Seekins // VISN 6 Network Director
Linda Exner // Acting Deputy Network Director
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PRODUCTION TEAM

Fanning Communications
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