

# VOICES OF VISN 6

— Excellent Care — Earned by Veterans — Delivered Here —

## Wide-Awake Hand Surgery Experience at the

W.G. (BILL) HEFNER VA MEDICAL CENTER



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### COVER STORY | By Amanda Reilly | SALISBURY VA HEALTH CARE SYSTEM PUBLIC AFFAIRS

On Nov. 23rd, 2016, Dr. Jeffrey A. Baker, a hand and upper extremity specialist, introduced a relatively new technique called Wide-Awake Hand Surgery to the Salisbury VA Medical Center. Baker used this technique in his private practice for almost two years before starting at VA.

He was introduced to the technique during a presentation at a University of Florida Hand Fellows Meeting, given by Dr. Paul Gorman from Johnson City, Tenn. Baker

**TOP PHOTO:** Since 2016, Dr. Jeffrey A. Baker has been performing Wide-Awake Hand Surgery at the Salisbury VA Medical Center.

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## Message from the Network Director

A few weeks ago I celebrated my two-year anniversary as Network Director of VISN 6. These last two years have gone by fast and I am extremely proud of the team we have created, the work we have accomplished and the plans we are pursuing to ensure that Veterans in our region receive the best care possible. We have committed ourselves to a team approach, dedicated to fulfilling Secretary Wilkie’s priorities: Customer Service, Implementation of the MISSION Act, HER Modernization, and Business System Transformation, which includes human resources, fiscal

operations, acquisition, supply chain, homelessness, and suicide prevention. In the last two years we have made great strides in each of these areas, and as we continue to improve our healthcare delivery we have also begun the journey of becoming a high reliability organization (HRO). As such, we are dedicated to doing our best in a culture that strives to reduce error. The guiding principles of HROs center around safety, consistency, trust and shared values. These principles guide all of our operations, whether at a bedside, in a warehouse or cleaning equipment. No matter the size of a problem, we need to ask the hard

questions that enable us to reach the root cause of problems so that we can correct them, and so that we don’t see errors repeated. We must ask ourselves: What happened? Why did it happen? And what action could we do in the future to prevent it from happening again? Our goal is to move our healthcare system toward eliminating preventable errors, and improving the safety of our patients – which is the essence of building a High Reliability Network.

– **DeAnne M. Seekins**  
Network Director

## VHA Leader Visits Hampton VA

VA’s top health administrator, VHA Executive in Charge (EIC) Richard Stone, M.D. visited Hampton VAMC today. Director Seekins met the EIC with Hampton leadership to review operations and receive word on the latest developments at the facility. Accompanied by VHA Acting Deputy Chief of Staff Jon Jensen, the leadership group reviewed MISSION Act implementation, then discussed facility-specific issues related to Veterans

access to care, recruitment and expansion projects. During lunch the EIC received a briefing on Equine Therapy and concluded the day with a tour of the facility, stopping at the Hospice Unit, Women’s Health Clinic, Spinal Cord Injury Unit and Primary Care. Dr. Stone met staff and patients along the way. Photo by John Rogers.



Dr. Richard Stone, VHA Executive in Charge, on a recent visit with staff at the Hampton VAMC. (Photo: John Rogers)

## Wide-Awake Hand Surgery Experience at the W.G. (Bill) Hefner VA Medical Center

later visited Gorman to observe the procedures. After the experience, Baker began performing similar procedures in his office, then brought the technique to the VA.

Wide-Awake Hand Surgery was adapted from the WALANT (Wide-Awake Local Anesthesia No Tourniquet) technique of Canadian hand surgery pioneer Donald H. Lalonde, MD. The procedure does not require general anesthesia for the surgery. Patients can be fully clothed and receive local numbing medication to the affected area. Once it takes effect, the surgery is performed. After the procedure, patient is given post-op instructions and leaves the procedure room unassisted, to go about the rest of his or her day. They also may eat and drink prior to surgery.

Since 2016, the practice has been streamlined to allow about 12 patients to have minor hand surgery, such as carpal tunnel releases, trigger finger releases, ganglion excisions, mass excisions, De Quervaine releases, Dupuytren's releases, tennis elbow surgery and ulnar nerve releases at the wrist every Friday morning. Most of the procedures take between five and 15 minutes to perform under local anesthesia.

The surgery does not require antibiotics because it is a soft-tissue procedure, and patients do not have to hold any of their diabetic or other medications, except some blood thinners. No IVs or medications are needed prior to the procedure. The environment is very interpersonal, as surgeons and staff talk with the patient throughout the procedure. The use of narcotics is essentially eliminated because the patient is awake and realizes how quick and simple the procedure is.

Using this technique has greatly improved access to care for Veterans. Although the number is growing, few orthopedic surgeons in the private sector use the new technique. Dr. Baker said he believes that we are the first to do so at any VA, especially with this level of access and timeliness. Typical VA system OR procedures allow three to five of these cases in an entire day compared to the 12 Baker completes every Friday morning.

Baker says, "Over the last two years it has been exciting developing the Wide-Awake Hand Program at the Salisbury VA." He was able to perform surgery on 349 Veterans over the last year, with no complications, and Baker anticipates volume to increase. Orthopedic procedure volume in the main OR at the Salisbury VA shared by four surgeons was around 680. He says, "The Wide-Awake Hand Procedure room enables us to service another 349 patients each year, without utilizing the regular ORs."

In 2017, an article by the San Antonio Military Medical Center showed a 75-80% savings (around \$393,100) in the cost of surgery for 100 procedures ("Cost Savings and Patient Experiences of a Clinic-Based, Wide-Awake Hand Surgery Program at a Military Medical Center: A Critical Analysis of the First 100 Procedures," Rhee, Fischer, Rhee, McMillan, Johnson). For the almost 350 cases at the Salisbury VA, that would equate to around \$1.4 million in cost savings.

Veterans who have undergone Wide-Awake Hand Surgery at the Salisbury VA have expressed extreme satisfaction with the technique. Baker feels strongly that with determination and very little additional cost, the practice could be easily implemented at VA facilities nationwide, tremendously helping Veterans' access to care.

Patients undergoing Wide-Awake Hand Surgery receive local anesthesia and can remain fully clothed. Their surgeon can talk them through the whole procedure in real time.



## Central Virginia VA AT Team Wins Innovation Award

Story by David Hodge

RICHMOND VAMC PUBLIC AFFAIRS

The (McGuire) Central Virginia VA Health Care System Assistive Technology (AT) team received an innovation award during a national conference held in Washington, D.C., May 23.

As one of this year's top 40 finalists at the annual Igniting Innovation Conference, the AT team brought home the Dynamite Transformer Award for using existing technology in a transformative new way and broadening its applicability and use.

"The Igniting Innovation Transformer Award validates to our Assistive Technology team that the work they are doing every day at Central Virginia VA has a huge impact on our Veterans' daily lives," said Melissa Oliver, AT Program Coordinator.

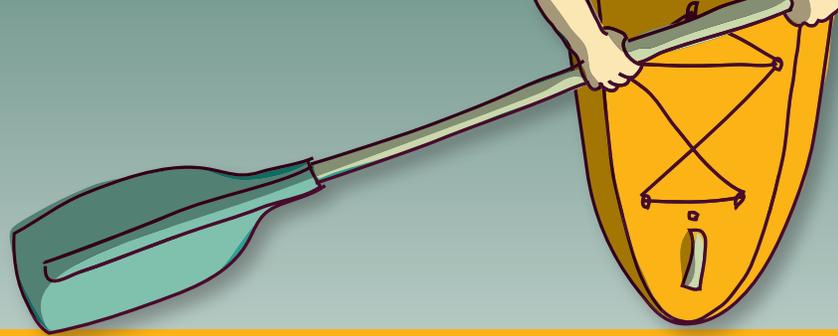
The award covers more than any single product the team created. Instead, the award recognizes the entire AT program and its services. Some interesting highlights of the AT program in its 10-year history at Central Virginia HCS include: the use of telerehabilitation for assistive technology to reach Veterans in 28 states in the U.S.; having clinical rehabilitation engineers as part of the AT team; and the use of 3D printing to develop customized Veteran solutions, medical modeling for presurgical planning and patient education.

There were 207 submissions to this year's conference. Of the top 40 finalists, 25 percent were from the health care industry.

Being a Dynamite Award recipient, the AT team is automatically invited to the [Imagine Nation ELC 2019 Conference](#). Both conferences are hosted by the American Council for Technology and Industry Advisory Council (ACT-IAC).

Brian Burkhardt (left), Clinical Rehab Engineer, and Melissa Oliver, Assistive Technology Program Coordinator, stand in front of their display at the 2019 Igniting Innovation Conference, May 23. Photo courtesy of Melissa Oliver

# Let's Go Kayaking!



By Salisbury VA Public Affairs with Terri Everett | KERNERSVILLE HCC BLIND REHABILITATION CLINIC

Terry Hunt, a totally blind Veteran receiving health care at the Kernersville VA Health Care Center (HCC), mentioned several years ago that he wished he could participate in water sports. It just so happened that around the same time Terri Everett, a Blind Rehabilitation Outpatient Specialist at the HCC, became a chapter coordinator for a national kayaking organization called Team River Runner. Team River Runner, dedicated to providing Veterans and their families opportunities to find health, healing, community purpose, and new challenges through adventure and adaptive paddle sports, is funded through grants from the Department of Veterans Affairs.

All Hunt needed to say was, "Let's get on the water!" and Everett was ready to go. Shortly after they connected, Hunt began regular kayaking with the Triad Chapter of Team River Runner and has been doing so for the past five years. On the water, he is guided by Ms. Everett or by other volunteers.

Guides use several methods to help blind people kayaking, including voice commands, music, and tethering, if necessary. Hunt purchased his own kayak last year. He also participated in the 2018 annual High Rock Lake Dragon Boat Race, where he placed first in one of the races he rowed in. He will compete in the Dragon Boat Race again this year as one of the lead rowers.

On July 4, Team River Runner and Mr. Hunt took kayaking to a new level for visually impaired and blind kayakers. They used a new, remote guiding system, developed and engineered by Team River Runner Chapter Coordinator, Jim Riley, in which the Veteran wears a vest with sensors and Everett uses a paddle with a switch, guiding him based on where he feels the sensors. The vibrating sensation of sensors on his sides, chest, and back let him know where he needs to concentrate effort. It was an incredible success! On that day they paddled four miles, in and out of coves, under bridges, in and around piers, and then back to the dock. The guiding system will also be featured at the VA Summer sports clinic in San Diego this September.

Reflecting on his experience, Hunt jubilantly declared, "This life vest, having pulsating areas at the right, left, front, and back, to let the visual impaired person know which way you want them to go, was awesome!"

He couldn't stop talking about it, adding, "This is incredible, because it gave me a sense of greater independence. I feel this life vest is a breakthrough for help in enjoying the kayak trip for the visual impaired person."

With a sense of both gratitude and patriotism, Hunt continued, "Thanks for doing this on July 4, Independence Day. How awesome to feel independent on this day! To sum up my thoughts, I think this not only shows Team River Runners' commitment to visual impaired persons, but also shows the Department of Veterans Affairs' willingness to help our visual impaired community in ways not just connected to health care. It is a great feeling to do things you never thought you would ever do again."

Hunt will continue his kayaking adventures with Team River Runner and beyond. He was recently chosen to attend the VA Summer Sports Clinic in September, where he will have the opportunity to kayak, sail, to ride a tandem bike, and other activities. Kudos to Mr. Hunt for the positive example he is setting for other disabled Veterans!

Pictured, Terri Everett (blue kayak in front) Blind Rehabilitation Outpatient Specialist at the Kernersville VA Health Care Center (HCC) with blind Veteran Terry Hunt (red vest in rear blue kayak) and his son (red kayak). Everett has worked in blind rehabilitation for 38 years, and participated in adaptive sports for disabled Veterans for most of that time. She is a certified level 2 ACA Kayak instructor with adaptive endorsement. Hunt has been kayaking for five years and loves every minute of it!





## VETERANS EXPERIENCE ACTION CENTER : How One Community Delivered for Veterans

By Brett Robbins and Steve Wilkins | VISN 6 AND SALEM VA PUBLIC AFFAIRS, VETERANS EXPERIENCE PUBLIC AFFAIRS

Despite the record heat on July 19 and 20 in Davenport, Iowa, more than 600 Veterans and their family members attended the Quad Cities Veterans Experience Action Center (VEAC) at [St. Ambrose University](#). The event brought together community service providers, Veteran service organizations, and other government partners to provide services, resources and information directly to Veterans and those currently serving.

After reading about the Quad Cities VEAC's success on day one, Paige, a U.S. Army Veteran, flew from Baltimore, Md., for the VEAC's second day. "I knew this event would be best opportunity for me to get some answers. I was told by the representative from the regional office I would have a decision within a week," said Paige. Another Veteran, from Orlando, Fla., heard about the VEAC in April and booked his flight and hotel room to attend. Army Veteran, Vincent, had been struggling for years to get the help he needed. "This event was just what is needed for Veterans. Today, I was able to get all of my issues resolved. I can now go back home and sleep peacefully," he said.

Planning the Quad Cities Veterans Experience Action Center began in May 2018. Organizers collaborated with the VA [Veterans Experience Office](#), the National Cemetery Administration, VBA regional offices, Iowa City VA Health Care System, the local Vet Center, two [Community Veteran Engagement Boards](#), the Rock Island Arsenal, UnityPoint Health Trinity, the United Way, St. Ambrose Universi-

ty and many more. They all came together to ensure Veterans have the resources, services, and information needed to get to "yes."

Community partners took on this challenging event knowing it would have a significant and lasting impact on the lives of Veterans in their community, which made the many months of planning worth it.

"I have desire to help the ones that served our Nation in uniform and knew there was a need in the Quad Cities area to bring together community partners and VA under one building to provide information and resources to Veterans," said Daniel Joiner, Director of Community Engagement at [UnityPoint Health Trinity](#) and Quad Cities VEAC organizer.

During the two-day event, the Des Moines, Iowa, and Chicago, Ill., Veterans Benefit Administration regional offices were on-site to assist Veterans wanting to file a disability compensation claim, check on a claim decision, check on the status of an existing claim, obtain representation from a Veteran Service Organization, receive counseling services through the mobile Vet Center and learn about many other community resources.

A similar event is scheduled for North Carolina in September. Cary American Legion Post 67 will host its third Veterans Experience Action Center (VEAC) event at the Herb Young Community Center in Cary, N.C. on September 12,13 and 14. There will be plenty of parking with space for handicap parking as well.

The event boasts about 30 VA Adminis-

trators and 15 state Veterans Service Officers (VSO's) to assist veterans with existing or new VA claims. Registration is day of the event, upon arrival. Veterans are advised to bring their Veteran friends, as well as documents that may be required to complete administration and adjudication of claims, including all necessary health records, DD-214 and other records that may be of use in submitting a new or upgrading an existing claim.

### Veterans Experience Action Center (VEAC)

Friday, September 13 -  
Sunday, September 15, 2019

The event begins at 9:00 a.m. Friday

Herb Young Community Center  
101 Wilkinson Ave | Cary, NC 27513

Contact: American Legion Post 67  
919-481-4811 or 919-270-2136



# When Veterans Should Use Urgent Care Centers vs. Emergency Departments

By Brett Robbins | SALEM VA PUBLIC AFFAIRS

Should a sore throat or a rash send a Veteran to the emergency department or an urgent care center? Sometimes it's difficult to be sure. So, VA wants to make it easy by providing a clear-cut description of where to go for the health care Veterans need.

Urgent care centers, whether at a VA Health Care System or one located in a community, provide easy access to quality health care when a Veteran does not have time to wait to see a regular primary care provider or their office is closed.

If a Veteran lives close to the VA Health Care System, choosing to visit an urgent care center may be best if the illness or injury is non-life-threatening. Their medical expertise and commitment to personalized attention ensures Veterans with urgent health needs receive the very best care.

“For life-threatening emergencies, such as stroke symptoms or head trauma, they require a visit to your closest emergency department,” Dr. Mark Todd, Chief of Emergency Medicine at Salem VA Medical Center located in Salem, Virginia, said. “A minor injury or illness that does not appear to be life threatening and cannot wait until the following day should be treated at an urgent care center.”

As part of implementing the VA MISSION Act of 2018, VA started offering urgent care services to provide Veterans with greater choice and access to timely, high-quality care. To find an urgent care center, visit VA Urgent Care Locator.

## When should a Veteran go to an urgent care center?

For acute symptoms such as, sinus infections, sore throats, rashes, low back pain, or urinary tract infections to treat those minor illnesses or injuries. Some other examples of non-emergent care include:

- Bee stings
- Earaches
- Eye infections/irritations
- Minor burns
- Minor cuts and lacerations
- Sports-related injuries
- Sprains

## When should a Veteran go to an emergency department?

An emergency condition is one that can permanently endanger a Veteran's life. Some examples of conditions that need emergency medical care can include:

- Heart attack symptoms (severe chest pain)
- Stroke symptoms
- Moderate to severe difficulty breathing
- Uncontrollable bleeding
- Sudden, severe pain
- Poisoning
- Head trauma
- Vomiting blood or coughing up blood
- Loss of consciousness

If a Veteran is experiencing a life-threatening injury, dial 911 immediately. Emergency department visits are necessary for true emergencies. If greater care is required, VA health care physicians will transfer Veterans directly to a hospital emergency room for further treatment.





Staff member Jennifer Rogers participates in one of the orientation exercises set up for visitors to Hampton VA's Davinci demonstration while a youth volunteer looks on.

## Hampton Unveils Newest Surgical Tech Device

Staff and Veterans passing through the Hampton VAMC main lobby were introduced to the facility's new Davinci robotic surgical device. Part of the introduction included games that oriented visitors to the capabilities of the equipment and allowed people to become more comfortable with the idea of robotic surgery. The \$2.7 million device enables trained surgeons to perform operations, including gallbladders, colon resections, stomach surgery, spleen removal, hernia repairs, anti-reflux surgery, and others, with fewer complications, less pain, and shorter hospitalizations. The device allows surgeons to navigate in spaces that have been difficult to negotiate while performing procedures using standard open or laparoscopic techniques. The opportunity was also used to sign Veterans up for hernia screening. The device was received in December 2018, and became operational in March 2019. To date, Hampton has performed more than 70 robotic operations. According to Dr. Wiebke, Chief of Surgery at Hampton, this device will increase precision, efficiency and productivity, enabling providers to serve more Veterans with greater quality. Hampton currently has three general surgeons — Drs. Maddineni, Chang and Castro — trained and privileged to use the robot.



Orientation exercise in progress on the Hampton VA's Davinci robotic surgical device.

# VA Nurse Practitioner Recognized with Prestigious AASLD Award

Article by Sydney Dudley | RICHMOND VA PUBLIC AFFAIRS

The Central Virginia VA Health Care System is proud to be the employer of choice for Zenaida Malpaya, a nurse practitioner who is part of the facility's hepatology program.

Through her hard work and dedication to serving Veterans, she received national recognition from the American Association for the Study of Liver Disease (AASLD) for earning the Nurse Practitioner/Physician Assistants Clinical Hepatology Fellowship Award.

The award is designed to increase participation in clinical hepatology, facilitate the transition for new workers into the field, and increase patient access to providers with liver disease training.

One of only four people to receive this award in 2019, Malpaya attributes her success to Drs. Puneet Puri, Michael Fuchs, and Hochong Gilles, hepatologists who taught her about collaboration and fellowship. During this fellowship, which began July 1, Malpaya hopes to gain foundational knowledge and receive extensive training required to care for Veterans with acute and chronic liver disease. She is incredibly grateful for the gastroenterology (GI) and hepatology team's dedication to mentoring her during this fellowship at Central VA HCS.

"I feel so fortunate and privileged to be mentored and work with a group who has supported my goals," Malpaya says. "It's a team effort. I'm just so blessed to be working with such a well-respected team."

Award recipients were selected from a highly competitive applicant pool by a committee of academic and clinical specialists, physicians and advanced practice providers in the fields of hepatology and transplant hepatology, according to the AASLD website.

In February 2019, she began work at the VA in Richmond, Virginia, initially focused on Veterans enrolled in clinical trials for non-alcoholic fatty liver disease.

In the future, Malpaya hopes to use her knowledge and experience to serve as a mentor for aspiring nurse practitioners who wish to specialize in hepatology and further serve within AASLD.

After her fellowship, Malpaya will continue to work diligently and collaboratively with the gastroenterology/hepatology team members in providing the spectrum of expert hepatology services to positively impact the lives of Veterans at VA.



Zenaida Malpaya (Photo by Sydney Dudley, Public Affairs Volunteer)

# Henderson Veteran Gets One Last Wish

By Joshua D. Edson | DURHAM VAMC PUBLIC AFFAIRS

A Durham VA Healthcare System (DVAHCS) Veteran got to be a celebrity for a day, thanks to the DVAHCS Hospice General Post (Last Wish) Fund.

Michael Watson is a Navy Veteran and resident of Henderson, North Carolina. One of the new Hospice Unit's first patients, Mr. Watson is fighting what could be his final battle with Mesothelioma. To keep his spirits up, Mr. Watson's family as well as Hospice and Voluntary Services staff arranged a special day out. Wearing his best suit and a smile, Mr. Watson and his family enjoyed a limousine ride around Henderson, visiting some of Mr. Watson's old haunts.

"I'm a local man. My wife and I met in Boot Camp in 1979 and have been together and in true love ever since. I served in the Navy for six years," says Mr. Watson. We lived in Southern California for forty years and finally purchased a house last year in Henderson because we wanted to be closer to family and friends."

Essentially a trust, the General Post Hospice Fund exists to give Veterans receiving hospice care the chance to enjoy an activity as the near the end of their lives. For some, it might be as simple as contacting a relative. For others, it might be a favorite meal and beloved restaurant or a trip to the beach. If it can conceivably be done, the good folks in voluntary services will do all they can to accommodate.

For Mr. Watson, it was chance to see his hometown one last time, in a grand fashion. After spending several years in the Sand Diego area, Mr. Watson and his wife, Sheryl, decided that the slower pace of Henderson would be a welcome respite from the hustle bustle of the big city. Sadly, within a year of their arrival Mr. Watson was diagnosed with an aggressive form of Mesothelioma, owing to his years refitting ships while in the Navy.

Arriving promptly at 10 in the morning, the limousine whisked Mr. Watson, his wife and son the 40-miles to Henderson. Stops included the local post office, Walmart,



Veteran Michael Watson salutes hospice staff as he prepares for his Last Wish limousine ride. Suffering from Stage Four Mesothelioma, Mr. Watson was treated to a day of fun by DVAHCS hospice and volunteer staff.

and a local restaurant that Mr. Watson fondly remembered from his teenage years. Family also made an appearance, celebrating a life well lived.

"It was a really fun time. By the grace of God, everyone treated me well," says Mr. Watson. When we got back, I had to take several deep breaths just to calm down. I am filled with tears thinking about today's blessing and want to give thanks to everyone involved."

If you would like to donate to the Last Wish fund please contact [ronni.miller@va.gov](mailto:ronni.miller@va.gov) or visit <https://www.durham.va.gov/giving/index.asp> to E-Donate.

## Fayetteville NC VA Bids Adieu to Chief Medical Executive



Fayetteville Coastal Health Care System bids a fond farewell to outgoing Chief of Staff Dr. Greg Antoine.

Fayetteville Coastal Health Care System Chief of Staff Dr. Greg Antoine has shed his VA lab coat and slipped into a business suit — or at least a lab coat emblazoned with a new logo. Dr. Antoine left VA in June and returned to an environment that he is well acquainted with, the halls of academia.

He has accepted a position at one of the nation's most prestigious historically black colleges and universities, Morehouse College, where he is Senior Associate Dean for Clinical Affairs and Chief Medical Officer.

A Veteran of 24 years of military service in the U.S. Naval Reserves, Navy Medical Corps and U.S. Army, Dr. Antoine joined the Fayetteville team in August 2013, coming from Boston, where he served as chief of the Division of Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery at Boston Medical Center and at the Boston University School of Medicine.

As senior clinical leader here, he presided over expansive growth of primary care and men-

tal health services, as well as the introduction of a variety of specialty care services unavailable before his arrival. Fayetteville VA's physical footprint expanded as well during his tenure with the addition of the Sanford and expanded Jacksonville CBOCs along with the Fayetteville Health Care Center and Fayetteville Rehabilitation Clinic.

In an email to healthcare system staff announcing Dr. Antoine's departure, Associate Director Dan Fields said, "We will not only miss his medical expertise but his ever-present keen wit and good cheer. Join me in bidding him a fond farewell and great success in his new venture. Lastly, join me in thanking him for his tireless work on behalf of our Veterans and or workforce."

Asheboro native Dr. Jeffrey Morgan, Chief of Surgery and Deputy Chief of Staff, has assumed the role of Acting Chief of Staff. Dr. Morgan joined the Fayetteville staff in September 2017 as the Chief of Orthopedics and Deputy Chief of Surgery after retiring from the U.S. Army in the grade of Colonel. Subsequently he has served as Chief of Surgery and Interim Deputy Chief of Staff.

He served in a variety of leadership, medical and staff positions during his military career to include assignments at Fort Bragg as U.S.

Army Special Operations Command Surgeon; Deputy Commander for Clinical Services (Chief Medical Officer) for Womack Army Medical Center; and U.S. Army Special Operations Command THOR3 Program Director (Human Performance program) responsible for worldwide development and execution of the world's largest elite human performance and rehabilitation program (over 28,000 Special Operations Forces soldiers).

Dr. Morgan is a graduate of West Point and the East Tennessee University James H. Quillen College of Medicine. He has a Master of Business Administration from the Duke University Fuqua School of Business with a concentration in Health Sector Management. Dr. Morgan is certified by the American Board of Orthopedic Surgery as well as a Fellow of the American Academy of Orthopedic Surgeons and a Fellow of the American College of Healthcare Executives (FACHE).



Dr. Jeffrey Morgan, Chief of Surgery and Deputy Chief of Staff, has assumed the role of Acting Chief of Staff at the Fayetteville VA.

# RETIREMENT

## A Community Favorite Has Left the Building in Fayetteville

Warm wishes and kinds words abound from members of the Fayetteville VA Nutrition and Food Service on the retirement of their most senior member, 78-year-old Army Veteran Cliston Milner.

Milner retired July 31 after 12 years of service with Fayetteville VA Medical Center as a food service supervisor and providing daily meals for inpatient Veterans.

His supervisory duties require proficiency in special procedures and a broad knowledge of service operations, such as food preparation, dishwashing, dry and refrigerated storage, food and beverage serving and more. His career, coworkers say, has been characterized by dedication, professionalism, and the leadership, skills he gained during 24 years of service in the Army, serving last as a Noncommissioned Officer with 5th MASH (Mobile Army Surgical Hospital), 44th Medical Brigade at Fort Bragg, N.C.

Milner could be counted on for a thorough job, but also a great attitude. Food Service Supervisor Elvin Vest offered that Milner always followed-up and visited Veterans who were having issues with their meals and was always willing to help out the operation when short-staffed.

“Mr. Milner works with the relaxed but steady vigor that is calm and dependable, even in the face of challenge,” according to Holly Pflugfelder, Food Service Operations Manager. She continued, adding, “In the coming onslaught of Hurricane Matthew, Mr. Milner stayed overnight in the facility to ensure timely, quality meals were served. In the aftermath of the storm, when thanked for his service, he replied, “You know we’ll make a way! Go Army!”

Upon retiring, the College Park, Ga., native plans to return to the Gastonia, N.C., area where he lived since his retirement from the Army in 1985, to spend more time with his wife of 53 years, Rebecca, his two adult children, four grandchildren and two great grandchildren while continuing involvement in civic activities.

Several co-workers said that he’ll be missed deeply, contributing their own testaments to his legacy. Among them, comments like “His smile is contagious,” “His robust approach to life and career isn’t unnoticed,” and “His fun-living attitude will be truly missed.” Cliston Milner, as you go, so much Fayetteville spirit goes with you.



Fayetteville VA sends its best wishes for a happy retirement to Army Veteran Cliston Milner.

# Salisbury Veterans Participate in 39th National Wheelchair Games

By Amanda Reilly | SALISBURY VAHCS PUBLIC AFFAIRS



The 39th National Veterans Wheelchair Games (NVWG), the world's largest annual wheelchair sports event solely for military veterans, co-presented by the Department of Veterans Affairs and Paralyzed Veterans of America (PVA) were held in Louisville, Ky., from July 11 through July 16.

Each year, more than 600 Veterans with impairments — including amputation, spinal cord injuries (SCI), Multiple Sclerosis (MS) and other neurological conditions — who require a wheelchair compete independently (with minimal assistance from Recreational Therapists, Nurses, coaches, etc.) in more than 20 events such as cycling, wheelchair basketball, softball, weightlifting, trap shooting, swimming and archery.

The Salisbury VA Health Care System was represented by a phenomenal team, Blue Steel.

Blue Steel team member, Command Sergeant Major (CSM) Roy Wilkins reinforced the event's mission by sharing, "Participating in sports gives us another way out. ... It can trick your mind to feel like you are not disabled anymore," says Wilkins. "We do more in wheelchairs than some with two legs."

Wilkins played football at Clemson University. Since becoming an amputee following an IED blast in Afghanistan, he has had quite a journey. Attending a Salisbury VA fitness program in the Rehabilitation Medicine Service, he recalls seeing photos on the walls depicting amputees and/or wheelchair bound Veterans playing sports. He didn't feel that was him. But he was approached six years ago and told, "You're an athlete and you need to represent Salisbury." He joined the team and discovered it helped his PTSD symptoms and distracted him

**PHOTO BELOW:** Other VISN 6 NVWG participants came from four more facilities. The Durham VA sent a contingent known as the Avengers, comprising: Kevin Tenney (Air Force), who medaled with Bronze in wheelchair basketball, Glenn McClary (Marines) earned a silver in bowling, James Frazier (Marines) won gold in archery, bronze in boccia ball, bronze in table tennis, Danny Ward (Army) brought home silver in table tennis, Gregory Crawford (Marines) nabbed gold in table tennis, silver in archery, Frankie Davis (Army) achieved silver in handcycling, Marcus Alston-Leggett (Army), and Amy McKee (Marines) medaled with silver in archery, gold in handle ball (bowling), gold in slalom.

[STORY CONTINUES ON PAGE 11](#)



# Salisbury Veterans Participate in 39th National Wheelchair Games



(Cont'd From page 10)

from his pain while competing. He found that making friends and competing against Veterans with similar injuries eased him back into society. He says being a part of society means greatness, adding that participating in sports is helping preserve his life.

Since joining Blue Steel, Wilkins has actively promoted the National Wheelchair

Games and is always attempting to convince others like him to participate. He reports that anyone involved knows that "Salisbury is in it to win." At the 2019 games, Wilkins received medals for five competitions: a gold medal in hand-cycling competition, a silver medal in both weightlifting and golf, and bronze for softball and basketball. Additionally, the ath-

letes played games such as billiards, archery, etc. in between events. The team is already looking forward to next year's games, slated for Portland, Ore. At the end of this year's event, CSM Wilkins recalls proudly posing in front of two of the largest American flags he has ever seen, shouting "See you in Portland!"



Richmond's Central Virginia Health Care system team visited the Games with 28 Veteran athletes. They racked up 92 medals including 53 gold, 23 silver and 16 bronze. Richmond Vets also scored first place in the annual challenge event. This is an event where each VA picks a team of five Veterans to compete against one another in five separate competitions. Richmond VA Veterans won gold this year! Pictured are: Irene Montero (back row at left), recreation therapist; Kelvin Allen, licensed practical nurse; Nicole Shuman, recreation therapist; event staff person; Steve McGuire (front row at left); Leigh Sumner; Paul Austin; Logan Brokaw; Charles Bradley.



**PHOTO ABOVE:** Shown here with escort Dennis McCray, with their medals, Hampton VA athletes participated in several events. Mr. James Mayo (seated, right, Marines) participated in the Javelin throw and bowling. He won gold in bowling. This was the 17th time that Mr. Mayo has participated in the games. Mr. Mitch Moorehead (seated left, Marines) participated in bowling, 9-ball, air rifle and wheelchair slalom. He won silver in bowling and bronze in 9 ball. This was the 4th time that Mr. Moorehead participated in the games.



**Fayetteville VA's six participants came home with 10 medals from the 2019 Games.** Left to right, bottom row: Welton Locklear, Ronald Richardson (2 medals -Silver/Bowling, Bronze/Table Tennis), Terence Smith (1 medal - Silver/Quad Rugby), Booker T Foster, Charles Bradley (Senior Division, 3 medals - Gold/Bowling, Gold/Slalom, Gold/Team Challenge) **Back row:** Freddie Smith (first-time attendee for Fayetteville Sports Team - 4 medals - Gold/9-ball Pool, Silver/WC Basketball, Silver/Javelin Throw, Silver/Air Rifle).



## VISN 6 Care Managers Process National Guardsmen After Deployment

On Aug. 4, the VISN 6 Transition and Care Management (TCM) team welcomed 189 soldiers with the North Carolina National Guard 1-130th Attack Reconnaissance Battalion (1-130th ARB) back from Afghanistan — its seventh deployment as a unit in the last 30 years. That day the TCM team conducted a Post-Deployment Health Reassessment (PDHRA). They ensured that if a soldier who'd just become a Veteran (coming off active duty) desired care, they were linked with the appropriate VHA and VBA services, regardless of whether the service member resided outside of the VISN 6 catchment area.

The unit was deployed for one year, serving as the aviation task

force battalion headquarters in support of Operation Freedom's Sentinel across Train, Advise and Assist Command – South, in support of United States Forces and Afghan National Defense and Security Forces, to enable conditions leading to the stability and security of Afghanistan. The unit flies the AH-64 Apache helicopter, the U.S. Army's most heavily armed helicopter.

According to VISN 6 TCM Officials, VA sends staff to all PDHRA events as the soldiers transition from the DoD to Veteran status — they are eligible for 5 years of combat-related health care.

“We go to support linkage to care and registrations for VA. We are ‘changing the face of the VA, working with our newest Veterans,’” according to Susan Watkins, VISN 6 TCM Program Manager. She added that the event could not have occurred without the support and collaboration from the Greenville Vet Center, the Greensboro Vet Center, and the Fayetteville Vet Center and TCM staff from Durham and Fayetteville VAMC. Vet Centers send staff to support family and individual therapy, MST, and also bereavement supports.

But the team also had a special guest that day — Riley, a certified therapy dog and a certified service animal, also provided support to our troops! A special thank-you goes out to Cindy Woods, Administrative Officer with Durham VA's Mental Health Service Line, for sharing Riley. Riley was a big hit!

Watkins said that everyone involved worked “tirelessly” to support all the returnees from the 1-130th. She concluded, declaring, “The goal to register them now, while they are fully eligible, was tremendously successful. They don't have to use the VHA, but knowing what they are eligible for and having the Vet Center there helps place that safety net under these returnees.”



Members of the North Carolina National Guard 1-130th Attack reconnaissance Battalion pose with newfound friend, Riley the service dog, as they processed through a Post-Deployment Health Reassessment conducted by VISN 6 staff Aug. 4.

# Central Virginia VA Cuts Ribbon on State-of-the-Art OR Suite

Story by David Hodge

With the snip of a red, white and blue ribbon, the Central Virginia VA Health Care System (VAHCS) officially opened its latest clinical addition, to give the McGuire surgery department a significant boost in space and the ability to offer more complex surgeries to Veterans.

Applause echoed throughout the three new operating rooms and nine bed post-anesthesia care unit. Among those who cut the ribbon stood Christopher Graham, Chief of Surgical Nursing and Associate Chief of Nursing Services.

“This new space will definitely benefit our patients,” Graham said. “The addition of three spacious new state-of-the-art operating rooms and a brand-new post-anesthesia care unit are cutting edge tools that this dedicated staff will use to provide better care for Veterans and an improved workspace for many clinicians at the facility.”

This \$5.8 million addition brings the total number of operating rooms to 12, and the new post-anesthesia care unit will service all operating rooms.

Central Virginia VAHCS is constantly growing with more than \$170 million in ongoing construction projects. This growth in clinical capacity is a direct response to a steady increase in Veteran populations across central and northern Virginia.

**BELOW:** Registered Nurse Amanda Goff walks through one of the three new operating rooms, May 31, at the Central Virginia VA Health Care System. (Photo by Jason Miller)



Central Virginia VA Health Care System unveils its new operating rooms and post-anesthesia care unit, May 31. Pictured from left are: Amanda Goff, Operating Room Staff Nurse; Dr. Gundars Katlaps, Chief of Cardiothoracic Surgery; Dr. Mike Amendola, Operating Room Director; Chris Graham, Chief of Surgical Nursing and Associate Chief of Nursing Services; J. Ronald Johnson, Medical Center Director; James W. Dudley Jr., Associate Director; and Dr. Stefan Ianchulev, Chief of Anesthesiology. (Photo by Jason Miller)

## Congratulations to Dentistry

Congratulations to 2018 Advanced Education in General Dentistry-1 (AEGD-1) residents Warren Byrd, Duane Lauchengco, Mary Keith, Giselle Neukirchner and Kaitlyn Spencer, who have just completed their one-year residency here under the auspices of the Fayetteville NC VA Coastal Health Care System Dental Service. To mark the occasion, they were treated to a “graduation” ceremony June 26 presided over by Chief Dentist Dr. Jesse Howard and AEGD Residency Program Director Dr. Bryan Roach. The Fayetteville VAMC AEGD-1 program is a one-year residency that accepts five residents per year. The program provides the general dentist with continued opportunities for professional growth and advancement, preparing the resident to meet the oral health needs of a wide variety of medically compromised ambulatory and hospitalized patients. In addition, the program provides residents the opportunities to interact with physicians, nurses, pharmacists, social workers and other health care professionals as part of a multi-disciplinary health care team. The program is currently accepting applications for the next session.

The deadline for submission of the application and all related materials is Oct. 4, with interviews taking place Oct. 23, and notification to five selectees occurring in early November. Information about the AEGD-1 program can be found at [https://www.fayettevillenc.va.gov/Dental/AEGD\\_1\\_Program.asp](https://www.fayettevillenc.va.gov/Dental/AEGD_1_Program.asp).



# 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.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

### 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

## VISN 6 Newsletter

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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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