

VOICES OF VISN 6

— Excellent Care — Earned by Veterans — Delivered Here —



KOREAN WAR VET

REGAINS ABILITY TO WALK, IN ASHEVILLE



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COVER STORY | By Tara Manis-Healey | ASHEVILLE VAMC PUBLIC AFFAIRS

Charles George VAMC is employing a life-changing prosthetic device for Veterans suffering from a variety of illnesses affecting their ability to walk. The Ness L300 Go device can improve mobility, increase safety and return independence to many of the Veterans we serve.

The Ness L300 device wraps around the upper or lower leg and sends electrical stimulation to improve mobility for individuals with foot drop and/or thigh muscle weakness.

The device can assist people recovering from Stroke, Multiple Sclerosis, Cerebral Palsy, Traumatic Brain Injury or Incomplete Spinal Cord Injury. It has a 3-axis gyroscope and accelerometer embedded, which senses movement and immediately applies the necessary electrical stimulation to help a user walk. Paired with a mobile app, the L300 can track usage, set goals and monitor activity to show progress.

[STORY CONTINUES ON PAGE 3](#)

TOP PHOTO: Clifton Helms (Right) uses a Ness L300 Foot Drop System, enabling his ability to use his legs. Photo by Shahron James.



Message from the Network Director

Wow, it was an eventful month with Hurricane Dorian. First, the hurricane was projected to go into Florida, disturbing portions of Georgia, Alabama and Mississippi. Then to our surprise, it took a turn, up the east coast towards VISN 6. It was clear our experience with Hurricane Florence last year prepared us well. The agility and professionalism of staff at the VISN and throughout the network was amplified during the hurricane. Our leadership team and program chiefs ran our Incident Command Center (ICC) to ensure we had coordinated efforts and communication throughout the region. All the facilities ran their own 24-hour ICC, with all participating in daily hurricane calls to provide any assistance needed.

Our daily reports to Central Office Leadership were concise and consistent, exemplifying that we were prepared and ready for whatever Dorian brought our way. Our communication to Veterans and staff was pushed out timely throughout the field utilizing social media, national hotlines, websites, news channels, and personal phone calls to each and every vulnerable patient in VISN 6. All of this was done in less than two-days. Not many organizations can respond with that type of efficiency and accuracy in that short amount of time.

When the full ICC team arrived every morning, VISN 6 staff and facilities were already assessing their coastal clinics, updating the team on road closures, power outages, current evacuated counties, and

staff accountability. Our facilities are quickly rescheduling appointments for Veterans and ensuring they get the health care they need, when they need it. Unlike Florence (this time last year), Dorian brought a lot of wind, tornadoes and rain, but no major damage to our coastal sites is known at this time. We had a few water leaks here and there, but nothing that couldn't be resolved quickly.

No matter what - no matter when, we strive to be a reliable health care enterprise for our Veterans and staff. This is a perfect example of the high reliability culture we want to promote and expect at all times.

- DeAnne M. Seekins
VISN 6 Network Director



Hampton VA Medical Center Announces New Director

Hampton, Va. — The Department of Veterans Affairs is pleased to announce the appointment of David Collins as the new director of the Hampton VA Medical Center.

Collins will oversee delivery of health care to more than 50,000 Veterans at the medical center, which is currently experiencing a 21-percent growth rate (more than 4 times the national average) and an operating budget exceeding \$350 million.

“I am proud to announce the selection of Mr. Collins as the new Medical Center Director for Hampton VA,” said DeAnne Seekins, Mid-Atlantic Health Care Network (VISN 6) Director. “He is a results-driven leader with incredible experience managing health care operations, developing patient-centered policy and inspiring quality performance. We look forward to his steady leadership.”

Collins is a 28-year Veteran of the Navy Medical Service Corps, whose recent appointments include service as the Executive Assistant to the Navy Surgeon General, Commanding Officer of the Jacksonville Naval

Hospital and Chief Operating Officer of the Naval Hospital in Bremerton, Washington. He also spent time as the Executive Officer for NATO's Multinational Medical Unit in Afghanistan, demonstrating an ability to relate to other military Veterans with a similar background. He is a current resident of the Hampton and Chesapeake Community.

Collins has received several notable military honors, including the Legion of Merit. He earned his Master of Science in Human Resource Management from Troy University in 1999, and a Bachelors of Business and Management from the University of Maryland in 1991.

With more than 1,800 employees, the Hampton VA Medical Center is a 438-bed teaching facility serving Veterans in eastern Virginia and northeastern North Carolina. The medical center, 4th-oldest in the nation, is located on 85 acres overlooking the Chesapeake Bay, and includes outpatient clinics in Virginia Beach, Va. and Elizabeth City, N.C.

The Department of Veterans Affairs has appointed David Collins as director of the Hampton VA Medical Center.

Korean War Vet Regains Ability to Walk, In Asheville

Charles George VAMC has partnered with Bioness, inc. to bring the product to Veterans. Dr. Anne Hammonds saw the potential for the device to improve life for Clifton Helms, a Korean War Veteran.

To prepare, Helms worked with Hammonds for nearly three weeks, while staying at the Charles George Community Living Center to determine his appropriateness to use the L300 Go device. They also worked for several weeks on an outpatient basis, with the goal of increasing his safety and mobility at home.

Because of this device, Helms can remain independent and return to everyday activities like dressing himself and enjoying the hobbies he loves. Recently, while on vacation at the beach with his wife and daughter, He was able to walk in the sand barefoot and use his metal detector, activities he loves. He can do those things because of the L300 device. Other interventional aids require that he wear

a shoe.

The Bioness program utilized by the Charles George VAMC is designed to match the appropriate device to a suitable candidate. Dr. Hammonds employs a team to work with individuals over the course of weeks or months, assessing their capability and need.

The team works with the Veteran to develop a personalized treatment plan to set goals. During this training period Hammonds checks the Veteran's ability to safely place the device on the leg, conduct proper maintenance for continued safe use and demonstrate improved gait, increasing independence. When the Veteran shows competency with the device, it is purchased for the Veteran's personal use.

Gratified to receive his personal device, Helms said, "We got one of the best hospitals in the world, the staff are so kind and helpful."

The Ness L300 has not only helped him



Clifton Helms uses his Ness L300 Foot Drop System to stimulate his leg muscles, enabling him to increase his ability to use them. The device is wrapped around his leg and is wirelessly connected to a mobile app allowing him to control it and monitor his progress. Photos by Shahrone James.

improve physically, but he also notes the positive impact it has had on his state of mind. He says, "I am no longer down in the dumps, I can get around and enjoy life again."

The Charles George VAMC Rehabilitation Department is looking forward to using the device in both inpatient rehabilitation and outpatient rehabilitation to benefit Veterans.



"GAME ON," Richmond VA Assistive Technology Extends Veterans' Gaming Potential

By Sydney Dudley | RICHMOND VAMC PUBLIC AFFAIRS

A common misconception about paralysis is that it often is equated to life limitations. Well, if you ask the assistive technology (AT) team at the Richmond VA Medical Center, they might disagree. The AT team uses modern innovations and their own creativity to reveal new possibilities for patients every day.

Engineers on the AT team must have the problem-solving capability to effectively address patient needs. Seth Hills, VA clinical rehabilitation engineer, first got involved with adaptive gaming when one of his patients wanted to play video games again.

The patient wanted to play Nintendo Wii, but the system often requires the use of two hands simultaneously: a remote in one hand, a nunchuck in the other. The patient has paralysis on one side of his body. But Hills saw an opportunity. He thought, "What can we do to adapt the controller so it can be used by just one hand?"

After intense brainstorming and a complex production process, the AT team created a device combining the Wii remote and nunchuck into a single controller which could be operated using only one hand.

Since then, Hills has worked with many other Veterans to create custom gaming setups to fit their needs. One of these Veterans, Lance



Veteran Lance Knadler watches as VA clinical rehabilitation engineers Seth Hills (left) and John Miller assist him to get his "game on." (Photo: David Hodge)

Knadler, who served as a machine gunner in the Marines, enjoyed gaming on Microsoft Xbox for 15 years, often playing Destiny and Destiny 2.

He's collected more than 58 video games on his Xbox account but has been unable to play since a car accident left his legs paralyzed and caused limited mobility in his hands.

The AT team got to work with several slick pieces of hardware thanks to a partnership between Microsoft and VA. They used Microsoft's Xbox Adaptive Controller system

as the basis for a custom acrylic desktop for Knadler's motorized wheelchair. Then they erected oversized joysticks, an oral bite switch, and buttons positioned for his elbows to push.

Knadler said he is excited to get the opportunity to play multiplayer games such as Smite and Castle Crashers with his 9-year-old daughter. "She's looking forward to playing some co-op with her daddy," Knadler said. Co-op refers to cooperative play between two players in the same game.

The therapeutic benefits of this activity have led members of the AT team to teach VA occupational and recreational therapists how to include video games in patient treatment plans. Hills offers training sessions and simulations for healthcare professionals wanting to learn how to incorporate adaptive gaming technology.

Currently, Richmond VA is one of only five VA Medical Centers in the country with an AT program. However, the Richmond team regularly shares its best practices with VA medical centers trying to start programs of their own. VA employees or patients with questions regarding adaptive technology should contact Melissa Oliver, Assistive Technology Program Coordinator, at Melissa.Oliver@va.gov.

More Accolades for EMS MANAGEMENT

By Joshua D. Edson | DURHAM VAMC PUBLIC AFFAIRS

Staff at the Durham VA Healthcare System (DVAHCS) are among some of the best in the VA Healthcare system. From researchers who work tirelessly to innovate new cures for once-incurable diseases to others working at the cutting edge of cancer research, the DVAHCS certainly has its fair share of brightly shining stars.

As brightly as our providers shine, the DVAHCS has a legion of employees who shine equally bright. From Medical Support Assistants who make sure our Veterans get in-

processed quickly to Environmental Management System (EMS) staff members who make sure our Veterans receive their care in a clean and contagion-free environment, all of them provide a critical component to our whole health care model.

That said, it is with great pride that we introduce you to Eric Heard, the DVAHCS Assistant Chief of EMS. Heard, an Army Veteran and VA employee of six years, was recently recognized with the VA Central Office Environmental Program Service's Manager of the Year award. Simply put, from more than 100 VA facilities nationwide, Eric's dedication to excellence is unsurpassed. Candidates are chosen for their commitment to cleanliness, environmental sustainability and dedication to cost-saving measures.

"I really just love what I do," Eric says. "As a Veteran myself, I could be laying in one of those beds. I want to make sure that Veterans who come in here with a headache aren't leaving with some terrible disease. This job is so fulfilling, because without a sanitary environment, our doctors couldn't do the excellent work they do."

This will mark the second year in a row that a member of the DVAHCS EMS management staff has won the national Manager of the Year award.

"Our success doesn't just lie with my leadership," says Eric. "This couldn't have been done without the frontline work of all of our team members. This isn't just my award, it's theirs as well."



Eric Heard, Assistant Chief of the DVAHCS Environmental Management Service, winner of the VA Central Office Environmental Programs Service's Manager of the Year Award. Mr. Heard's award marks the second year in a row that a member of the DVAHCS EMS management team wins Manager of the Year.

VA Secretary Checks on Hurricane Recovery in Southeastern NC Market

By Steve Wilkins
VISN 6 PUBLIC AFFAIRS

Almost a year ago, the Wilmington VA Health Care Center stood in a shambles. A victim of Hurricane Florence as it ravaged the Wilmington area, the facility had been severely damaged, and Veterans were diverted for some time to receive care from volunteers in mobile medical units and at other locations in the community.

"The building had holes in it," declared VA Secretary Robert Wilkie, reflecting on the "destruction" he saw personally during a visit right after the storm. The Secretary accompanied Senator Thom Tillis through stops at the Wilmington HCC and other locations in the Fayetteville NC Coastal Health Care System catchment August 6 and 7, meeting Veterans and staff. They were following up on hurricane recovery efforts and seemed pleased with what they found.

The Wilmington facility bounced back within weeks of the weather event, so was fully operational as they toured with facility administrator Deborah Caruso, Fayetteville NC Coastal Health Care System Director Daniel Dücker, and VISN 6 Director DeAnne Seekins.

Impressed with the robust clip of Veterans passing through VA's doors, and Veterans' complimentary comments (the Wilmington HCC currently boasts an 88-percent trust score), walking the facility hallways, the Secretary noted his interest in continuing to answer the call of a growing Veteran population throughout North Carolina.

According to his statistics, Wilkie mentioned that North Carolina would have more Veterans than California by 2030, continuing the current pace; and that only Texas contained a larger rural population. In fact, Women Veterans receiving care at the Wilmington HCC comprise practically one-fifth of Veterans seen there.

Throughout the visit, Wilkie



seemed genuinely in the moment and engaged. Caruso observed, "I was captivated by Secretary Wilkie's commitment, dedication and concern for our Veterans, and his love of military history."

In addition to the Veterans they met in Wilmington, the group admired the HCC's "Honor our Veterans" displays. The facility dedicated a wall of military patches to which Veterans can add, and nearby decorative display cabinets in which they can place challenge coins and other memorabilia.

Wilkie and Tillis stressed the importance of mental health strategies, and how they figured into a solution to the present suicide epidemic. Wilkie agreed with Tillis that most Veterans committing suicide are outside the system, but he added that services like same-day counseling and mental health screening for Veterans as they come through any facility doors will help stem crisis.

They urged everyone to be involved in helping others in crisis and pointed out the most important thing is to ask the question of anyone who appears in crisis whether they have thought of harming themselves or others.

Director Seekins also accompanied Secretary Wilkie and Senator Tillis on a tour of the Veterans Life Center, currently under construction in Butner, N.C. The center, a private venture with broad community support, will help Veterans who have been displaced or have found themselves in dire circumstances to redirect their paths toward success.

TOP PHOTO: VA Secretary Robert Wilkie (right, light-colored coat), accompanied by Senator Thom Tillis, met staff at the Wilmington Health Care Center as they toured the Southeastern region of North Carolina August 6 and 7. (Photo Courtesy of Senator Tillis' office)

VA PARTNERS WITH NATIONAL GUARD To Provide On-Site Counseling During Training Weekends

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and the Department of Defense formalized a partnership June 28 between [VA's Vet Centers](#) and the [National Guard Bureau](#) to provide Vet Center counseling, outreach staff and other services to members during training or drill weekends.

"This relationship between VA and the National Guard further advances the department's efforts to decrease service member and Veteran suicide," said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie. "Vet Center staff will provide counseling and referral to those who may be under stress and at risk for self-harm."

VA's 300 Vet Centers, 80 Mobile Vet Centers and a 24/7 call center provide community-based counseling for a wide range of social and psychological services, including confidential readjustment counseling and outreach, and referral to eligible Veterans, active-duty, National Guard and Reserve members, and their families.

Vet Center counselors and outreach staff, many of whom are Veterans themselves, are experienced and prepared to discuss the tragedies of war, loss, grief and transition after trauma.

Suicide prevention is a top priority for the National Guard, which experienced the highest rate of suicide among military components in 2017. Since then, VA has seen a 38-percent increase in National Guard service members seeking Vet Center services.*

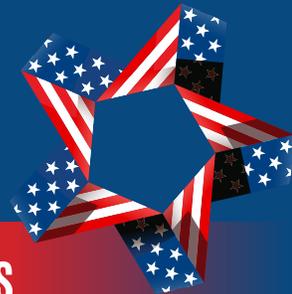
"This is an important and historic day for the National Guard and Veterans Affairs," said [Gen. Joseph L. Lengyel](#), chief of the National Guard Bureau, "This partnership will increase our ability to offer access to services to our Guard Soldiers and Airmen and their families who live in remote locations. Ultimately, this partnership will positively impact the readiness of our force."

Suicides across the Guard have dropped to the lowest point than they have been in the past 5 years when comparing annual data from January to August. NGB is carefully examining the information to determine whether a direct correlation exists between the reduction of suicides so far in 2019, and this type of strategic engagement.

Nearly 300,000 Veterans and active-duty service members received Vet Center services in 2018.

To find out more about Vet Centers, or to locate a nearby Vet Center, visit www.vetcenter.va.gov.

*Data was pulled from Oct. 1, 2017 to July 31, 2018, and compared with data from Oct. 1, 2018, to July 31, 2019.



VA Launches Veterans Legacy Memorial to Honor Deceased Veterans Online

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA) National Cemetery Administration (NCA) launched the [Veterans Legacy Memorial](#) (VLM) Aug. 14, the country's first digital platform dedicated entirely to the preservation of the memory of the 3.7 million Veterans interred in VA national cemeteries.

Each Veteran will have their own memorial page on the VLM, a secure, Web-based platform that creates a perpetual memorial extending beyond the physical border of the national cemetery.

"Veterans Legacy Memorial ensures 'no Veteran ever dies' by honoring the legacy of our nation's Veterans not just in our cemeteries, but in a new and innovative digital setting," said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie. "It enhances the onsite national cemetery experience and extends the experience to those who otherwise are unable to physically visit the cemetery."

NCA, in conjunction with [VA's Office of Information and Technology](#), built the architecture for the site, starting with the information contained on every Veteran's headstone.

In the initial rollout, the public will be able to search the site for Veterans, find out where they are buried and read the basic details of their lives and service. Future capabilities may be expanded to allow families, survivors, fellow Veterans and others to add historic photos and share memories to a deceased Veteran's memorial page. Such capabilities will include provisions that allow NCA to manage the site in a manner that maintains the same level of decorum our customers experience in our national cemeteries.

For more information about the Veterans Legacy Memorial, visit <https://www.va.gov/remember>, or contact Dr. Bryce Carpenter, Veterans Legacy Program Manager, at bryce.carpenter@va.gov.

Have questions about Veterans Legacy Memorial? Find what you're looking for at [VLM FAQ](#).

**If you encounter challenges
at your urgent care visit
or pharmacy, call
1-866-620-2071.**

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 steppen.wilkinsz@va.gov or call 919-956-5541

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