



VA MID-ATLANTIC HEALTH CARE NETWORK • VISN SIX

Vol. 3, No.6

“Excellent Care – Earned by Veterans – Delivered Here”

# Voices of VISN 6

Official news from around *your* VISN

March 31, 2013

## Beckley VAMC Breaks Ground On Patient Care Projects

*Despite the groundhog’s prediction of an early spring, participants of the March 25 groundbreaking for patient care enhancement projects at Beckley VA Medical Center braved hazardous roads, heavy snow and 24 degree temperatures to symbolically begin construction of the new facility. From left with shovels, Beckley VAMC’s Brian Nimmo; Mike Browning, regional representative for U.S. Sen. Joe Manchin; Phil Lewis, staff assistant to U.S. Sen. Jay Rockefeller; Karin McGraw, Beckley VAMC director; Congressman Nick Rahall; and Ernesto Arana, project manager for Seawolf Construction. See story on Pg 3.*



*Debbie Voloski*

## Durham VAMC Researcher Earns 2013 Under Secretary’s Award

Dr. Hayden B. Bosworth is the recipient of the 2013 Under Secretary’s Award for Outstanding Achievement in Health Services Research – the highest honor for a VA health services researcher. Dr. Bosworth is a developmental health psychologist and health services researcher, and has served as associate director of VA’s Health Services Research and Development Center for Health Services Research in Primary Care in Durham, for 10 years.

VA HSR&D officials said Bosworth met the major criteria the award by improving understanding of factors that affect the health of Veterans and the quality of their care, contributing to the future of VA health services research by inspiring and training a new generation of investigators, and enhancing the visibility of VA research

through national recognition within the research community. Bosworth has a doctorate in philosophy, human development and family studies from Pennsylvania State University, and completed a postdoctoral behavioral medicine fellowship at the Duke University Medical Center.

An HSR&D Research Career Scientist Awardee, his main research interests comprise three inter-related areas that have significant implications for Veterans: 1) self-management in chronic care, 2) developing and using quality measurements to monitor and improve the processes and outcomes of health-care, and 3) translating research findings into clinical care.

For more than 15 years, Bosworth has developed and tested novel interventions to improve the health behaviors and out-



*Dr. Hayden B. Bosworth*

comes for patients with chronic diseases that are prevalent among Veterans, including: hypertension, coronary artery disease, hyperlipidemia, diabetes, osteoarthritis, and depression.

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## From the Director

I often mention how we strive to provide Veteran's with the right care, in the right place, at the right time. Accomplishing this requires regular investments in new equipment, system updates and facility enhancements. As one can imagine, prioritizing which investment opportunity needs to be pursued and what equipment should be purchased or upgraded, is quite the process.

This month, I'll share with you a bit about how we allocate resources throughout the VISN to ensure that the needs of our entire Veteran population are represented. Our general guiding philosophy is to put resources where our Veterans are and where services are most needed.

The medical centers clearly have the best view of the equipment needed to allow them to function at their highest-level. Our process begins with each facility working through the prioritization of new or replacement equipment and enhancements for their campus. The facilities submit capital investment proposals along with clear justification as to how each item will enhance their operation.

Factors including the role each medical center plays in our VISN, their complexity level, specialists, overall staffing, as well as the basic infrastructure of the buildings themselves come into play as medical centers work through this process. What does not come into play at this point is cost. Each facility develops their list without regard to cost which ensures all items can be brought to the table for consideration during the second step.

With the medical centers proposals completed, the VISN assembles our Capital Investment Board (CIB). The board is made up of representatives from each medical center, including a mix of directors, chiefs of staff, associate directors and nurse executives. VISN representation includes leadership, our strategic planner as well as our chiefs of Finance, Logistics, and Information systems. Additionally, we augment the board with subject matter experts as required.

Using a computer program, representatives rank and prioritize each proposal, in an effort to develop a Strategic Acquisition Plan that best supports the mission and the needs of the VISN, our mission and the Veterans we serve.

Each proposal is weighted to show how the equipment will contribute to my three overarching concerns: Strategic Alignment, (how an item reduces dependence on non-VA care, increases productivity, and improves patient, physician and employee satisfaction); Return on Taxpayers Investment (cost benefits, weighing alternatives when possible and the impact to collaboration within the VISN); and Risk Abatement, which looks at how the equipment can reduce or eliminate risk safety risks, or prior survey citations.

Over the course of two days last month, our CIB reviewed 96 Capital Investment Proposals totaling \$41.5 million. Proposals ran the entire spectrum of equipment and included everything from the rather mundane replacement of beds and purchase of storage cabinets to new audiology booths, a simulator that helps train clini-



cians for eye surgery all the way up to a \$3 million Dual Energy Linear Accelerator which is a sophisticated radiation therapy device used to treat cancer patients.

Our sites of care have different capabilities and levels of expertise. We cannot offer everything everywhere, but you can bet we strive to make sure we offer the right services at the right sites based on need.

Through the dedicated work of our CIB, we are able to balance the need to provide the "best care anywhere" to the most veterans with the precious tax dollars received by generous Americans.

Sincerely,  
Dan Hoffmann



## Network Seeks Health Care Providers

The VA Mid-Atlantic Health Care Network is looking for highly qualified health care providers. If you or someone you know is looking for a challenging and rewarding opportunity, please contact Harold "Keith" Liles Jr., Mid-Atlantic Region's National Healthcare Recruitment Consultant, for additional information. Liles can be reached via email at [Harold.Liles@va.gov](mailto:Harold.Liles@va.gov) or by phone at 919-408-4741.

### Current Vacancies

**Emergency Medicine:** Asheville

**Emergency Medicine:** Durham, N.C.

**Dermatologist, Emergency Medicine, Gastroenterologist, Mental Health Physician Assistant/Nurse Practitioner, Psychiatrist, Psychologist:** Fayetteville, N.C.

**Psychiatrist, Mental Health PA/NP:** Salisbury, N.C.

**Associate Chief of Staff for Long Term Care, Chief of Pharmacy, Primary Care Physician:** Hampton, Va.

**Emergency Medicine (BC-ABEM):** Richmond, Va.

**Dermatologist, Gastroenterologist:** Salem, Va.

**Gastroenterologist, Pulmonologist, Psychiatrist:** Beckley, W. Va.

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**Questions or comments about the newsletter, e-mail Bruce Sprecher@va.gov or call 919-956-5541.**



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**EXCELLENCE**  
in the 21st Century

# Patient Care Enhancement Projects Underway At Beckley

By Debbie Voloski  
Beckley VAMC public affairs

The Beckley VAMC broke ground March 25 for two patient care enhancement projects designed to increase services to the nearly 14,000 southern West Virginia Veterans receiving care at the facility. The projects are slated for completion in the fall of 2014.

One project will be an 8,000-square-foot building, located adjacent to the main medical center. This \$5.8 million building will be used to expand the adult day health care program and house programs like community health and home telehealth. Presently, the adult day health care program can only accommodate six Veterans, but when completed, the new building will offer the ability to accommodate 20.

The second project will be a 2,300-square-foot second-floor deck suite added to the medical center. This \$4.4 million building addition will be the site for the installation of a permanent magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) scanner. Currently, MRIs are accomplished in a mobile unit located outside near the non-emergency entrance. The additional square footage created on the first floor will be used to expand the emergency department.

Beckley VAMC Chief Engineer Theodore Hamb Jr. said these projects will increase access for Veterans and provide more space to provide high-quality care.

Congressman Nick J. Rahall participated in the groundbreaking ceremony and said he is excited to see the expansion of the Beckley VAMC. "The Beckley VAMC continues to provide excellent service to Veterans, and there is no way to say thank you enough."

# Hampton Staff, Peers Celebrate Veterans 'X,' Hope's Graduation

By James Coty  
Hampton VAMC

The peer-led support group at the Hampton VAMC, Veteran "X" and Veteran "Hope" recently enrolled their 1000th participant. During the March 21 celebration, Veterans explained how they had no hope, no dreams, and no future. Veterans shared stories of homelessness and mental health struggles ~ followed by their determination to create brighter futures. Volunteering, creating websites, embracing faith and building strong families were some of the successes Veterans proudly shared.

The innovative program is being adopted nationally by the VA and recognized as a VA Best Practice addressing homelessness among Veterans. The program creates fictitious characters named Veteran "X" and Veteran "Hope" (Veteran X's female equivalent). The characters have a list of problems; many of which contribute to their homelessness. Filing disability claims, securing a photo ID, dealing with longstanding legal issues, and confronting family problems are just some of the scenarios the group addresses during bi-weekly meetings.

"The process of identifying solutions to problems empowers the group's participants to apply lessons-learned to their own lives," said Thomas Pratt, peer counselor at the Hampton VAMC. "Veterans who are on-the-street often perceive their problems as insurmountable. This setting empowers them to tackle each scenario and then apply the solutions to their own lives."

The program's goal is to provide Veterans with the tools and confidence to solve their personal challenges. In addition to the group setting, Veterans work one-on-one with case managers who provide them with resources and direction to find solutions to their own challenges.

"Last year, Veterans "X" and Veteran "Hope" was voted one of the most innovative programs in the VA," said Pratt. "We are incredibly proud of the program and the Veterans who participated."



*Courtesy Photo*

*Veterans and employees attend a celebration ceremony at the Hampton VAMC, marking the 1000th Veteran to enroll in Veteran "X" program.*

# Hutchins Named Salem VAMC Chief of Staff

Dr. Anne C. Hutchins was appointed chief of staff for the Salem VAMC March 24. She had served as the interim chief of staff since September 2012.

In this key role, Dr. Hutchins will be responsible for providing clinical oversight of all clinical services at the Salem VAMC.

Dr. Hutchins joined VA in 1989 as a staff physician in Primary Care/Emergency Room at the Salem VAMC. She left the VAMC in 1992 to join an internal medicine private practice at Carillon Health Care System in Roanoke, Va. Dr. Hutchins returned in 1995 as a staff physician



in Primary Care/Geriatrics and Extended Care. In 2007, she was appointed as the acting chief of Geriatrics and Extended Care and as the chief, Geriatrics and Extended Care in 2009. Dr. Hutchins served in that capacity until September 2012. Dr. Hutchins is dedicated to providing quality healthcare to Veterans.

Dr. Hutchins attended medical school at Medical University of South Carolina College of Medicine and graduated in 1986.

The Salem VAMC is affiliated with the University of Virginia School of Medicine and the Edward Via College of Osteopathic Medicine. Dr. Hutchins serves as associate dean for the Salem Program at the University of Virginia School of Medicine and will have an academic appointment.

# UNC-Wilmington, Fayetteville VAMC Sign Pact Benefitting Vets



**Jamie Moncrief, UNC Wilmington**

*UNC Wilmington Provost Denise Battles holds a commemorative coin presented to her by Fayetteville VAMC Director Elizabeth Goolsby after the pair signed an affiliation agreement between UNCW and the VAMC March 25.*

Fayetteville VAMC and the College of Health & Human Services at UNC Wilmington officially entered into an education affiliation agreement March 25.

All of the degree programs in the CHHS include a clinical, internship or field requirement in order to graduate.

VA and UNC-W officials said this agreement gives CHHS students the opportunity to work with Veterans. The partnership will focus on promoting collaboration in the areas of clinical training, research, and health education initiatives, and exploring joint learning and professional development opportunities.

“We will be able to provide, at our health care center in Wilmington, opportunities for the future leaders of health care to have an exposure to Veteran care,” said Fayetteville VAMC Director Elizabeth Goolsby.

Along with providing students another place to sharpen their skills, college officials said now they’ll be able to invite VA physicians on campus as adjunct professors or guest speakers.

“These folks will see things and live things that they can bring in and share with us on a first hand basis that our students otherwise wouldn’t have the opportunity to hear about,” said Dr. Kathy Browder, CHHS associate dean.

Plus, she said students and professors can explore new research opportunities.

“They have a tremendous database that they are willing to allow us to have access to as we partner with them to answer questions about treatment and provision of health care to Veterans,” said Browder.

College officials plan to have the first round of students in the VA clinic in this fall. (Compiled from university news release and press reports.)

# NCNG Hosts Community Outreach Event Benefitting Education

The North Carolina National Guard will hold a community outreach event May 18, designed to demonstrate the collaborative, multi-agency domestic response mission of the NCNG and its emergency response partner agencies.

The outreach event called “The Minuteman Muster” features three competitive races: an adventure race, an 8k run, and a duathlon 1k run/20k bike.

All events will start and finish at the NC National Guard Headquarters / NC Military Center at 1636 Gold Star Drive in Raleigh. All activities are open to the public with proceeds going to NCNG Association Educational Foundation, Inc.

“This event provides an opportunity for your agency to interact and garner public support while reinforcing our cooperative relationship in times emergency,” said Andrew L. Jackson, NCNG transition assistance advisor.

## **NCNG Event To Benefit Education**

Where: 1636 Gold Star Dr., Raleigh, N.C.

When: May 18, 2013; event parking opens at 6 a.m.

Races begin at 8 a.m.

“Agencies have the option to provide a static display, set-up tent type public information booths, or exercise other creative outreach initiatives to reach their desired audiences.”

Jackson added that agencies were welcome to compete in one or more of the competitive events with agency built teams. Event parking area opens at 6 a.m.; races start at 8.

For more information, visit [www.nc.ngb.army.mil/Pages/Minuteman-Race.aspx](http://www.nc.ngb.army.mil/Pages/Minuteman-Race.aspx) or contact Jackson at 919-664-6573 or via email at Andrew.l.jackson8.ctr@mail.mil.

## **Bosworth continued from Pg 1**

He is currently the principal investigator on four self-management interventions, and co-investigator on three other funded studies. He also has been a leader in helping to reduce healthcare disparities. Among 10 trials he has conducted, there has been a consistent improvement among individuals with low literacy, as well as under-represented groups, such as African American and women Veterans.

In addition, Bosworth is a tenured research professor at the Duke University Medical Center – the first Ph.D. from the Division of General Medicine to be awarded this honor. He also is a health services research lecturer in Duke’s Clinical Research Training Program, and has directed the VA Office of Academic Affairs Ph.D. Post-Doctoral Fellowship for 13 years. A highly sought after mentor for Ph.D. and M.D. investigators, fellows, and students, he has mentored 64 trainees. He also is a prolific author, with more than 200 peer-reviewed publications and al-

most 250 academic presentations.

Bosworth’s research is directly applicable to the health-care of our Veterans. For example, his innovative approach to improving treatment adherence through telemedicine interventions is helping VA transition to a more patient-centered approach to care through Patient-Aligned Care Teams and other initiatives.

“Durham VAMC and Duke University are proud of Dr. Bosworth’s work,” said Center for Health Services Research in Primary Care Director Dr. Eugene Z. Oddone. “It has made a real difference in improving our understanding of how to extend healthcare outside of the walls of the VA, and into patients home in a way that improves access and outcomes. Future generations of Veterans will have an ever expanding platform of ways to get needed care based on Hayden’s foundational research.”

# Durham VA Enlists UV Technology To Disinfect Patient Rooms

By Pete Tillman  
Durham VAMC public affairs

Looking like a scene out of a science fiction movie, TRU-D, a robot outfitted with ultraviolet light, can be found performing its mission in hospital rooms at the Durham VAMC.

Patient rooms may include the presence of microorganisms like multidrug-resistant pathogens. As hard to pronounce as they are to say aloud, MDROs are vancomycin-resistant enterococci, methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*, *C. difficile*, and *Acinetobacter*, more commonly referred to as VRE, MRSA, and *C. Diff*.

These harmful pathogens are resistant to many antibiotics, resilient in hospital settings, and place patients at risk of becoming sick during their inpatient stay.

The use of Total Room UV-Disinfectant technology is one of the newest methods being tested for its ability to improve the cleanliness of the hospital environment, prevent hospital-acquired infections and lead to new disinfectant strategies.

Durham VAMC is one of nine hospitals, and the only VA medical center, participating in a two-year clinical trial called "The Benefits of Enhanced Terminal Room Disinfection." Funded by the Centers for Disease Control, the study is evaluating the effectiveness and feasibility of new cleaning and disinfection interventions specifically targeted at preventing health care associated infections and destroying multidrug-resistant organisms (MDRO).

The study provides Durham VAMC with the capability of using a TRU-D robot during terminal cleaning of single-occupancy rooms used to care for patients in acute care units. The study builds upon the cleaning practices already taking place to ensure patients are not at risk. The medi-



*Pete Tillman*

*Roger Walsh and Orlando Brown of the Durham VAMC's Environmental Management Service operate a TRU-D machine on an inpatient room.*

cal center's environmental management service staff routinely cleans patient rooms with bleach or another ammonium solution after patients are discharged. Following the routine cleaning, the TRU-D robot is given the opportunity to enhance that process using its UV light to kill microorganisms and germs. The study will determine if the use of UV light effectively reduces the risk of infections.

Terminal cleaning methods vary but usually include removing all detachable objects in the room and cleaning from the ceiling down to the floor, including lights and air ducts. Items removed from the room are sanitized before being returned to the room.

Susan Wilkins, Durham's MDRO prevention coordinator, is pleased that the

Durham VAMC was chosen to be a part of this study. "It is exciting to be able to work on developing better ways of protecting Veterans from infection. Patients and family members appreciate the fact that we are ahead of the curve in applying new technology to improve care," Wilkins said.

Dr. Rebekah Moehring, an infectious disease physician at the Durham VAMC and Duke Medical Center, said the TRU-D technology may become the standard for all health care environments in the years to come. "The study will help us determine the feasibility of broad implementation of this technology," she said.

If the study has positive findings that support the use of traditional cleaning and TRU-D, we may see more robots in health care settings.

## Quick Facts About VA's Services For Military Sexual Trauma

VA uses the term "military sexual trauma" (MST) to refer to experiences of sexual assault or repeated, threatening sexual harassment experienced while on federal active duty or active duty for training.

If you are a Veteran and have MST, here are some things you should know:

- The Veterans Health Administration (VHA) has a range of outpatient, inpatient, and residential services available to assist Veterans in their recovery from MST.

- All treatment for conditions related to MST is provided to Veterans free of charge. This includes outpatient, inpatient, residential, and pharmaceutical treatment.

- To receive this free MST-related care, Veterans do not need to be service connected (that is, have a VA disability rating\*) – eligibility for MST-related healthcare is independent of receipt of other VA benefits. Veterans may be able to receive free MST-related care even if they are not eligible for other VA care. For example, there are no length of service or income requirements to receive MST-related care. Veterans do not need to have reported the



incident(s) when they happened or have other documentation that they occurred. \*Note: the Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) handles claims for compensation for injuries or disabilities that began or got worse during military service. More information about filing an MST-related disability claim is available at [www.benefits.va.gov/BENEFITS/factsheets/serviceconnected/MST.pdf](http://www.benefits.va.gov/BENEFITS/factsheets/serviceconnected/MST.pdf).

For more information, please contact the MST Coordinator at your nearest VA Medical Center or visit [www.mentalhealth.va.gov/msthome.asp](http://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/msthome.asp).

Serving Those Who  
Preserve Our Freedom



# Injured Marine

## Semper Fi Fund

### Marine Charity Launches Aid Program Open To Vets, Families

By Jeff Melvin  
VISN 6 public affairs

Retired Marine Corps Sgt. Maj. William F. "Bill" Squires stopped by the Mid-Atlantic Health Care Network headquarters March 26 to learn about the organization and to introduce a new program launched by his new employers, the Injured Marine Semper Fi Fund. The nonprofit Semper Fi Fund provides immediate financial support for injured and critically ill service members and their families, directing urgently needed resources to post 9-11 service members within 24-72 hours of a request. Since its formation in 2004, the fund has issued more than 55,000 grants totaling more than \$72 million to over 9,100 of service members and their families.



Squires, the newly appointed Mid-Atlantic Veteran Lead or VL for the Semper Fi Fund's Veterans 2 Veterans (V2V) Integrated Transition Services Program. V2V VLs like Squires are former military members strategically placed in seven regions around the country. They have the knowledge and skill to help other service members. It's Veteran helping Veteran, Veteran to Veteran.

He describes his new job, his third since his retirement in August 2012, as a calling. "I think the Lord has blessed me with the right job."

He should know about calling, he served 30 years in the Marine Corps, most recently at New River MCAS where his last post was the installation sergeant major.

"I'm here to understand what VISN 6 does," said the decorated Marine who in addition to serving as air station sergeant major, also served as a drill instructor, first sergeant, and recruiting station sergeant major during his illustrious career. "When I get a call from a wounded or ill service member or family member, I want to be able to steer them in the right direction they need to go if they have an issue or problem. It's better to know how the system works other than what I'm seeing on paper."

Squires' stop at the VISN headquarters follows visits to several Vet Centers and CBOCs in the region all part of his effort familiarize himself with his region which covers North Carolina, South Carolina and southern Virginia. His aim, he said, is to be able to offer Veterans and their families "a warm phone call because either (1) I've already made a telephone call for them or (2) I've already been through what they're going through based off my resources, my experiences or the tools I have in my toolbox."

That toolbox should be quite extensive considering his active duty career Semperincluded tours in Kosovo as well as combat operations in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Unlike VA where he's taking trying to get smart quick, he was quite familiar with his new employers, the Semper Fi Fund, having

encountered them on several occasions previously when Marines were killed in an auto accident or injured Marines needed critical care and "Semper Fi jumped in and took care of our needs."

He and his fellow V2V Veteran Leads are virtual employees. They work out of their homes. "Ninety nine percent of us work from home," Squires said. "We have an iPhone, we have a laptop, those are some of the ways we keep our expenses down. We can go anywhere, anytime."

This virtual model is typical of the streamlined structure Semper Fi Fund organization employs to keep overhead low while efficiently delivering assistance to those in need. And unlike the "Semper Fi" motto associated exclusively with the Marine Corps, Veterans of all branch of service are eligible for Semper Fi Fund programs like Veterans 2 Veterans and America's Fund.

Squires sees his role – and that of other V2V VLs—as that of facilitators, code crackers, of sort, filling or supplementing a void.

"The VA is a big process. There are a lot of organizations out there and many people don't know who to turn to for help. It's all about resources, then pointing them in that right direction. We're going to streamline that stuff. We're going to make sure we know which organization fits that individual's need and point them in the right direction."

He said he will network with other organizations like DAV, American Legion, member of Marine Corps League and VFW. He recently met Tim Wipperman of the North Carolina Department of Veterans Affairs and plans to meet his counterparts in other states in the Mid-Atlantic region.

"We all know knowledge is power, the more I know about the VISN 6 system, the more I know about the NC DVA system and what they do, and how the two work together, the more I know about our local counties and what they have to offer, the better I am positioned to take care of Vets and family members when I get calls."

A patient at the Jacksonville CBOC, Squires said he "loves VA. I think they do a great job. It's amazing all VA does for us. All too often VA gets a bad rap and many times that's because an individual just doesn't know where to turn."

If he has his way that won't happen on his watch. Veterans 2 Veterans, he said, wants to provide services and like resources to individuals in their time of need. "We're all on the same team. We want your folks (VISN 6) in the clinics, Vet Centers, medical centers or CBOCs to spread the word Semper Fi Fund is out there."

To find out more about the Semper Fi Fund, visit their web site at <http://semperfund.org>. To contact retired Sgt. Maj. Squires, email him at [billy.squires@semperfund.org](mailto:billy.squires@semperfund.org) or call him at 910-467-3735.

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VA Mid-Atlantic Health Care Network VISN 6

# Brothers Get Assistance From Blind Rehabilitation Services

By Dana Draa  
Charlotte Outpatient Clinic  
Vision Impairment Services  
Team coordinator

Three Charlotte-area blinded Veterans who are brothers are using VA's Blind Rehabilitation Center programs at the Southeastern BRC in Birmingham, Ala.

Derrick, Darrell and Daniel Bidgood all have the genetic and degenerative eye disease Retinitis Pigmentosa. Although they were all in the Army, they did not serve together.

The brothers entered the program in mid-March. They will spend approximately eight weeks in a rehabilitation program specifically tailored for Veterans who are blind and visually impaired.

To the best of our knowledge, this is the first time in the history of the nation's blind rehabilitation program that three Veterans who are brothers have attended the BRC at the same time.

The BRC's are residential inpatient programs that provide comprehensive adjustment to blindness training and serve a geographic area usually comprised of several states. BRC's offer a variety of courses designed to help blinded Veterans achieve a realistic level of independence.

These skill areas include: orientation and mobility, communication, manual and



*Courtesy Photo*

*From left, visually impaired Veterans Derrick, Darrell and Daniel Bidgood, brothers who share a genetic and degenerative eye disease, pose for a photo with Dana Draa, VIST Coordinator at the Charlotte Outpatient Clinic.*

visual skills, activities of daily living, computer access training and social/recreational activities

Program participants also receive assistance making emotional and behavioral adjustments through individual counseling sessions and group therapy meetings.

Veterans and eligible active duty service members should contact the Vision Impairment Services Team (VIST) coordinator in the VA facility nearest their home or by contacting the Blind Rehabilitation Service Program office at 202-461-7317.

# Wounded Warrior Program Links Vets, Families To Scholarships

By Elanor Wainscott  
VWWP VISTA

The U.S. Army Quartermaster Foundation recently announced the recipients of the 2013 Lucy Rhea Henry and Sandra Green Henry Scholarships. The scholarship program, established by retired Maj. Gen. Charles R. Henry on behalf of his mother and his wife, recognizes the sacrifice, courage, and dedication demonstrated by members of the Armed Forces in defense of our nation. Virginia residents Rene Pantzke and retired Air Force Tech. Sgt. William H. Bjornes Jr. are the 2013 recipients.

This year the Quartermaster Foundation worked with the Virginia Wounded Warrior Program to help identify potential applicants. "Kerri Gerke, peer support specialist, gave a talk about the VWWP and afterwards I went up to her and talked to her about the scholarship program," said retired Col. Robert Barrett, president, "We look forward to continuing to use the VWWP to help identify potential applicants in the future."

Each scholarship provides up to \$2,500 to assist military personnel and spouses in an undergraduate or technical program leading to an associate degree or a techni-

cal qualification. The children, stepchildren or grandchildren of an eligible military member can receive an award if they are a graduating high school senior who will continue their academic education on a full time basis during the ensuing academic year, leading toward an associate, technical or baccalaureate degree.

"It was a sincere honor to have one of our Virginia Wounded Warrior Program peer support specialists, Keri Gerke, involved with helping to identify candidates for this very generous grant opportunity," said Catherine Wilson, VWWP executive director, "MG Henry exemplifies what it means to pay it forward to our military community. His generosity and the work of The Army Quartermaster Foundation are great examples of the powerful community support for our veterans and their families."

Both Pantzke and Bjornes are regular attendees of a VWWP support group where they learned about the scholarship program.

"I'm happy," said Bjornes. "It was great news to hear that I was awarded this scholarship." Bjornes served for 25 years and medically retired in 2010. He is a 100 percent disabled veteran and plans to put the money toward completing his certifi-

cate in jazz composition and arranging at the Berklee College of Music.

"It's exciting to win this scholarship," said Pantzke. "It relieves some of the financial pressure of going to school." Pantzke said she will use the money to pay for an externship. She is finishing an associate degree in medical coding and billing at Kaplan University and plans to pursue a bachelor's degree in health information technology.

"It is really nice to have this scholarship to honor not only the warrior, but also the family members," said Pantzke. "My husband can't work. Pursuing this career will allow me to work from home and be close to my warrior."

Scholarship applications for the 2014 academic year are currently being accepted. Application packets should be submitted by the end of May 2013. Further information regarding the application process and the applicable forms can be obtained from the Army Quartermaster Foundation, PO Box 5230, Fort Lee, VA 23801 or by calling 804-734-4339 Tuesday through Friday, 10 a.m. – 3 p.m.

Information about the Virginia Wounded Warrior program can be found by visiting the website at [www.WeAreVirginiaVeterans.org](http://www.WeAreVirginiaVeterans.org) or calling 1-877-285-1299.



# Fayetteville Chaplain Participates In Ft. Bragg Casualty Exercise

By Steve Wilkins  
VISN 6 public affairs

Resource sharing between the Fayetteville VAMC and Fort Bragg often focuses on providing for the physical and mental health of Soldiers and Veterans. The sharing has now progressed to caring for spiritual health as well.

Because the occurrence of a catastrophic event is “never a case of “if,” but “when,” a Fayetteville VAMC Chaplain participated in a recent mass casualty exercise at neighboring Fort Bragg. Retired Army Lt. Col. Sam Smith, Fayetteville VAMC’s chief chaplain participated in MASCAL-EX, Fort Bragg’s annual post-wide simulated disaster, March 20. The exercise helps prepare responders to take appropriate action when disaster strikes. Units from around the post and from the local community took part in the collaborative effort.

When crises like this hit an area, the aid response often includes assistance from outside sources, according to Chaplain Ron Leininger of Ft. Bragg’s Womack Army Medical Center. According to Leininger, exercises like these provide Soldiers the opportunity to interact and learn to communicate with responders from outside their units.

According to Smith, the chaplain’s role doesn’t really change from one scenario to another; “the nature of our work is pastoral care,” but he said the religious support is enhanced in this type of situation, as chaplains must gather and coordinate information from wounded individuals about themselves and points of contact they may need to communicate with.

Working alongside Army chaplains and other soldiers is mutually beneficial as Smith believes he brought back some points the Fayetteville VAMC staff may be able to use in their organizational



*Courtesy Photo*

*Chaplain Smith (center white coat) works with personnel from the unit ministry teams from the 82nd Airborne and 44th Medical Brigade, along with Womack Army Medical Center technicians.*

planning.

Leininger said the 3-hour exercise simulated a terrorist bomb explosion at nearby Hedrick Stadium, as well as an active-shooter with hostages inside the Soldier Support Center, where responders worked on 45 role-player casualties. Leininger said the group appreciated having Smith there. “When it happens for real, sadly, we will collaborate again. Today was a great training accomplishment.”

## VA To Use ‘Preliminary Findings’ To Reduce Verification Denials

WASHINGTON – To speed eligibility determinations of Veteran-owned small businesses for “Veterans First” contracts, VA will allow applicants the opportunity to correct minor deficiencies before an initial denial is issued. Starting May 1, VA will begin providing preliminary findings to applicants before completing a comprehensive review of their submissions. This is expected to greatly reduce the number of VA’s initial denials and subsequent requests for reconsideration from companies.

“A large percentage of verification denials are due to single points of failure that can be easily and quickly corrected. This improved process will enable us to bring more deserving Veteran business owners into VA’s system,” said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki. “Our Center for Veterans Enterprise will refine and measure the new process through pilot testing.”

Firms that would be denied based on easily corrected issues will receive a preliminary finding before a determination letter of eligibility is issued. They will have 48 hours to respond with their intent to correct and resubmit the documents within a specified timeframe. All Veteran-owned companies receiving preliminary findings will be encouraged to work with verification-assistance counselors to address identified issues that might result in denial.

CVE has initiated a series of limited pilots to exercise and refine this new process for applying for verification as a Veter-

an-owned small business. The program is aimed at eliminating a large percentage of verification denials that are due to single points of failure.

As VA has improved the program and processes, the average time to initial determination has been reduced from more than 130 days during the summer of 2011 to an average of 46 days for those applications completed last month.

This is the most recent initiative aimed at improving the verification process. In June 2012, Secretary Shinseki announced that VA would double the amount of time - from one year to two years - before the owners of service-disabled, Veteran-owned small businesses and Veteran-owned small businesses had to reverify their status with VA.

The next generation Verification Case Management System is currently under development, with an estimated contract award for a new system in May 2013. This will be a phased program with initial operational capability expected in October 2013.

VA encourages feedback on the providing of preliminary findings to applicants before completing a comprehensive review of their submissions and will post additional information and the listing of easily correctable issues on [www.VetBiz.gov](http://www.VetBiz.gov). CVE has also established a help desk service to address questions at 202-303-3260.

## Salem VAMC Partners To Host Regional Job Fair

Salem VAMC, Virginia Employment Commission, Virginia Wounded warrior program, and Roanoke VA Regional Office are partnering to sponsor their 2nd annual Veterans Only Job Fair, April 30, 2013 from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. in facility auditorium (Building 5).

Thirty employers will be available to discuss job opportunities and offer assistance to Veterans in completing the application pro-

cess. Staff will be on hand to assist with application submissions, resume preparation, and tips and tools to help Veterans get hired. Veterans’ benefits and resources information will be available.

Last year more than 500 Veterans turned out for the Job Fair.

For more information and updates, visit [www.salem.va.gov](http://www.salem.va.gov), check out Salem’s Facebook page [www.facebook.com/Salem-VAMC](http://www.facebook.com/Salem-VAMC), or call 1-888-982-2463, ext. 2520.



## New Automation Process Cuts GI Bill Claims Processing By Half

WASHINGTON – As part of its ongoing transformation from paper-based to electronic claims processing, the Department of Veterans Affairs has continued to improve the automated payment of benefits for Veterans participating in the Post-9/11 GI Bill education program. As a result, VA is now providing benefit payments to currently enrolled students in an average of six days – cutting by more than half the processing time experienced during the spring enrollment period last year.

This enhancement to VA's automated processing system, called the Long Term Solution, uses approximately 80 business rules to support end-to-end automation of Post-9/11 GI Bill claims, ensuring accurate payments without the need for manual handling.

During the month of February, 46 percent of incoming

documents (over 115,000) for enrolled students were fully automated, and an additional 33 percent were partially automated. For enrolled students starting a new semester of classes, processing is taking an average of six days to complete. For new students using the benefit for the first time, the average time to establish their eligibility under the Post-9/11 GI Bill is around 24 days.

The rules-based processing approach LTS uses is also being built into VA's technology for VA's paperless disability claims processing—the Veterans Benefits Management System (VBMS).

Over the past three years, VA has provided \$27 billion in Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits to approximately 938,000 Veterans, service members, and their families. For more information on VA education benefits go to [www.gibill.va.gov/](http://www.gibill.va.gov/).

## TSP Warns About iPhone App

The Thrift Savings Plan website issued a warning to iPhone users to avoid using the “TSP Funds” app from the Apple App store.

The free app is not sanctioned by TSP because it asks participants for account login information. This app is not being offered through the TSP and the TSP does not recommend using this application to access TSP accounts. TSP warns that providing this information could result in a security risk to your account.

For more information on keeping your account safe, see the Security Center ([www.tsp.gov/sitehelp/security/onlineSecurity.shtml](http://www.tsp.gov/sitehelp/security/onlineSecurity.shtml)) on the TSP website or contact the ThriftLine at 1-TSP-YOU-FRST (1-877-968-3778).



[gov/sitehelp/security/onlineSecurity.shtml](http://www.tsp.gov/sitehelp/security/onlineSecurity.shtml)) on the TSP website or contact the ThriftLine at 1-TSP-YOU-FRST (1-877-968-3778).



## Valor Games SE Coming To RDU Area

Valor Games Southeast, a three-day competition in adaptive sports for wounded and injured Veterans and active-duty service members is coming to the Raleigh-Durham area May 21-23. Other host sites for 2013 are San Jose, Calif., June 11-13; Chicago, Aug. 12-14; and San Antonio, Texas, Sept. 24-26.

The Valor Games introduce Veterans and service members to a variety of adaptive sports with the goal of inspiring them to new heights of physical activity and wellness. The Games are funded by the VA National Veterans Sports Programs & Special Events and the U.S. Paralympics.

Expanding the events to four cities makes it easier for Veterans to participate and more cost-effective for them. For Veterans with physical or visual disabilities, participating in sports can be life-changing and empowering. The thrill of competition can awaken confidence and motivation to accomplish goals that had been

previously unimaginable.

Veterans or service members of any era qualify to participate in the Valor Games. Physical disabilities may fall into various categories, including: amputation/limb loss; post-traumatic stress; spinal cord injuries; stroke; traumatic brain injuries; visual disabilities and any disability rating from VA.

Bridge II Sports, an adaptive sports organization that works with the Durham VAMC, will host the Southeast Valor Games. Events including rowing, archery, cycling, air rifle and volleyball will be played in Cameron Indoor Stadium at Duke University, the Dean E. Smith Center at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and in the Reynolds Coliseum area at N.C. State University.

Contestants can register at [www.valor-games-southeast.bridge2sports.org/index.php/register](http://www.valor-games-southeast.bridge2sports.org/index.php/register).

The public can attend the games, and admission is free.



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Elizabeth City, NC  
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**Asheville VAMC**  
1100 Tunnel Road  
Asheville, NC 28805  
828-298-7911, 800-932-6408  
[www.asheville.va.gov/](http://www.asheville.va.gov/)

**Beckley VAMC**  
200 Veterans Avenue  
Beckley, WV 25801  
304-255-2121, 877-902-5142  
[www.beckley.va.gov/](http://www.beckley.va.gov/)

**Brunswick Outreach Clinic**  
20 Medical Campus Drive  
Supply, NC 28462  
910-754-6141

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

**Charlottesville CBOC**  
650 Peter Jefferson Pkwy  
Charlottesville, VA 22911  
434-293-3890

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

**Durham VAMC**  
508 Fulton St.  
Durham, NC 27705  
919-286-0411, 888-878-6890  
[www.durham.va.gov/](http://www.durham.va.gov/)

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

**Fayetteville VAMC**  
2300 Ramsey St.  
Fayetteville, NC 28301  
910-488-2120, 800-771-6106  
[www.fayettevillenc.va.gov/](http://www.fayettevillenc.va.gov/)

**Franklin CBOC**  
647 Wayah St.  
Franklin, NC 28734-3390  
828-369-1781

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

**Greenbrier County CBOC**  
804 Industrial Park Rd.  
Maxwelton, WV 24957  
304-497-3900

**Greenville CBOC**  
800 Moye Blvd.  
Greenville, NC 27858  
252-830-2149

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

**Hampton VAMC**  
100 Emancipation Dr.  
Hampton, VA 23667  
757-722-9961, 866-544-9961  
[www.hampton.va.gov/](http://www.hampton.va.gov/)

**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**  
241 Freedom Way  
Midway Park, NC 28544  
910-353-6406

**Lynchburg CBOC**  
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Lynchburg, VA 24501  
434-316-5000

**Morehead City CBOC**  
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Morehead City, NC 28557  
252-240-2349

**Raleigh CBOC**  
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Raleigh, NC 27610  
919-212-0129

**Raleigh II Annex**  
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Raleigh, NC 27603  
919-899-6259

**Richmond VAMC**  
1201 Broad Rock Blvd.  
Richmond, VA 23249  
804-675-5000, 800-784-8381  
[www.richmond.va.gov/](http://www.richmond.va.gov/)

**Robeson County CBOC**  
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Pembroke, NC 28372  
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**Rutherford County CBOC**  
374 Charlotte Rd.  
Rutherfordton, NC 28139  
828-288-2780

**Salem VAMC**  
1970 Roanoke Blvd.  
Salem, VA 24153  
540-982-2463, 888-982-2463  
[www.salem.va.gov/](http://www.salem.va.gov/)

**Salisbury VAMC**  
1601 Brenner Ave.  
Salisbury, NC 28144  
704-638-9000, 800-469-8262  
[www.salisbury.va.gov/](http://www.salisbury.va.gov/)

**Staunton CBOC**  
102 Business Way  
Staunton, VA 24401  
540-886-5777

**Tazewell CBOC**  
123 Ben Bolt Ave.  
Tazewell, VA 24651  
276-988-2526

**Virginia Beach CBOC**  
244 Clearfield Avenue  
Virginia Beach, VA  
757-722-9961, ext. 1900

**Wilmington CBOC**  
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Wilmington, NC 28401  
910-763-5979

**Winston-Salem CBOC**  
190 Kimel Park Drive  
Winston-Salem, NC 27103  
336-768-3296

**Winston-Salem Annex**  
2101 Peters Creek Parkway  
Winston-Salem, NC 27127  
336-761-5300

**Wytheville CBOC**  
165 Peppers Ferry Rd.  
Wytheville, VA 24382-2363  
276-223-5400

**Beckley Vet Center**  
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Beckley, WV 25801  
304-252-8220

**Charlotte Vet Center**  
2114 Ben Craig Dr.  
Charlotte, NC 28262  
704-549-8025

**Fayetteville Vet Center**  
4140 Ramsey St.  
Fayetteville, NC 28311  
910-488-6252

**Greensboro Vet Center**  
2009 S. Elm-Eugene St.  
Greensboro, NC 27406  
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

**Princeton Vet Center**  
905 Mercer Street  
Princeton, WV 24740  
304-425-5653

**Raleigh Vet Center**  
1649 Old Louisville Rd.  
Raleigh, NC 27604  
919-856-4616

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

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