

VOICES OF VISN 6

— Excellent Care — Earned by Veterans — Delivered Here —



NEW TECHNOLOGY HELPS VETERANS COPE WITH PAIN

Inside This Issue



- 3** VA Nurse's Journey to Deliver 'Best Care Possible'
- 3** Dr. Angela Williams to Serve as Acting Executive Director for Western North Carolina VA Health Care System Starting May 2, 2021
- 4** Durham and Fayetteville Come Together for Women Veterans' Telehealth
- 5** Veteran Recalls D-Day, Iwo Jima, Okinawa
- 6** CGVAMC Ultrasound Supervisor Lauded by Students
- 7** Laughter is the Best Medicine: A Veterans Comedy Show
- 8** VA Establishes 120-Day Task Force on Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Access
- 9** AWWETS to Hold Memorial Day Weekend Event on the Roanoke

A gentleman, more than 80 years old, smiled, exploring the art museum. As he moved from one painting to another, the music playing in the background changed to support the view. His experience, moving through the rooms, admiring the paintings, listening to the music, conjured nostalgic memories of days past, when he made the music. It seemed that some of the joy he got from playing revisited him for a moment. As he left the museum, he felt good, relaxed. He spent some time talking about it. He was ready for the next step. He was due for surgery.

But he wasn't 'really' inside the museum, it wasn't 'really' there. It just felt that way. It felt good. The museum had been part of a therapy used to help calm his nerves. You see, just before he entered the imaginary world of the museum, the man was anxious and scared about going in for surgery. But a visionary nurse used a new therapy, virtual reality (VR), to relax his anxiety and prepare him to move on to the surgery more easily.

"He told me about his favorite music and about his time playing instruments," explained nurse Caitlin Rawlins. Rawlins is an Interim Innovation Specialist and the Virtual Reality Project Lead at Asheville's Charles George VA Medical Center. As a nurse, she helps people heal. But in this role, she helps them feel better, too.

Pain is a distressing feeling that, when intense, can overrule thoughts, feelings and emotions. According to Aetna Insurance Company, long-term daily pain affects 25 million Americans. Historically, pharmaceuticals of varying types and strengths, [including](#)

TOP PHOTO: Nurse Caitlin Rawlins, Virtual Reality Project Lead at Asheville's Charles George VA Medical Center, assists a patient with Virtual Reality therapy.

(Continued on page 4)



MESSAGE FROM OUR ACTING NETWORK DIRECTOR

Greetings,

Can you do me a favor? Do you mind thanking one of our employees next time you see them? And let me tell you why ...

They accomplished so much last month, and it's pretty remarkable. You may have heard about our behind-the-scenes scurrying to support the SAVE LIVES Act — vaccinating individuals who were previously not covered by the congressional mandate for health care in VA. In addition to meeting our obligation to covered Veterans, we adapted to accommodate our new charge.

We quickly developed new processes to identify, vaccinate and track the new population of “patients.” Although we use the same system we’ve been using for our Veterans and emergency response, we distinguished this population to avoid budgetary issues down the road. As a result, we set up separate appointment schedules with appropriate guidance to ensure they received both doses when appropriate.

Then news of the Johnson & Johnson/Janssen COVID-19 vaccine 10-day pause triggered another pivot for us. We adjusted processes and worked hard to educate the meaning and effect of the pause. Unfortunately, those waning moments reinforced hesitancy among those who have not

already received a vaccine. However, we remind Veterans and our staff that our goal is to educate and not convince or condemn people into getting vaccinated, and we continue to do just that. The J&J/Janssen COVID-19 vaccine pause reinforced a few things: that the FDA and CDC’s safety protocols work, and that the J&J/Janssen vaccine’s known and potential benefits outweigh its known and potential risks. Following the rigorous safety review and guidance, we resumed offering the J&J vaccine.

I am reminded of one of the U.S. Marines’ slogans: *Improvise, Adapt and Overcome* — no better slogan speaks to the actions of our employees right now. After combating this for a year and a half, our teams continue to keep us all safe from cleaning surfaces exhaustively, scheduling appointments, maintaining order in lines and administering shots, coordinating staff, filling in wherever needed, ordering supplies, or receiving shipments, working IT in this virtual world, the list goes on and on.

Do you remember that favor I asked in the beginning — to thank one of our employees the next time you see them? Thank YOU, for thanking them.

Onward!

Stephanie Young | *Acting VA Mid Atlantic Health Care Network Director, VISN 6*

VA Nurse's Journey to Deliver 'Best Care Possible'

By Megan Kon | CVHCS PUBLIC AFFAIRS

In 1993, Nishana Mercer wasn't sure what career path she wanted to pursue. She was in college working to become an elementary school teacher when she decided to change career paths. While maintaining employment as a resident assistant at a local retirement community in Henrico, she befriended Stella Wood, a licensed practical nurse. Wood convinced Mercer to consider nursing after she observed how she interacted with residents at the retirement community. Mercer said Wood also commented on her curiosity when it came to understanding patients' medications and diagnoses.

"She made a deal with me," said Mercer. "Ms. Wood told me if I took the entrance test to the LPN school and failed, she would stop trying to convince me to be a nurse. But if I passed, I had to go to nursing school."

Mercer passed the LPN exam and began nursing school.

"From the first clinical day, I was in love with nursing," Mercer said.

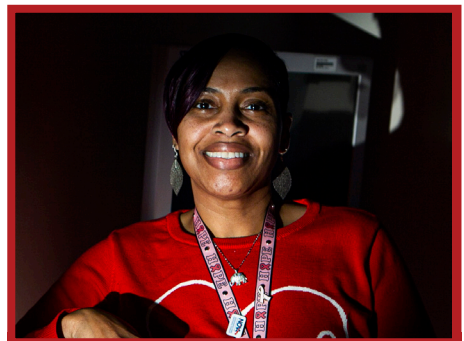
Now, 24 years later, Mercer just complet-

ed her master's degree in nursing from Western Governors University. She has worked as a registered nurse at CVHCS for the past four years in the Ear, Nose and Throat Clinic. She hopes to soon change her path again and help to educate and train future nurses in VA.

"I enjoy assisting the Veteran population and hearing their stories," said Mercer. "At CVHCS, I can be an advocate for my patients and their family members. Each day I can collaborate with other members of the health care team to provide Veterans with the best care possible."

Check out the [20 Reasons Nurses Love Working for the Veterans Health Administration](#).

Click [here](#) to see the medical and medical support positions for VA's COVID-19 Response — including immediate hiring and permanent/temporary positions.



Central Virginia VA Health Care System's (CVHCS) is the largest Veterans hospital in the Commonwealth and is the employer of choice for more than 4,000 employees. Among this workforce is a cadre of more than 1,160 nurses. (CVHCS Photo: Megan Kon/Released)



RIGHT PHOTO: Nishana Mercer is joined by Kimberly Blue and Sheila Mann in front of the Avenue of Flags at the main entrance to the Central Virginia VA Health Care System (CVHCS). Blue and Mann also recently graduated with master's degrees in nursing from Western Governors University. CVHCS is the largest Veterans hospital in the Commonwealth, and is the employer of choice for more than 4,000 employees. Among this workforce is a cadre of more than 1,160 nurses. (Photo courtesy of Mrs. Thelma Roach-Serry, Nurse Manager for Surgical Specialty Clinics.)

Dr. Angela Williams to Serve as Acting Executive Director for Western North Carolina VA Health Care System Starting May 2, 2021

Ms. Stephanie Young, acting network director for VISN 6, welcomes Dr. Angela Williams, associate director for VA Salt Lake City Health Care System, to the acting executive director position for the Western North Carolina VA Health Care System starting May 2, 2021.

"Her long-standing and varied career within VA demonstrates her exceptional

talent for leading change and building solid professional coalitions in all areas of health care operations," said Ms. Young. "We are excited to have her and know she will be an asset to our team."

Ms. Young, appointed executive director for the Western North Carolina VA Health Care System, is currently the acting network director for VISN 6.

Acting Assistant Director, Interim Chief of Environmental Management Service, and Interim Chief of Human Resources.

She earned a Doctorate of Pharmacy degree from the University of Florida and a Master of Science degree in Healthcare Management and Operations from Nebraska Methodist University. Dr. Williams also holds Bachelor of Science degrees in Biology and Chemistry from Occidental College and a Bachelor of Science in Pharmacy from Creighton University.

She is a member of the American College of Clinical Pharmacy and American College of Healthcare Executives.

Dr. Williams is an avid reader who enjoys cooking and hiking after work and on weekends. She strives to live by the motto that you should try to leave a place or situation a little better than you found it. She is married to LaRoy Williams, MD of Urology, and they have two adult sons, Darius and Nathanael.

Please join us in welcoming Dr. Williams to our team!



Dr. Angela Williams Executive Biography:

Dr. Angela Williams, PharmD, MS, VHA-CM, was named the Salt Lake City Health Care System's associate director in May 2019. She has been on detail as the acting associate director for the Wyoming VA Medical Center since March 13, 2021. Recently, her focus has been developing strategies and action plans to bring identified services back into the facility and building action plans to ensure that all encounters are closed in seven days or fewer. Dr. Williams is well versed in all areas of health care operations, both clinical and administrative, and has served in various VA leadership roles: Pharmacy Director, Acting Associate Director of Operations and Finance,

New Technology Helps Veterans Cope With Pain

opioids, have been used to de-emphasize the effect pain had on the brain. But many of the pharmacological medications had adverse side effects, some of which outlast the pain.

The scientific world has confirmed in recent years that some treatments can distract the brain, de-emphasizing the pain, enabling it to function more regularly. Increasingly, health authorities are discovering tangible benefits of complementary and integrative health care (CIH). Complementary and integrative health care (CIH) therapies like hypnosis, aromatherapy, massage, acupuncture, activities including yoga and tai chi, and other therapies that exercise and relax muscles, have been used to relax the mind and distract it from pain. In a similar way, VR can disrupt pain signals to the brain via distraction and focus attention to more positive stimuli. This works the same way for anxiety, stress, boredom, agitation and restlessness.

Virtual Reality uses apparatus to simulate environments. The devices include head-mounted displays (HMD), or rooms equipped with screens connected to computer programs that present views that give the illusion of surrounding or immersing the viewer. Other devices can support the illusion with sensory sound and touch, making the sensation of immersion in the environment quite separate from the actual place the viewer happens to be.

Much of the content within a VR platform may specifically address certain diagnoses. It can guide relaxation, or encourage mindful breathing exercises, and offer meditative spaces to distract from negative stressors and promote a feeling of calm. This is one reason why VR is consistent with the Whole Health approach to care that the VA has embraced, which is designed to empower and equip Veterans to live their lives to the fullest. The software may also include gamified approaches to distraction through interactive games, scavenger hunts, or mind-stimulating puzzles.

Sessions typically last about 30 minutes. Rawlins contends, “Virtual reality transports patients out of their hospital bed, out of the chemotherapy infusion clinic, even out of their wheelchair to a world where their negative stressors do not exist.”

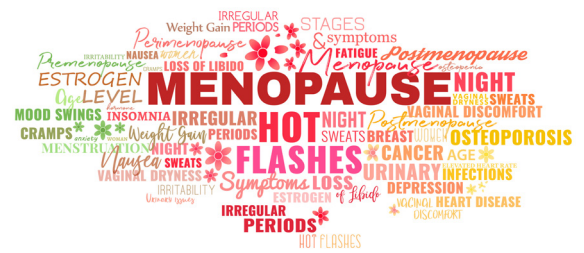
VR was first used with Veterans at the Charles George Medical Center in July 2018. “Being able to watch a patient struggling with severe pain begin to smile, laugh, or even fall asleep — finally getting relief from the pain that opioids only mask, is extremely gratifying,” Rawlins declared with satisfaction.

She relates a scene in which a different patient, wheelchair-bound, is on a hiking excursion: The Veteran suffers from chronic pain, cognitive decline, and is often agitated. But during the hike she climbed rocks, gazed at flowers, deer and butterflies. “During her VR experience, she told me that she used to volunteer at the local nature center. She truly lit up with joy!” That moment improved the Veteran’s quality of life, also giving her and her caregivers a reprieve from the diagnoses that frequently torment her.

Rawlins says VR may also be used with management of phantom limb pain, fall risk and neurological assessments, and eye movement desensitization, on a growing list.

“It’s never about the numbers,” she says. But the quantitative data shows it is efficacious for pain and anxiety, but importantly, the Veteran’s response to it.” As the use of Virtual Reality continues to expand across the VHA, Rawlins hopes it will play a significant role in research and care delivery. “Virtual reality brings the outside world to our patients when they need it the most. They are no longer isolated, stuck, in pain, etc., but they are free.” In addition to possible Virtual Reality offerings in VA medical centers, Veterans and staff can also find resources in the Live Whole Health app, available to Veterans and VA staff for free in the VA app store.

Durham and Fayetteville Come Together for Women Veterans’ Telehealth



Durham VA Women’s Health is now offering Tele-Menopause, the first interfacility Telemedicine consult for Menopause within VISN 6. The Menopause Telemedicine interfacility program (Tele-Menopause) offers specialty counseling, evaluation and coordination of treatment for menopause-specific concerns directly to women Veterans via VA Video Connect. Currently, the interfacility program is available to women Veterans enrolled at the Fayetteville VA Health System.

The service is a win for everyone, since it makes the appointments more convenient for Veterans, who won’t need to wait long for appointments or venture into the community for this aspect of gynecologic care. Tele-Menopause also relieves demands on facility staff when requests approach threshold levels.

During menopause and the menopausal transition (the period of time before fully entering menopause), many changes happen in a woman’s body. The effects can be stressful and painful. Many women experience hot flashes, depression or anxiety, vaginal dryness. Sexual activity can be painful as well. Menopause can affect other parts of the body and may exacerbate pre-existing health problems. Their need for care could be severe, without warning, immediate and yet, non-emergent.

The Tele-Menopause program is a stop-gap solution developed by Dr. Kara McElligott Park, an experienced women’s health clinician at the Durham VA who is board-certified in OB/GYN and Obesity Medicine. The program is currently open to women Veterans in the Fayetteville or Durham catchment areas experiencing bothersome symptoms, or comorbidities exacerbated by menopause.

Menopause is a common, gender-specific condition, so all providers should be aware of this availability. Fayetteville VACHCS Clinicians can order the consults through IFC VVC Menopause/Menopausal Transition – Durham, and Durham VAHCS Clinicians may place a consult to Gynecology and request Tele-Menopause.

For other questions regarding the Tele-Menopause program, you can reach Dr. McElligott Park via email at kara.mcelligottpark@va.gov.

Veteran Recalls D-Day, Iwo Jima, Okinawa

By Rosaire Bushey and Chaplain Greg Schmalfeldt

In February 2021, Lewis Cobbler, 96, was recovering from a case of COVID-19 in the High Consequence Infection ward at the Salem VA Hospital, but he went back in time to 1944 to tell of his drafting by the U.S. Navy, and how, by June 6, 1944, he was serving aboard the *USS Arkansas* as it barraged German positions at Omaha Beach in support of the D-Day landings.

Chaplains like Greg Schmalfeldt, himself an Air Force Veteran, are an important part of the VA's Veteran-centered holistic care model, providing spiritual care and counseling for Veterans and nurturing the spiritual health of Veterans' families, caregivers, providers, staff and community stakeholders. So, sitting down decked out in full PPE is part of what VA Chaplains do every day. On this day, Schmalfeldt took notes as he spoke with a member of America's Greatest Generation.

Their discussion was halting and sometimes disjointed, but Cobbler's recollection of the *USS Arkansas*' path from northern France to Japan was clear.

"My job was to bring up supplies from four decks down," Cobbler said when asked what he did in the war. "The officer in the motor room gets a message — 'Full speed ahead' — and he'd no more than said that than he said, 'Full speed aft.' We were going in (toward Omaha Beach) and they saw we were going in between two guns. If we'd have gone in and dropped anchor, they would have got us."

The *Arkansas*, known in the Navy as the *Arky*, was the oldest battleship in active combat duty in the Navy by 1944. Its keel was laid down in 1910, one of only two ships in the Wyoming Dreadnought class, and the last to use 12-inch guns; in the *Arky*'s case, six twin-mounted turrets. On D-Day, the ship was parked about 4,000 yards off Omaha Beach, well within range of its 12 main guns.

"Some of the sailors on the ship were sent out on landing craft to the beach, and we were used as a hospital until a hospital ship could be brought in," Cobbler recalls. "We picked up pieces of guard rail (out of the ocean) that had 'U.S.' written on it and used them to help people board the ship."

As a coastal bombardment platform, the *Arky* packed a punch, throwing 870-pound shells with 353 pounds of propellant. At 12,000 yards, the *Arky*'s guns could penetrate 12.3 inches of face-hardened armor. The ship also sported eight 3-inch, 50-caliber anti-aircraft guns, which would become especially useful in the Pacific Theater.

"Our captain, when we went to Normandy, the skipper said, 'Bring the batteries to fire,' and he'd say, 'Double the powder, double the powder,'" Cobbler says. "We had 12-inch guns, and we'd use that double powder. It might not help none, he'd say, but they'd get there quicker."

Cobbler moved his hands together to show how the *Arky* was sitting and said that when they used double powder, the guns would twist the ship. "When we got 14 days leave, they took the ship to the Navy yard to



straighten it out."

After Omaha Beach, the *Arky* took part in the bombardment of Cherbourg, and then as part of Operation Dragoon, the invasion of Southern France. By August, the ship and Cobbler were heading to the Pacific.

The first stop for the *Arky* was Iwo Jima where the ship and crew provided bombardment support in February 1945, followed by the Battle of Okinawa in April.

"The Germans fought like we did," Cobbler remembers. "They'd go to sleep, and you could get some sleep, but the (Japanese) saved up enough to keep you awake. We'd say the Japanese work all day and party all night."

"[In the Pacific,] we didn't think we were in any danger, and then a (Japanese) would come over, and we knew he was up there and we knew he was coming down, but we didn't know where or when. [Just that we had to] get behind a gun." In fact, the *Arkansas* was repeatedly attacked by Kamikazes during the ship's 46 days off Okinawa.

The *Arkansas* earned four battle stars for World War II service, and when the fighting was over, the ship was used as part of Operation Magic Carpet, bringing U.S. servicemembers home from the Pacific Theater.

The ship's final mission was to serve as a target vessel for atomic bomb tests at Bikini Atoll, surviving an initial air-burst test. In July 1946, the ship was engulfed in a column of water from an underwater atomic blast and quickly sank.

LEFT PHOTO: A photo of Lewis Cobbler after basic training, courtesy of the Cobbler family.

BELOW LEFT: Above, sailors on the *Arkansas* watch Jack Haley's USO Show in Oran, North Africa, probably 1944. (Photo: U.S. Navy, US National Archives) **BELOW RIGHT:** *USS Arkansas* (BB-33) shells German position on Omaha Beach, June 6, 1944. Onboard the *Arkansas* was Lewis Cobbler, now 96 and a patient at Salem VA HCS. (Photo: U.S. Navy, US National Archives)



VHA OBSERVES 75 Years 1 Billion Hours of Volunteerism

The Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA) Veterans Health Administration (VHA) celebrates its 75-year milestone anniversary during National Volunteer Week, April 18-24.

In 1946, VA established the Department of Medicine and Surgery (DM&S), the organization that would later become the Veterans Health Administration and provide health care to Veterans as a core mission.

VA Voluntary Service (VAVS) was one of the foundational programs created in the newly established DM&S which is marking 1 billion hours that volunteers have given of their time in service to Veterans at VA facilities.

"Volunteers are a priceless asset, and our Veterans greatly appreciate what they do and have done for three quarters of a century," said Center for Development and Civic Engagement Director Sabrina Clark. "VA volunteerism is a tradition that has created opportunities for volunteers to serve Veterans, even during a global pandemic."

At the beginning of VHA's COVID-19 response, VAVS adapted its program to meet the needs of Veterans. Although in-person volunteer engagements were limited, VAVS designed new virtual assignments, and galvanized volunteers and organizations to donate items, such as handmade masks, personal protective equipment, smart tablets for Veterans to stay in touch with loved ones, and even meals for frontline workers.

Where many believed volunteer operations to be suspended, VAVS continued its mission to involve the American public in civic engagement activities on behalf of the nation's Veterans. They saw approximately 46,000 volunteers on the rolls during 2020, contributing more than 4.4 million hours of service, and \$108 million in gifts and donations, resulting in a value-added resource of approximately \$227 million to VA, Veterans, families and caregivers.

To learn more about available volunteer opportunities and to join the mission to honor the sacrifice and service of America's Veterans, contact VA Voluntary Service.



Charles George VA Medical Center Ultrasound Supervisor Robert McCauley

CGVAMC Ultrasound Supervisor Lauded by Students

By Vance Janes | WNC VA HEALTH CARE SYSTEM PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICER

ASHEVILLE, N.C. — Charles George VA Medical Center Ultrasound Supervisor Robert McCauley has made quite an impression on a group of students from Asheville-Buncombe Technical Community College.

So much of an impression that they cumulatively voted McCauley as the instructor who has had the most impact on their education for 2021.

"Thank you for all you do for our students," an email from the Chair of Medical Sonography stated. "You go out of your way to make sure they get to scan and learn. We all appreciate you very much!"

The Sonography curriculum at A-B Tech prepares the graduate to be a sonographer, a skilled health care professional who uses high-frequency sound waves to produce dynamic visual images of organs, tissues, or blood flow inside the body.

As part of that program, students do their clinical rotation at CGVAMC.

Graduates of accredited programs are eligible to apply to take the American Registry for Diagnostic Medical Sonography (ARDMS) national examination for certification as medical sonographers. A-B Tech graduates are eligible for the following ARDMS registries:

SONOGRAPHY PRINCIPLES AND INSTRUMENTATION
Abdomen
Obstetrics/Gynecology
Vascular Technology

Charles George VAMC Imaging Service is proud play a part in the education of future professionals in the community.

Connie West, an Ultrasonographer at Charles George VAMC who works with McCauley, said his dedication to the students is unmatched.

"He takes time; he talks to the students; and he is very, very good at what he does," West said. "I've been scanning for 22 years, and if I run into something [out of the ordinary] I ask him to take a look at it. He's awesome, just good at everything."

Of the recognition, McCauley said he is excited because it shows the impact the VA has on the students it trains.

"We know we do a great job caring for our Veterans and each other," McCauley said. "But we may not always think about the impact that we play in the development of our Imaging students."

McCauley also said the recognition goes beyond just him. He credits the success as a group effort from the Ultrasound team at Charles George VAMC.



Laughter is the Best Medicine: A Veterans Comedy Show

By Steve Wilkins | VISN 6 PUBLIC AFFAIRS

Hampton VA Medical Center celebrated Whole Health Month with virtual comedy shows by Veterans April 16 and April 23. The “Laughter is the Best Medicine” performances featured six Veterans who graduated from Comedy Bootcamps offered by the non-profit Armed Services Arts Partnership (ASAP). They offered their hilarious views on life, love, and on being a Veteran. The performances were attended by a total of more than 300 from across the U.S., and they highlighted Hampton’s expansion of arts and humanities programs for Veterans as a way to support health and community.

“Laughter has important health benefits for Veterans and staff,” Dr. Jennifer Daly, Hampton VAMC Whole Health System Coordinator, explains. “Laughter not only changes our moods but improves pain management, reduces anxiety, elevates mood, and even improves immune functioning.” In her pre-show talk about the value of comedy for health, Daly noted that laughing works abdominal and other muscles and burns about 200 calories an hour, making it a good exercise for mind and body. Hampton is partnering with ASAP to provide Veterans with access to writing, storytelling, acting, drawing and improvisation as well as comedy.

There is scientific evidence to back health claims about laughter. A 2005 article in *Psychology Today* by Hara Estroff Marano points to a study by Dr. Michael Miller that shows that laughter affects the inner lining of blood vessels, relaxing them, increasing blood flow and benefitting the heart and brain due to improved oxygen delivery. Other studies have shown that laughter helps to reduce mental stress, improves focus so you can be

more productive, can help social life and relieves pain.

Although the comedians’ audience came to hear their jokes, they did a lot to help their own wellbeing. That is the point of Whole Health, according to Daly. Whole Health is a holistic approach to healthcare that includes traditional medicine along with other evidence-based practices to encourage Veterans and VA staff members to take charge of their health and wellbeing. Daly says, “Whole Health is about helping staff and Veterans to focus on what really matters in their lives, to empower people to live abundantly, and to

self-compassion, mindfulness, and gratitude. “Many studies over the past decade have found that people who consciously count their blessings tend to be happier and less depressed,” according to Daly. An entire week was focused on helping people to develop a gratitude practice through journaling, sharing appreciation, and noticing small moments of gratitude. Like the comedy show, some activities were more entertaining, and others explored deeper themes of spirituality and change.

April’s Whole Health month encouraged Veterans Medical Centers across the U.S. to renew their commitment to proactive, patient-driven care and celebrate the value of Whole Health in the lives of both Veterans and employees. This year’s theme was “Be Alive. Be Well. Be Whole.” Hampton’s comedy event was made possible by an Arts and Humanities expansion grant from VA’s Office of Patient-Centered Care and Cultural Transformation.

Hampton Whole Health has conducted several successful promotions over the past five years, including a Whole Health fair that attracted in excess of 400 participants, a virtual 10-day fitness challenge that engaged more than 300 staff, and an annual VA2K to support employee health and homeless Veterans. Daly says Hampton plans to sponsor comedy workshops, guitar lessons for Veterans, line dancing and another health fair in May, with other attractions planned for the remainder of 2021.

Daly contends that encouraging employee awareness and participation in Whole Health-related activities helps each of them and enables them to engage Veterans concerning complementary and integrated health options offered by VA providers.

Whole Health Month 2021



Be Alive. Be Well. Be Whole.

“If we want people to fully show up, to bring their whole selves including their unarmored, whole hearts — so that we can innovate, solve problems, and serve people — we have to be vigilant about creating a culture in which people feel safe, seen, heard and respected.”

— Brene Brown

move toward a future that spotlights relationships, joy, and enthusiasm.”

Dr. Daly and her team offered over 20 interactive events and activities during the month of April that touch different aspects of life, from Tai Chi, Zumba and weight loss to



VA Establishes 120-Day Task Force on Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Access

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Secretary Denis McDonough established a 120-day task force April 1 to conduct a whole-of-VA review and to design and implement a holistic and integrated VA mission on inclusion, diversity, equity and access.

VA strives to provide quality care and services to all Veterans regardless of age, race,

ethnicity, gender and sexual identity, but a 2019 Government Accountability Office report reveals that Veterans from underserved communities continue to face barriers to accessing VA health services.

“Systemic barriers that underserved communities face many times negatively impact Veterans,” said McDonough. “In order

to overcome many of these barriers, VA must tap into its vast diversity and use it as a major source of strength. The implementation of this task force will help the department become the inclusive, diverse, equitable and accessible team our Veterans, their families, survivors and caregivers deserve.”

The task force is charged with providing concrete and actionable recommendations addressing inclusion, diversity, equity and access to the secretary no later than July 31, and will focus on five objectives:

1. Ensure execution of requirements outlined in Executive Order 13985 and any other subsequent and relevant Executive Orders.
2. Examine and develop VA’s strategic mission, goals and objectives on inclusion, diversity, equity and access.
3. Conduct a whole-of-VA review of policies, programming, training and strategic communications for workforce and Veterans’ initiatives.
4. Identify opportunities to leverage data to inform and operationalize inclusion, diversity, equity and access.
5. Develop institutional access points for underserved communities to establish strategic partnerships with VA.

Led by the Chair, Deputy Chief of Staff and White House Liaison Chris Diaz — additional members of the task force include:

Assistant Under Secretary for Health and Clinical Services **Kameron Matthews M.D.**

Assistant Deputy Under Secretary for Field Operations **Cheryl Rawls.**

Deputy Chief Veterans Experience Officer **Barbara Morton.**

Acting Assistant Secretary for the Office of Accountability and Whistleblower Protection **Hansel Cordeiro.**

Executive Director of the National Center for Organizational Development **Maureen Marks, Ph.D.**

Deputy Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs **Melissa Bryant.**

Senior Advisor to the Secretary and Veteran Service Organizations **Liaison Ray Kelley.**

Acting Executive Director for the Center for Minority Veterans **Dennis May.**

Acting Executive Director for the Center for Women Veterans **Elizabeth Estabrooks.**

Chief of Staff at the Office of Enterprise Integration **Shana Love-Holmon.**

Clinical Implementation Lead for PRIDE **Tiffany Lange, Psy.D.**

Executive Director for the Center for Innovation **Ryan Vega, M.D.**

Executive Director for Human Capital Management **Lisa Thomas, Ph.D.**

Special Counsel Tahmika **Ruth Jackson, JD, LL.M.**

Director of the Office of Tribal Government Relations **Stephanie Birdwell.**

Special Assistant to the Secretary and Deputy White House Liaison **James Anderson** (facilitator).

Deputy Assistant Secretary for the Office of Resolution Management, Diversity & Inclusion **Harvey Johnson.**

The task force recommendations will aim to eliminate barriers so that all Veterans have equal treatment and experiences when interacting with VA. More to follow at the conclusion of the 120-day period.



Remembrance on the River

AMVETS to Hold Memorial Day Weekend Event on the Roanoke

Remembrance on the River is a yearly event held by the North Carolina AMVETS on the banks of the beautiful Roanoke River at River Falls Park in Weldon, N.C. Slated for May 27-30, this inspiring event's two primary founders are the N.C. AMVETS Service Foundation and Bruce Tyler. The event will seek to reflect, recognize, and respect America's fallen military heroes and their families.

Bruce Tyler (U.S. Army Ret.), served 27 years in the Active Army, Reserves, and N.C. National Guard. This project is very important to Bruce, as his sister became a Gold Star Widow after her husband and his Blackhawk crew were shot down in Afghanistan. Bruce will join the Ride to Remember riders, [previously known as](#) Rolling Thunder, for their last stretch into Weldon on Thursday, May 27th, somewhere around 11:00 at River Falls Park in Weldon, for anyone wishing to be present and to show support.

Remembrance on the River 2021 will include the

North Carolina Vietnam Traveling Wall, owned and built by AMVETS Post 906 in South Port, N.C.; the War on Terrorism Memorial, housed in Chesterfield, Va.; the N.C. National Guard History and static display; and the John Dixon Vietnam Historic Display. All memorials and displays will be open Thursday, May 27-Sunday, May 30, and are free to the public.

The public is also invited to participate in the living memorial, the Field of Flags, built throughout the weekend by visitors. Flags can be placed in honor of, or in memory of your buddy, your unit, your ship, your family member, or all Veterans who served. Proceeds from the Field of Flags will directly support projects targeting Gold Star Families, helping to pay off home mortgages. Remembrance on the River is solely volunteer. For more information, contact Jean Reaves (jean.reaves579@gmail.com) or visit the website at www.remembranceontheriver.org

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 | 888-878-6880
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

Clayton CBOC

11618 US Hwy 70 Business Highway West,
Suites 100 & 200
Clayton, NC 27520

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

2580 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

2270 College Avenue, Suite 145
Forest City, NC 28043-2459
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 Ellstree Lane
Raleigh, NC 27617
(919) 361-6419

Roanoke Vet Center

1401 Franklin Rd SW
Roanoke, VA 24016
540-342-9726

Virginia Beach Vet Center

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

VISN 6 Newsletter

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

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

VISN 6 EDITORIAL

Stephanie Young // Acting VISN 6 Network Director
Tara Ricks // Director of Communications
Steve Wilkins // Editor

PRODUCTION TEAM

Fanning Communications
John Fanning // President + CEO
DeAnna Clark // Graphic Designer
Karl J. Paloucek // Editor + Copywriter

