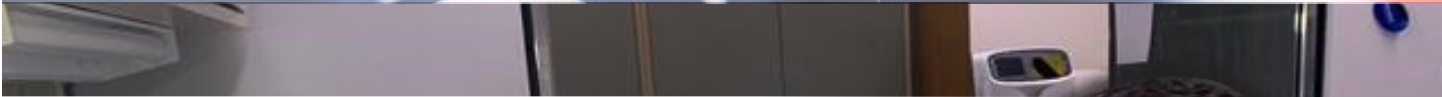


VOICES OF VISN 6

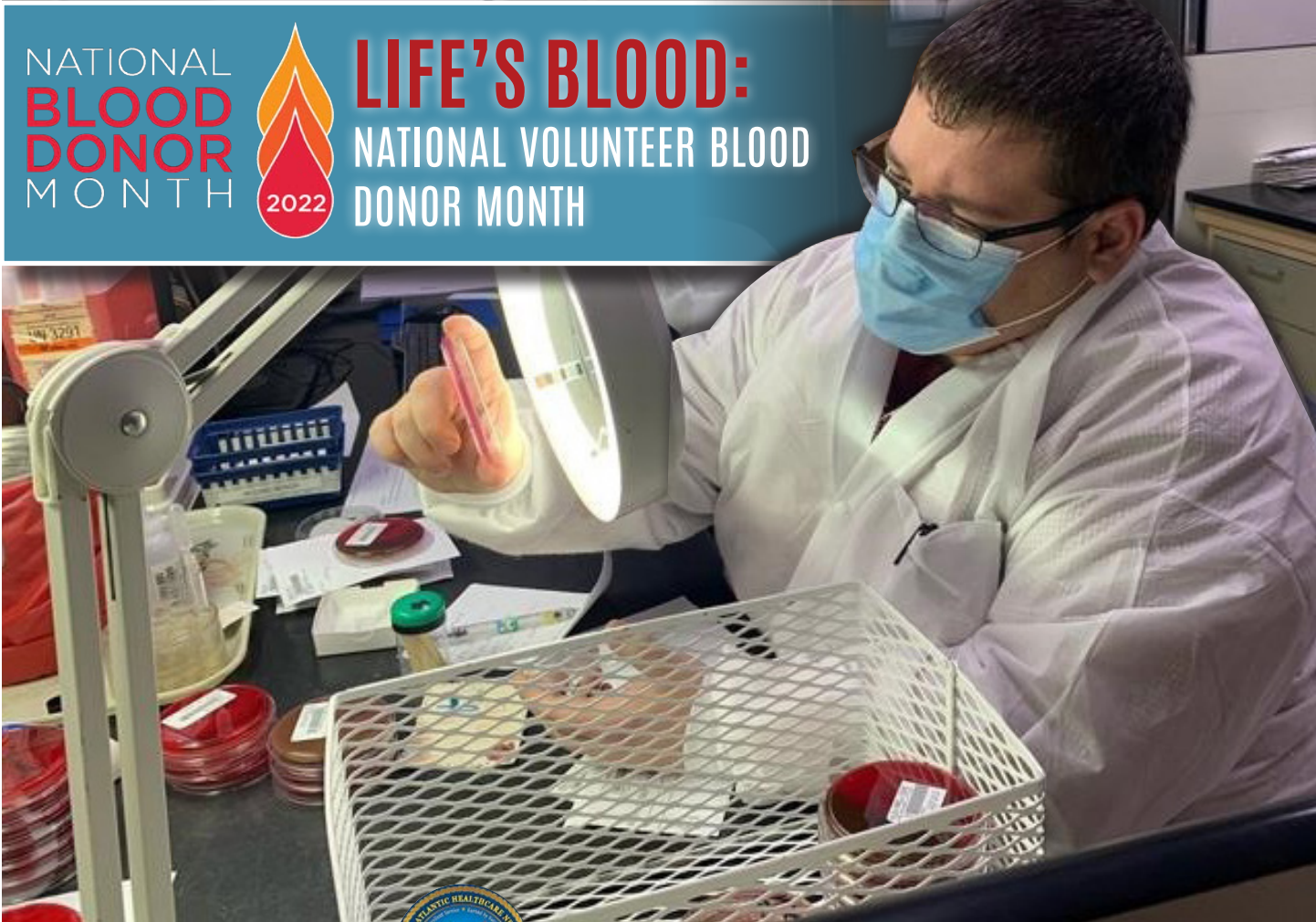
Excellent Care – Earned by Veterans – Delivered Here



NATIONAL
BLOOD
DONOR
MONTH



LIFE'S BLOOD:
NATIONAL VOLUNTEER BLOOD
DONOR MONTH



Inside This Issue



By Joshua Edson | DVAHCS INTEGRATED STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS OFFICE

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Since 1969, January has been designated as National Blood Donor Month. This simple act of volunteer blood donation can save a life — and that life could be the life of a Veteran, their family members or someone else touched by military service.

With another COVID-19 crisis looming, [blood](#) donation centers and hospitals across the Nation have limited supplies of most blood types and there is an emergency need for blood donations. Blood is being distributed to hospitals faster than donations are coming in. According to Red Cross statistics, every two seconds someone in the United States needs blood.

“There is a misconception that we need blood products only for surgeries and transfusions,” says Dr. Elizabeth Boswell, Chief of Pathology and Lab Services at the

TOP PHOTO: Dr. James Everheart, a Medical Microbiologist Fellow at the DVAHCS, examines cultures at the DVAHCS Pathology lab. Blood Donations received by the DVAHCS undergo rigorous tests before being cleared for medical use.

(Continued on page 5)

MESSAGE FROM OUR DIRECTOR



Dear Stakeholders,

We continued to see high COVID-19 positive testing rates throughout the region. However, the last few weeks indicate a slow decline of positive tests, and the current positivity rate remains well above the levels seen in any initial surge.

If you are fully vaccinated, especially if you're boosted, you are highly protected. No vaccine is 100% effective, and as the number of people who have been vaccinated for COVID-19 goes up, the number of vaccine breakthrough infections will also increase. It remains true that the risk of disease and death remains much higher for those that unvaccinated. Our experts continue to recommend multi-layer prevention strategies: masks in public indoor settings, practicing physical distancing, frequent handwashing, improving ventilation, and testing to slow its transmission. Even if you don't have symptoms and don't believe that you have been exposed, using a self-test before gathering indoors with others can help you to reduce the risk of spreading the virus that causes COVID-19.

If you haven't heard, you can now get four free, at-home COVID-19 tests. The United States Postal Service will deliver them right to your door. Go to this [link](#) for more information. Self-tests are great options if you have symptoms, or have been exposed or potentially exposed to an individual with COVID-19.

February is Black History Month, and our sites across the region are putting aside time to celebrate and recognize the achievements of Black Americans and honor the significant contributions they make today and throughout U.S. history in all facets of society.

As the President's proclamation reads: "Each February, National Black History Month serves as both a celebration and a powerful reminder that Black history is American history, Black culture is American culture, and Black stories are essential to the ongoing story of America — our faults, our struggles, our progress, and our aspirations. Shining a light on Black

history today is as important to understanding ourselves and growing stronger as a Nation as it has ever been. That is why it is essential that we take time to celebrate the immeasurable contributions of Black Americans, honor the legacies and achievements of generations past, reckon with centuries of injustice, and confront those injustices that still fester today."

The Black History Month 2022 theme is Black Health and Wellness. VA leads the nation in providing health care services to Veterans. The Department celebrates the momentous achievements of Black Americans in the field of health care throughout U.S. history. Two incredible examples of Black American trailblazers in medicine are Dr. James McCune Smith (1813-1865) and Dr. Rebecca Lee Crumpler (1831-1895). Dr. McCune was the first Black American to receive a medical degree, the first Black American to own and operate a pharmacy, and the first Black physician published in U.S. medical journals. After years as a nurse, Dr. Crumpler became the first Black woman in the U.S. to receive a medical degree from the New England Female Medical College in Boston, Mass. She was also the institution's only Black graduate.

Fast forwarding to today, VA is the top employer of Black Americans out of all the federal agencies, with Black Americans representing more than 25 percent of the VA workforce, compared to the federal government as a whole, having 18 percent Black American representation. But this is just the beginning — there is much more to do.

The push for more diversity, inclusion, and the elimination of health inequities amongst our Black American Veterans and under-represented communities, continue to shape the future of VA Health Care. In 2019, there were approximately 2.15 million Black American Veterans in the United States, representing approximately 12 percent of the total Veteran population. Representation of Black Americans and all ethnic groups in health care is imperative to ensuring that all Veterans from all walks of life, backgrounds and cultures receive equitable treatment and have equitable health solutions.

VISN 6 is committed to leading the way in cultivating and sustaining a diverse, inclusive workforce at all levels of our organization — from the top down. As of today, VISN 6 employs 21,060 individuals. Out of that number, 8,055 are Black Americans (38 percent), 10,733 are White (51 percent), and 2,272 are Hispanic American, Asian American, Pacific Islander, American Indian, or other ethnicities (11 percent). People of diverse ethical and cultural backgrounds account for more than 49 percent (10,327) of our workforce in VISN 6. We believe that it is imperative to combat social health determinants for our Veterans, and to embrace diversity and innovation in the workforce. A diverse workforce is the only way to build more culturally competent health care solutions and outcomes for the Veterans we serve.

COVID-19 put a spotlight on the health inequities amongst historically underserved communities. We have a lot of work to do, and we are committed to making sustainable change in Veteran health care. In 2020 and 2021, we stood up diversity, inclusion and equity committees throughout the VISN that focused on education, complex two-way conversations, and weaving inclusivity and diversity into all of our practices. In 2021, four core questions regarding diversity, equity and inclusion were added to the all-employee survey with the goal of tangible change at all levels of the organization and processes. Change is happening.

We believe a system or a process without diverse representation is a risk to the health of our Black American Veterans, and to all Veterans of diversity — we can't let that happen. We are taking these issues seriously and taking action. Culture change doesn't just happen overnight; every day, every conversation, every change moves us towards a stronger environment where all people are represented, they feel valued, heard and included — that's how we get better.

PAUL S. CREWS

MPH, FACHE, VISN 6 Network Director



From Left: George Wilson, '71, Tanya Jones, Homeless Program Coordinator, Susanne Tribble, HUD-VASH, Darnell Wood, president, '80, Amanda Saoit, Trust House liaison, Barbara Reynolds, '77, Jeremy Floyd, HUD-VASH, William Lee, former Salem VA Chaplain, '74, Leslie Hindle, Healthcare for Re-entry Social Worker, and Michael Wilson, '71.



Virginia State University Alumni Association Donates on Behalf of Homeless Vets

The [Virginia State University Alumni Association](#) Roanoke Chapter presented the Salem VA Homeless Program a donation of \$1,050 for the purchase of items needed by area homeless Veterans. The VSUAA, under

the direction of Darnell Wood, President, discussed barriers faced by homeless Veterans, such as lack of resources, including household items for the newly housed, as well as comfort or warm-weather items to

sustain Veterans during the winter months. Rev. Dr. William “Bill” Lee, who retired from the Salem VA as a Chaplain, helped lead the donation initiative.



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U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs

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The VHA's Graduate Healthcare Administrative Training Program (GHATP) is giving Brandon Martin the chance to help to lead change within health care systems, as one of two program participants at the Fayetteville NC VA Coastal Health Care System.



The VHA's Graduate Healthcare Administrative Training Program (GHATP) is giving Kayla Remboldt the chance to help to lead change within health care systems, as one of two program participants at the Fayetteville NC VA Coastal Health Care System.

VHA Training Program Helps Prepare the Next Generation of Health Care Administrators

By Gail Cureton

FAYETTEVILLE, NC VA HCS PUBLIC AFFAIRS

As a child in rural South Carolina, Brandon Martin saw the challenges his family faced getting medical care for a cousin with autism, and the impact helped shape his career interest.

“[My family] would have to travel upwards of an hour to get to medical appointments,” Martin said. “That just didn’t sit well with me. I wanted to make a difference and work with underserved populations.”

After receiving his bachelor’s degree in public health, he was interested in working for a non-profit. While studying for his master’s degree, Martin saw himself fulfilling a broader goal of helping to lead change within health care systems.

Working as a healthcare administrative trainee in Fayetteville is affording him and another trainee that opportunity.

The VHA’s Graduate Healthcare Administrative Training Program (GHATP) is giving him that chance as one of two program participants at the Fayetteville NC VA Coastal Health Care System. GHATP is a one-year appointment and includes comprehensive rotations throughout the various departments which offer valuable information and excellent opportunities for growth.

Kayla Remboldt is Fayetteville’s other GHATP trainee, and like Martin, her health care focus changes during an internship in women’s health as part of her master’s degree program.

“I did some data collection and analysis and put together presentations for them. That really got me thinking that I have a skill set that would apply well in healthcare administration.”

Managers across the health system say their leadership and professional skills are assisting in a variety of programs.

Remboldt has made a significant impact facilitating HRO discussions, according to Anthony Martin, the health care system High Reliability Organization Coordinator. “She has a knack for engaging our employees and helping foster open communication which has yielded opportunities for improvement to provide valuable and efficient healthcare to our Veterans,” said Martin.

Starting the training program during the COVID pandemic gave Brandon Martin a unique opportunity to make an immediate impact supporting the need open a new ward to accommodate a surge in COVID patients.

“He pulled all of the administrative, clinical and nursing staff together to design a time and task-oriented plan to successfully activate the ward,” said Sharon Henderson, Acting Chief of Development and Community Engagement, who also served as Health System Specialist for Employee Engagement. “Brandon was able to accomplish this in a COVID-constrained environment when the key players were being pulled in multiple directions.”

The one-year appointments will end in the summer, but both are hoping to continue their pursuit of opportunities as health care leaders and change agents.

“Many steps are being taken to improve the culture of the organization and the care we provide to Veterans.”

Remboldt agreed. “Oftentimes, it can be difficult for administrative staff to see our impact since we often do not work directly with patients, she said. “However, through my interactions with frontline staff and participation in process improvement initiatives, I feel that my work has indirectly demonstrated a positive impact to Veteran care at the Fayetteville VA,” she said.

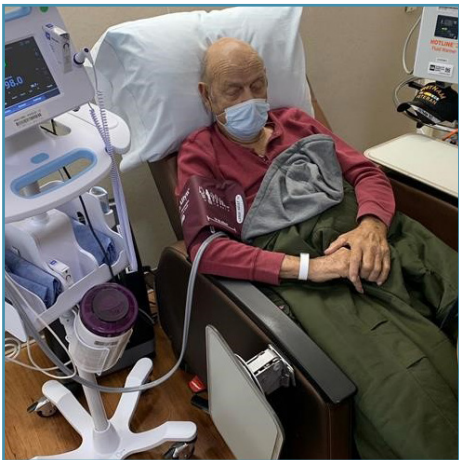
Executive Director Dan Dücker said that GHATP program is a benefit to not only the trainees but the organization.

“I think we have given them a great opportunity to work with a wide range of services — clinical and non-clinical and staff at every level, from frontline to executive leadership. Kayla and Brandon have helped us look at things through a different lens, they’ve shared their technical skills and innovative ideas to help us better support our Veterans and staff. I think we are better for having them here.”



CONTINUED FROM COVER

LIFE'S BLOOD: NATIONAL VOLUNTEER BLOOD DONOR MONTH



Mr. Tommy Long, an Army Vietnam Veteran, receives a blood transfusion to counteract the effects of chronic anemia. January was National Volunteer Blood Donor Month. With national blood banks at critically low levels, eligible donors are needed now more than ever.

Durham VA Healthcare System. “We certainly need blood for that, but we also need blood products for research, testing and many other medical procedures.”

Donating blood is safe and easy. The process usually takes about 45 minutes to an hour. Once collected, the blood moves to a central processing facility where it is thoroughly tested before being sent to a hospital or other medical facility.

“Once we get it, we test it again,” says Dr. Boswell. “There are a lot of checks and balances when it comes to blood products and the donation process.”

The DVAHCS is fortunate regarding its blood supply. While the nationwide shortage has had an impact, additional donation sources have lessened the effects.

“We’re doing better than some facilities,” says Dr. Boswell. “Fort Bragg, the Red

Cross and the Blood Connection have really come through for us. The more suppliers and options we have, the better.”

For Mr. Tommy Long, an Army Vietnam Veteran who suffers from chronic anemia, access to regular blood transfusions is a literally a life-or-death matter.

“When someone gives blood,” says Mr. Long, “They make it possible for me to spend another day with my family. If you can, please give. We need all the help we can get.”

If you are healthy enough to donate, please visit the Red Cross (<https://www.redcrossblood.org>) or the Blood Connection (<https://thebloodconnection.org>) to find and schedule an appointment. Your effort will help ensure that we are better able to support Veterans who may need blood or blood products in the near term.

Western North Carolina VA Health Care System New HRO Coordinator Announced

By WNC VA Health Care System Public Affairs

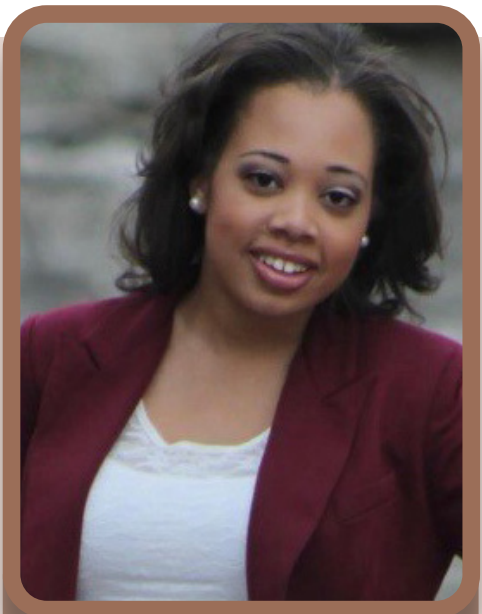
ASHEVILLE, N.C. — Rakeyta Scales has been selected as our HRO Coordinator. High Reliability is all about ensuring safety of Veterans and employees, hearing concerns, stopping the line, conducting safety debriefings, bouncing back from mistakes, and using the expertise of our talented workforce.

Rakeyta received her Bachelor of Science degree in Environmental Science from Alabama A&M University in 2013. She immediately joined the VA Health Care System here in Asheville and served for five years as Industrial Hygienist while completing her Technical Career Field internship. She developed the Industrial Hygiene and Green Environmental Management System (GEMS) programs and frequently served as Safety Manager.

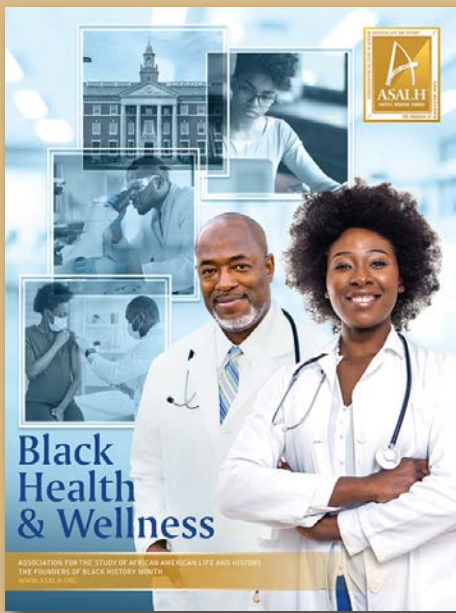
As the Emergency Management Specialist since 2018, Rakeyta has managed a variety of emergency drills and actual events in conjunction with VHA’s Comprehensive Emergency Management Program and community partners.

She has provided the global perspective needed for all services to come together collaboratively to make sometimes daily adjustments to evolving guidance to keep our employees and Veterans safe during the pandemic.

She has served as the face of High Reliability during the pandemic, a trusted advocate for uncompromising systems to minimize harm.



Rakeyta Scales has been named new HRO Coordinator for the Western North Carolina VA Health Care System. She has worked at Charles George VA Medical Center since 2013.



Black History Month Observance

Each February, VA joins federal agencies and the entire country to observe Black History Month. This annual commemoration recognizes the outstanding contributions of Black Americans to all facets of society.

The Black History Month 2022 theme is Black Health and Wellness. VA leads the nation in providing health care services to Veterans. The Department celebrates the momentous achievements of Black Americans to the field of health care throughout U.S. history.

Dr. James McCune Smith (1813-1865) was the first Black American to receive a medical degree, the first Black American to own and operate a pharmacy and the first Black physician to be published in U.S. medical journals. After years as a nurse, Dr. Rebecca Lee Crumpler (1831-1895) became the first Black woman in the U.S. to receive a medical degree from the New England Female Medical College in Boston, Mass., where she also was the institution's only Black graduate.

Today, VA is helping train future generations of doctors. Section 304 of the Mission Act authorized VA to provide scholarships in exchange for VA service for up to two Veteran students in the 2020 entering class at nine medical schools. Four of those schools are Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), including Charles R. Drew University of Medicine and Sciences, Howard University College of Medicine, Meharry Medical College and Morehouse School of Medicine. The goal is to increase the number of minority Veteran physicians serving at VA facilities.

According to OPM statistics, Black Americans represent more than 18 percent of the federal government workforce as of September 2021. VA is the top employer of Black Americans at federal agencies, with Black Americans representing more than 25 percent of the VA workforce.

Adapted from ORMDI [newsletter](#) materials.

WNC VA Health Care System Update

By WNC VA Health Care System PAO

ASHEVILLE, N.C. — The Western North Carolina VA Health Care System has once again restricted its visitation policy.

Following the surge in positive cases across the Western part of the state and nationwide, health care system leadership took steps to safeguard patients and staff from the latest variant of COVID-19.

Under the new restrictions, no visitors of any age can enter inpatient areas.

There are instances where visitors can enter Health Care System facilities, but only when it's necessary for providing medical care, supporting patient care activities, or visiting under urgent circumstances, such as grave illness or imminent death of a family member under care in the facility.

For outpatient Veterans one individual 18 or over may enter with a Veteran for outpatient care if they answer pre-screening questions and screen negative. This action is being taken as a precautionary measure considering the increased vulnerability of certain patient populations receiving care at the facility.

The only exceptions being made are for Hospice Patients, and some inpatients, which will be coordinated through Palliative Care.

Construction Update

If you've visited Charles George VA Medical Center lately, there's a good chance you've literally heard the sounds of progress.

The sounds coming from around the South Tower are that of concrete and brick being removed from the outside wall to prepare for the new steel structure for the Operating Room Suite Expansion.

The work is being done during normal daytime hours (7:00am to 5:00pm) so sleeping patients won't be disturbed in the evenings. Construction crews are working

closely with the operating room schedule to accomplish as much work as possible without disturbing critical procedures.

The work is expected to be on and off for the next 30 days.

HBPC/NIC Program Director Announcement

Primary Care Service is very pleased to announce that Shannon Peters, MSOT has assumed the duties of Program Director for our Home-Based Primary Care (HBPC) and Non-Institutional Care (NIC) programs.

Peters served as an occupational therapist for 10 years in the HBPC program in Bath, New York. In the 10 years since that time, she has held a series of leadership positions at the facility, VISN 2 and VACO level in Health Promotion, Quality Management and Process Improvement among other duties.

Her previous position was with the Veterans Health Education and Information (VHEI) National Center for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention office in Durham, North Carolina, which led the implementation of VHA's COVID-19 vaccination program.

Peters applied for the Director of Home-Based Primary Care (HBPC) and Non-Institutional Care (NIC) programs in Asheville because she said she desired to return to the work she found the most satisfying and enriched her career tract; namely, working in home-based care.

There were multiple high-quality candidates who applied for the HBPC/NIC Director position, each with impressive accomplishments, attractive personal qualities and bright futures. In selecting Ms. Peters in this important leadership role, we are confident in continuing our HBPC and NIC tradition of excellence.





VETERANS BENEFITS LIVE VA IN MY TOWN CARY, NORTH CAROLINA.

FORMERLY THE VEAC

YOU CANNOT AFFORD TO MISS THIS EVENT
Should any of the following apply :

- You would like to file a new claim with the VA.
- You have questions about VA appeals or benefits to which you may be entitled.
- You have questions about VA Healthcare.

Veterans and dependents will be assisted by a combined team including Veterans' Benefits and Health Administrators, Vet Center, and Veterans' Service Officers.

They will assist with the following:
Face-to-face explanation and assistance facilitating and expediting existing claims and appeals, filing new claims, and accepting all claims-related evidence for processing and providing information regarding benefit related VA programs.

Who: All veterans and family members of veterans

Where: Herbert Young Community Center, 101 Wilkinson Avenue, Cary, North Carolina 27513

When: 17th, 18th, 19th of March 2022.
Hours on Thursday from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., Friday from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m., and Saturday 8 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Please bring with you the proper documentation about your case: DD 214, all medical records about your disability both military and civilian, and dependency documents if new or not already provided to the VA.

Wait times may be long, please be patient.
Coffee, water, and snacks provided free of charge.

For more information contact Richard Spyrison at CaryVEAC@gmail.com



HAMPTON, VA. — On Fridays, Nurse Phyllis Fobb looks forward to work — teamwork, specifically.

As a member of a Patient Aligned Care Team (PACT) 40, Nurse Fobb spends her days in a fast-paced medical environment. Combined with the ever-present inbox and the adjustments required by COVID, it's a tough job which doesn't often provide time to recharge.

Faced with workforce burnout during a prolonged pandemic, top VA leadership is recognizing the tolls being taken. Another side effect of the pandemic, staff burnout has been discussed in recent townhalls with VA Secretary Denis McDonough who states that he is committed to addressing it head-on.

As the VA-wide initiatives take shape, they'll likely be rolled out in official documents, well-worded emails and perhaps even budgeted for. Yet it'll be hard to top the free fun and fellowship being had by Hampton VA PACT members, as they spin a homemade trivia wheel.

FREE PENS, SPENDING TIME WITH FRIENDS

Among the ways to describe Geraldine “Geri” Pollard is nurse, colleague, clinical leader ... and “gameshow host.” Geri runs a colorful fun-filled training session for PACTs one Friday a month. It's educational, stress-free and enjoyable, says participant Nurse Fobbs.



Posing with the activity wheel are (L-R) Christine Kitchen, Geraldine “Geri” Pollard and Jennifer Donnelly, Hampton VA staff members. (Photo by John Rogers)

“Sessions wrap up with a trivia competition,” Fobbs continues. “At the end, Geri puts out a question, and whoever gives the right answer first gets a prize. A pen or, you know, a calendar. The prizes aren't budget-busters yet are cool enough to get the team's attention. She makes it very interesting and engaging.”

After a very stressful and difficult 2020, Geri wanted to find something that was fun, engaging and educational — all wrapped up in

one. “We all needed it desperately!” says Geri.

A hint of competitiveness is known to creep into the game. “We cheer for the winner, but you know what? We want to be the one who wins the prize,” says Fobbs. “But we give kudos to whoever wins it. Geri is just an awesome person!”



Engraved pens given away as prizes during “Fridays With Geri” training events. (Photo by John Rogers)

CATCHING UP AND CATCHING PROBLEMS

Geri's team sessions are purposely informal and social, fostering teamwork through fun while pausing the pressures that providers experience. Geri's training also reinforces critical patient safety habits. A busy day in the clinic can set the conditions for a potentially dangerous medication error. Geri shares a safety story.

“We had a near-miss due to sound-alike, look-alike medication that co-existed in the same place. Fortunately training kicked in, and action was taken to mitigate and avoid repeat occurrences.”

It's an example of how the destressing “time out” team training ensures positive patient and provider outcomes. Sessions cover outpatient topics, particularly in a team-driven PACT setting. Recent trainings focused on Hypertension Quality, Scanning Medical Records, Time Management, Incident Reporting, Encounters, Workload/Increment of Time Credit, Veteran and Staff Resources, Clinical Reminders, and PACT Metrics. Training Management System credit is earned for attendance.



Setting up activities for a “Fridays With Geri” event. Pictured (L-R) are Hampton VA staff members Ronnette Langhorne, Jennifer Donnelly, Christine Kitchen and Geraldine “Geri” Pollard. (Photo by John Rogers)

GERI'S 'WHY'

Born and raised in Chicago, Geri says, “I knew at a very young age that I wanted to be a nurse, because I love taking care of and serving others.”

That spirit of service led her to raise her right hand to commit to defend the Constitution, as she served four years active duty in the U.S. Army.

Continuing to pursue a higher calling, she began her nursing career in 1995. Geri says it's always been about putting patients' needs first. “My passion comes from being able to help others in their time of need. I try to treat others the way I'd want to be treated.” Hampton VA Medical Center has been home to Geri's passion and professionalism since 2012.



Geraldine “Geri” Pollard organizes “Fridays With Geri,” a staff training event combining fun, learning, food and prizes. (Photo by John Rogers)

BALM FOR BURNOUT

“I am committed to a holistic approach of taking care of myself and others by focusing on spiritual, mental, physical and emotional health,” Geri continues. “It is challenging to remain positive in certain situations. I fall short during these [pandemic] times. However, I make the necessary adjustments to get back on track. I love to laugh and have fun, and want the same for others.”

Nurse Fobb agrees that it's fun and foundational. “[Geri's monthly training event] brings our team closer together, because we get to know each other, and are collaborating and bonding. Ultimately we deliver better medical care to Veterans.”

It's local leadership tackling a big VA initiative with just a pocket change budget for prizes. Combining creative education and a team spirit, “Fridays with Geri” is a balm for burnout. “I am a positive person who sees the glass half full versus half empty,” says Geri.

On Fridays, Geri Pollard is pouring her very best effort into ensuring that the Hampton VA staff's “glass” stays filled.

HAVE A CONVERSATION ABOUT YOUR HEART

Your VA health care provider can help you protect your heart at any age.



Heart Association Urges Women to Talk About Heart Health

In February, in partnership with the American Heart Association's Go Red for Women campaign, VA Women's Health is promoting communications to encourage women Veterans to have a conversation about their heart.

This year's campaign focuses on the impacts of mental health concerns such as increased stress, trauma, and PTSD on the heart. Even if a woman is younger, she should consider her heart health.

All women Veterans need to think about their heart health. Increased stress due to some mental health concerns like PTSD and depression, and experiences of trauma can increase heart disease risk for women of all ages. Have a conversation about your heart with your VA primary care provider. They can help you understand your risks and learn ways to protect your heart.

Heart disease is the leading cause of death among women in the U.S. Women Veterans should be aware of factors that increase their risk of heart disease:

- Smoking (women have an even greater

risk for heart disease if they smoke, compared to men)

- Being overweight
- A sedentary lifestyle (not moving enough throughout the day)
- High blood pressure
- Too much stress in your life
- History of preeclampsia or diabetes while pregnant
- Having PTSD, depression, or experiences of trauma
- Having sleep apnea and/or not getting good sleep

The best way to reduce your risk of heart disease is through lifestyle changes. Focusing on these protective factors can improve your heart health. If you can't focus on all of them, choosing a few of them to focus on is still helpful to your heart:

- Not smoking
- Getting regular exercise (i.e., going on walks)
- Eating a healthy diet rich in nutrients

(such as green leafy vegetables)

- Getting good sleep
- Spending time with loved ones
- Reducing stress in your life and practicing self-care or trying some Whole Health approaches like yoga, tai chi, mindfulness, or meditation
- Visiting your VA health care provider to get your blood pressure, cholesterol, and blood sugar checked.
- Taking your prescribed medications

Your VA health care provider can partner with you to assess your unique heart disease risks, check out your heart, and create a heart health plan with realistic and achievable goals.

Even if you're a younger woman Veteran, have a conversation about your heart with your VA health care provider during your next checkup. They can help you make a heart health plan. For more information on VA heart-health services for women Veterans, visit: <https://www.womenshealth.va.gov/WOMENSHEALTH/OutreachMaterials/GeneralHealthandWellness/hearthealth.asp>.



VA Takes Action to Become Federal Model for Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Access for Veterans and Employees

WASHINGTON — The Department of Veterans Affairs becomes attuned making inclusion, diversity, equity and access a part of its cultural transformation [action plan](#).

An 18-member [I-DEA task force, created April 1, 2021](#), developed 20 recommendations and 68 sub-recommendations for the department to consider during the next four years to ensure all VA employees, Veterans, their families, caregivers and survivors have equitable treatment and experiences when interacting with VA.

“This action plan reflects the Department of Veterans Affairs is working to ensure our customers and employees have equal access to all VA offerings and are treated with respect and dignity when interacting with the department,” said VA Secretary Denis McDonough. “We recognize this work requires a culture shift and will not happen overnight, but the Biden-Harris administration and I will see this through to completion on behalf of the Veterans we serve and the diverse workforce that carries out our mission.”

The 20 recommendations address potential gaps to include:

- Collecting and disaggregating race, ethnicity, gender identity and sexual orientation demographic information about VA employees and Veterans we serve.
- Developing a workforce plan to integrate I-DEA into hiring, position management, talent development and executive coaching to address potential areas of need.
- Revamping VA’s communications efforts to better reach underserved communities such as those who live in rural or remote areas, outlying communities or Veterans with limited English proficiency.

The I-DEA action plan also establishes an I-DEA sub-council tasked with facilitating policy development, adoption and implementation of the recommendations outlined in the plan and to ensure enterprise policy decisions are consistent with the secretary’s strategic goals.

The sub-council is chaired by Assistant Secretary for Human Resources and Administration/Operations Security and Preparedness Gina Grosso and Deputy Assistant Secretary for the Office of Resolution, Management, Diversity and Inclusion Harvey Johnson.

President Joseph Biden issued Executive Order 13985, [Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government](#), Jan. 20, 2021, and Executive Order 14035 on [Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility in the Federal Workforce](#), June 25, 2021. For more details go to the VA [Office of Resolution Management, Diversity & Inclusion](#).

VA Amplifies Access to Home, Community-Based Services for Eligible Veterans

WASHINGTON — The Department of Veterans Affairs' [Office of Geriatrics and Extended Care](#) is expanding its [Home-Based Primary Care](#), Medical Foster Home and [Veteran-Directed Care](#) programs to make them available at all VA medical centers by the end of fiscal year 2026.

VA will add 58 medical foster homes and 70 Veteran-directed care programs to VAMCs across the nation and add 75 home-based primary care teams to areas with the highest unmet need.

"These [evidence-based programs](#) allow Veterans to age in place, avoid or delay nursing home placement, and choose the care environment that aligns most with their care needs, preferences and goals," said Executive Director of VA Office of

Geriatrics and Extended Care Scotte Hartrouft, M.D. "Veterans using these programs have experienced [fewer hospitalizations](#) and emergency department visits, reduced hospital and nursing home days and fewer nursing home readmissions and inpatient complications."

According to [VA's Policy Analysis and Forecasting Office](#), the number of Veterans of all ages who are eligible for nursing home care is estimated to expand from approximately 2 million Veterans in 2019 to more than 4 million by 2039. As this population grows, VA remains steadfast in providing the highest levels of care to Veterans in the least-restrictive settings.

These programs provide an in-home or smaller care setting than traditional in-

stitutionalized long-term care. This smaller setting of care supports less risk of transmission of COVID and other infectious diseases. Many Veterans have chosen these programs instead of institutionalized care during the pandemic for more flexibility in care preferences and less risk of COVID transmission.

Learn more about [VA geriatrics](#).



OPM Affirms \$15 Minimum Wage for Federal Civilian Employees

Human Resources agency issues official guidance for implementation

WASHINGTON — The Office of Personnel Management will now pay all federal workers a minimum of at least \$15 per hour.

OPM's guidance [\[CS1\]](#) directs agencies on adjusting pay rates for General Schedule and Federal Wage System employees stationed in the U.S and how to use administrative authority for other pay systems, with implementation of the changes as of Jan. 30.

In total, this impacts 67,000 out of 2.2 million federal employees. During his first week in office, President Biden signed an [Executive Order on Protecting the Federal Workforce](#) directing OPM's leadership to provide him a report with recommendations to promote a \$15-per-hour minimum wage for the federal workforce. That report was submitted to the White House and the issued guidance reflects the report's findings.

The Departments of Veterans Affairs, Defense and Agriculture collectively employ most of the personnel who are currently paid an hourly rate below \$15. Many of the employees who will benefit from this wage increase have been on the front lines throughout the pandemic, working resiliently to serve the Ameri-

can public.

"Of the nearly 67,000 affected federal employees, 9,700 are from the Department of Veterans Affairs," said VA Secretary Denis McDonough. "How we treat our workforce directly impacts their morale and success — and increasing pay rates to at least \$15 per hour is a necessary step to achieve these goals. Some of these affected individuals are VA food service workers and housekeeping aides."

VA housekeeping staff support the department's mission to help Veterans improve their health quicker by keeping facilities clean and safe, which are essential to the patient care experience.

VA's food service workers are also essential to patient care as they deliver excellent dining that nourishes the Veterans they serve. Safety, sanitation and quality, along with customer service, are paramount in the Veterans Health Administration's health care systems.

[OPM's memorandum \[CS2\]](#) to department and agency heads outlines guidance for implementing the pay rate adjustments.

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

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 27809
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

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