

VOICES OF VISN 6

— Excellent Care – Earned by Veterans – Delivered Here —



COLLINS SWORN IN AS DIRECTOR OF HAMPTON VA

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COVER STORY

Dave Collins took the SES Oath of Office Sept. 16, administered by VISN 6 Director DeAnne Seekins, signifying his first day as Director of the Hampton VA Medical Center. Collins was greeted by about 100 people, including staff and friends, after the ceremony. Collins is a 28-year Veteran of the Navy Medical Service Corps, whose recent appointments include service as the Executive Assistant to the Navy Surgeon General, Commanding Officer of the Jacksonville Naval Hospital, and Chief Operating Officer of the Naval Hospital in Bremerton, Wash.

TOP PHOTO: Dave Collins takes the SES Oath of Office to become Director of the Hampton VA Medical Center on Sept. 16 of this year.



Message from the Network Director

October's breast cancer awareness month holds a special place in my heart as a two-time breast cancer survivor myself. I remember the doctors, the nurses and all the caregivers along the way who were there for me when I needed it most. The warmth and comfort my health care team offered me during this time made all the difference. Breast cancer awareness is near and dear to me. In 2010, while serving as the Director of the Hampton VAMC, I was diagnosed with breast cancer. It was a heart stopping moment; thank goodness for screening and treatment, as well as a wonderful family and VA team who stood by me. The unthinkable happened again in 2013, I was diagnosed again, with a more aggressive reoccurrence. Once again,

screening and treatment saved my life. My expanded VA family at Durham stood by me and supported every step of the way.

It's critical that we do everything in our power to prevent breast cancer. We need to ask our patients the necessary questions, get preventative test done for them – and ourselves, and more importantly – look at family history. Research tells us a woman's risk of developing cancer doubles if she has a first degree relative (mother, sister, daughter) who has been diagnosed with it. While men are also susceptible to the disease, women hold a clear majority of breast cancer cases historically, and so the effort is aimed at them to check for signs early and often. We must ask the questions.

If you haven't had your yearly check-up – schedule it today. 76 percent of women

Veterans ages 40-49 receive mammograms yearly throughout the VA, however, my personal goal for VISN 6 is 100 percent in that age group are screened. We can't stop cancer, if we don't screen it. We are committed to providing access to onsite mammograms screenings with state-of-the-art technology at all of our sites of care. If our patient is eligible, we will do everything in our power to prevent breast cancer from showing-up.

You can find more information on Breast Cancer, what to look for, what can be done about it and how to be more involved in fighting it at <https://www.nationalbreast-cancer.org/breast-cancer-awareness-month>.

– DeAnne M. Seekins
VISN 6 Network Director



Zero Recommendations for Richmond VAMC SARRT Program

By Megan Kon | RICHMOND VAMC PUBLIC AFFAIRS

Thanks to the tireless efforts of Richmond VA Medical Center's Substance Abuse Residential Rehabilitation Treatment Program (SAR RTP) team, the Central Virginia VA Health Care System received zero recommendations from their most recent CARF survey. This means that Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF) surveyors didn't see anything staff needed to improve upon to meet the accreditation standard. This is rare.

"One surveyor said that he has only seen one other program achieve a 'zero recommendation survey' in his 25 years as a CARF surveyor," said Catherine Sykes, licensed clinical social worker for

Central Virginia VA HCS. "The other surveyor said she had never seen a program accomplish this feat. During the exit briefing, both surveyors spoke highly of our program, our facility and of the exceptional leadership that was evident during the interviews with our staff and management."

The CARF is an independent, nonprofit organization focused on assessment of quality of services and best possible outcomes for consumers. Their standards are internationally recognized and CARF accreditation provides assurance that high quality services are being provided and maintained. The success of the SAR RTP's CARF survey is a testament to the quality of care provided to our Veterans by each team member.

Kinesiotherapy Week - September 9-13

By Amanda Reilly | SALISBURY VAHCS PUBLIC AFFAIRS

Kinesiotherapy (formerly Corrective Therapy) was introduced to hospitalized Veterans as a means of physical rehabilitation in 1946. Kinesiotherapists (KTs) use their understanding of anatomy and the physiology of the human body to create custom, scientifically based exercise programs that can reverse or minimize debilitation and enhance functional capacity for patients. For Veterans who have experienced disease or injury affecting their physical conditioning, these exercise routines are designed to assist in reaching their peak physical, social and psychological potential by helping them regain lost function, optimizing strength, flexibility and endurance.

Heidi Harris, RKT, DRS, has been with the Salisbury VA Health Care System since 2009. Her father being a disabled Vietnam Veteran inspired her and created a desire for her to help our nation's brave heroes. Heidi works with Veteran Lisa Young on an exercise program specific to her needs. Ms. Young shared that working with Heidi helps her to stay motivated and improves her "goals for an overall healthier lifestyle."

Each year at the Salisbury VA Medical Center, we celebrate our KT department during National Kinesiotherapy Week, which occurs the second week in September. We invite other Medical Center staff, Veterans and their families to come and learn about the services offered, equipment used, diseases and/or injuries that could warrant referral to KT, and the results that have been achieved for Veterans who have been through a KT treatment

or exercise program. Some of the services offered by KT at Salisbury include fitness/ cardiovascular endurance and strength, gait/ambulatory evaluations, weight, diabetic and blood pressure management, home exercise plan development, vehicle modification evaluations, and education to family members and caregivers.

This year, on each day of KT week, Salisbury VA Health Care Center KT staff held a different type of "meet and greet" event, including a lobby presentation with pictures and brochures, an annual group photo of our current KT staff in front of their work area, and a luncheon where KT staff provided fruit, salad, and a variety of other healthy options. It was a pleasure to join this fun, energetic and dedicated bunch as they spread awareness of their vital section of Physical Medicine.



ABOVE: Heidi Harris, RKT, DRS working with Veteran Lisa Young during Kinesiotherapy session at the Charlotte HCC. (Photo: Amanda Reilly)



Salisbury VA Health Care Center Kinesiotherapy staff during KT Week celebration: Shkrumia Morris, Vernon Bryant Jr., Jameya Barnwell, Gary Whitaker, Margaret Kelly, Charlene Macaulay, and Heidi Harris. Missing: Randall Lewallen (Photo: Amanda Reilly)

DVAHCS Professionals Gather for Annual Mental Health Summit

By Joshua D. Edson



Mental Health professionals discuss treatment techniques at the DVAHCS Mental Health Summit. The purpose of the summit is to enhance the wellbeing of Veterans and their families through collaboration and partnerships with VA, community mental health advocates and providers, and local and state organizations.

Durham VA Healthcare System (DVAHCS) mental health professionals, Veterans and advocacy groups recently met for the 2019 Mental Health Summit on Sept. 12. In its seventh year, the summit provides those on the frontlines of Veteran mental health issues to compare notes, share experience and expertise, and gain insight into the current behavioral health trends and treatments.

Topics of discussion at this year's summit included; expanded opportunities in access to VA mental health services, whole health initiatives, suicide prevention, and improving the wellbeing of Veterans and their families. Leading these discussions were DVAHCS mental health providers as well as community outreach partners. Although they discussed a wide array of topics and experts, there was one common goal: helping Veterans overcome their mental health hurdles.

"We want to develop and grow our relationships with our Veterans and community partners," offers Cynthia Woods, administrative officer for Mental and Behavioral Health Services at the DVAHCS. "These summits have been a great success because the collaboration helps us learn from our mistakes and capitalize on our successes. In fact, we're getting so much participation now that we're considering doing two summits a year, rather than just the one."

For Gordon Jeans, it's been a boon. A disabled Army Veteran, Jeans is a Veterans Crisis intervention instructor. In the years since he has attended the summit, he's seen how mental health services at the DVAHCS have steadily improved.

"It feels good to have a hand in the Durham VA's improvement," says Jeans. "When it comes to Veterans in crisis, you have to be proactive, not reactive. In recent years, I've seen the Durham VA become way more proactive when it comes to mental health, and I think we have these meetings of minds to thank for that."

When a motorcycle accident left Army Veteran William Arnold with injuries from head to toe, he had to take inventory of his life.

“I broke my collar, wrist, elbow, femur, pelvis, jaw, had a collapsed lung ... and a traumatic brain injury,” Arnold said. “But I also had TBIs from the military.”

While seeking mental health services at VA, he was introduced to Chelsea Grandolfo, a vocational rehabilitation specialist for the Compensated Work Therapy (CWT) program at the Central Virginia VA Health Care System.

CWT services are recovery-oriented and focus on each Veteran’s strengths, skills, abilities, needs, goals and preferences. They also help Veterans secure employment, achieve goals and improve their wellbeing.

Grandolfo and Arnold talked daily through the ups and downs of unemployment. She helped him build physical and emotional stamina to prepare for a potential future work environment.

“We figure out what the Veteran needs help with, and how can we help them connect to employers,” Grandolfo said.

Grandolfo worked with Arnold to help him with his confidence and his ability to express the skills he knew he had.

“Working with her got me motivated to do something,” Arnold said. After several interviews and months of networking, Arnold landed the job he originally wanted, and he did it while interviewing alone. He is now a correc-

tions officer at Nottoway Correctional Center.

Motivated to retire by age 50, Arnold said his job gives him a better quality of life. “I enjoy the things I do outside of work a little bit more, since I started working,” Arnold said. “What I love about these services is they are truly tailored to the individual,” Grandolfo said. “We provide care in whichever way is most accessible for the Veteran, whether it’s in their community, here at the hospital or via telehealth.”



William Arnold and Chelsea Grandolfo discuss results from his Quality of Life Inventory, part of VA’s measurement-based care initiative.

Grandolfo says Veterans living in rural areas can feel isolated because of the lack of people around or limited funds to go out and socialize with. After the motorcycle accident in 2014, Arnold’s debt mounted, and the stress became overwhelming.

“When it feels too far gone, you may feel

like ‘What’s the point?’” Grandolfo said. “But then you start to see that your decisions do count. The Veteran starts to feel that sense of self efficacy — a little bit does count; every little bit counts.” Arnold is proud of his progress and is looking forward to the future.

“I haven’t had a cigarette in three weeks,” Arnold said. “This job helped me to stop smoking and I appreciate that. After I finish this program, a whole bunch of doors will open up to me.”

Central Virginia VA Health Care System Compensated Work Therapy Program

The CWT program is recognized nationally as a leader in expanding services to underserved populations, such as Veterans living with spinal cord injuries or living in rural areas.

Kevin Fields, supervisory vocational rehabilitation counselor, says services range from information sharing to counseling, depending on the Veteran need and preference.

“Supporting Veterans’ effort to gain and maintain meaningful employment is a benefit to Veterans, their communities and our nation,” Fields said. Central Virginia VA Health Care System has a 69-percent success rate for Veterans who’ve successfully gained employment after discharge from the CWT program. For more information about the CWT program, please call Kevin Fields at (804) 675-4193.

VA Improves Information Sharing With Community Care Providers

By Joshua D. Edson | DURHAM VAHCS PUBLIC AFFAIRS

WASHINGTON — The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) will implement new procedures by January 2020, for sharing medical information for Veterans accessing [health care in the community](#).

The department is changing its procedures for electronic health information sharing in accordance with Section 132 of the VA Maintaining Internal Systems and Strengthening Integrated Outside Networks Act of 2018 ([MISSION Act](#)).

“The MISSION Act gives Veterans greater access to care, whether at VA facilities or in the community,” said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie. “We are providing seamless access to care, improving efficiency and helping to ensure Veterans get the care they need, where and when they need it.”

The change moves VA from an “opt-in” to an “opt-out” model of electronic health information sharing. Veterans will no longer be required to provide signed, written authorization for VA to release electronic health information to community providers for the purposes of receiving medical treatment.

VA shares health information with community providers using a secure and safe electronic system called the [Veterans Health Information Exchange](#). This electronic exchange of information improves patient safety — particularly during emergency situations — and allows for improved care coordination for Veterans receiving care in the community.

Veterans who do not want their health information shared electronically can opt

out by submitting [VA Form 10-10164](#) (opt out of sharing) to the Release of Information Office at the nearest VA medical center now or at any time going forward. Veterans who previously opted out on VA Form 10-0484 prior to Sept. 30 do not need to submit new forms. However, Veterans who restricted what information VA shared by submitting [VA Form 10-0525](#) (restriction request) will need to opt out entirely by submitting Form 10-10164.

VA is committed to protecting Veteran privacy. Only community health care providers and organizations that have partnership agreements with VA and are part of VA’s approved, trusted network may receive VA health information.

For information about VA’s health information exchange visit [www.va.gov/vler](#).

2019 VA Homeless Stand Down in Asheville

FROM ASHEVILLE VA PUBLIC AFFAIRS

The Charles George VA Medical Center's Health Care for Homeless Veterans program hosted their annual homeless stand down on Sept. 6, 2019. The event was coordinated by the Charles George VA Medical Center, Asheville Buncombe Community Christian Ministry (ABCCM) and Homeward Bound WNC. Stand Down 2019 partnered with more than 35 VA programs and community partners who offer support to homeless veterans in our communities.

The homeless population faces many barriers to creating a stable home environment. Some of these barriers include proper state identification to apply for government services, employment, and difficulty accessing basic needs to perform self-care. The Stand Down is designed to focus on creating a one-stop-shop for homeless veterans to connect with VA health care programs, VA benefits and community programs that provide an array of assistance to improve their lives.

The 2019 Stand Down in Asheville brought together over 35 organizations with the mission to provide information on housing solutions, employment, substance abuse and mental/physical health screening. The medical center offered a shuttle service for veterans who lacked transportation to the event, from day shelters. The event served more than 117 veterans this year, including nine female veterans. HUD VASH RN, Kristie Roswech, gave 37 flu shots and provided complimentary blood pressure checks throughout the event.

"Stand Down is a great opportunity to see all of our community partners who work tirelessly year-round to help Veterans receive assistance and find permanent housing in our community. Everybody has an important part to play in this effort, and we could not do it without our community partners," said Joell Steininger, homeless program coordinator.

A popular stop was complimentary haircuts and beard trims, provided by two community volunteers, Joy and Nanette. These amazing ladies had a waiting line from 9:00am until after the event. They did not turn a veteran or family member away. Community volunteers were an integral part of the event, and the service they provided made a positive impact on veterans throughout the day.

A unique partnership at the event is with the Asheville Humane Society's Community Solutions department. They took care of Veterans' pets' basic needs with free resources for pets, including vaccines, flea/tick medication, pet food and spay/neuter vouchers. Since pets were not allowed inside, they offered to "check in" pets with an Asheville Humane Society staff member.

Warrior Canine Connection was also present. Their organization is unique because they partner with the local Veterans Treatment Court. The Veterans work with Warrior Canine Connection, volunteering to train the service dogs that will eventually go home with a fellow Veteran to assist with mobility.

As always, the gear was a huge draw for the event. Attendees were able to obtain packs, clothing, socks/shoes, cell phone chargers and toiletries.



At Stand Down 2019, more than 35 VA programs and community partners came together to support homeless veterans in the community.

Homeless veterans began arriving at the venue around 5:45am. Mr. Fredrick Tucker received a wristband with the number 1 on it and knew that his early arrival had paid off. Mr. Tucker was very excited to be attending his fourth Stand Down event. He shared that he received a HUD/VASH voucher from the CGVAMC and has had stable housing since 2018. "I am so grateful for the service I receive at the VA," he offered.

"Stand Down is a great opportunity to see all of our community partners who work tirelessly year-round to help Veterans receive assistance and find permanent housing in our community," Joell Steininger, homeless program coordinator, said. "Everybody has an important part to play in this effort, and we could not do it without our community partners."

Volunteers Joy and Nanette offered free haircuts to Veterans and their family members, staying until after the event to make sure everyone was taken care of.



Flu Shots Available to Fayetteville VA Enrollees

Veterans were able to receive flu vaccinations Sept. 25 through the 27 at the Fayetteville Coastal Health Care System annual flu shot kick off campaign at the Main Campus as well as the Fayetteville Health Care Center, and the Fayetteville Dialysis Center. The campaign was led by medical center Director Dan Dücker and the rest of the leadership team, who received their inoculations at the medical center.

Following the kick off campaign, Veterans can get their flu shots Monday through Friday at walk in clinics/flu stations where advance appointments are not necessary or by request during primary care appointments, depending on their respective location.

Flu season typically begins in October and runs through March and the Centers for Disease Control recommends everyone age 6 months and older receive get a flu shot every year to protect themselves.

To receive a flu shot, Veterans must show their VA ID cards. Veterans should check with their primary care teams to verify the most current information as dates, times and availability are subject to change. For the latest updates, visit your local facility Facebook page or website.



Fayetteville N.C. VA Coastal Health Care System Director Dan Dücker kicks off the facility's annual flu shot campaign by receiving his, during a kick-off event September 25. (Photo by Brad Garner)

VISN 6 Flu Shot Information

Western North Carolina VA Health Care System (Asheville) Flu Shot Information

All enrolled Veterans may receive free flu shots during hospital stays and at Primary Care, Specialty Clinics and CBOCs during scheduled appointments and walk-ins without appointments.

Flu shots are also available during designated Walk-in Flu Shot Clinics:

Cherokee Indian Fair Flu Clinic

October 11 from 11:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

Rutherfordton CBOC:

October 19, from 8:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

Charles George VA Medical Center:

- October 22, from 1:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m. (BBooi, near Atrium)
- October 23, from 7:30 a.m. – 3:30 p.m. (BBooi, near Atrium)
- October 24, from 7:30 a.m. – 3:30 p.m. (BBooi, near Atrium)

Durham VAHCS Flu Shot Information

To better prepare our Veterans for flu season we are now offering flu shots at all primary care locations as well as at our flu clinics in Durham,

Greenville and Morehead City. Our annual flu shot clinics are free to all Veterans.

Durham VA Medical Center, 1st Floor Room A1010 | Sept. 30 to Nov. 22, 10am to 2pm

Morehead City Community Based Outpatient Clinic

Sept. 23 - Nov. 22, Monday-Friday, 8:30am to 3:30pm

Greenville Health Care Center, 2nd Floor Infusion Clinic | Sept. 23 - Nov. 22, Monday-Friday, 8am to 4pm

Fayetteville NC VACHCS Flu Shot Information

Fayetteville VAMC Main Campus– Veterans can receive flu shots at walk in clinic/flu station, **Wednesday only**, from 8 a.m. to noon in the Pharmacy Lobby on the basement floor.

Fayetteville Health Care Center -- Mon - Fri 8:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. in the in the First Floor Lobby.

Brunswick County Community-Based Outpatient Clinic -- Mon - Fri, 2:30 to 4 p.m., no appointment necessary

Goldsboro CBOC -- Mon - Fri 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Hamlet CBOC -- Mon - Fri 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

Jacksonville CBOC - drive thru flu clinic Sept. 25 thru Oct. 2 from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. and thereafter - Mon - Fri 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Robeson County -- flu shots by request during scheduled appointments or walk in Mon - Fri, 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

Sanford CBOC (3112 Tramway Road, Sanford, NC 27332) -- flu shots by request during scheduled appointments or walk in Mon - Fri, 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

Wilmington Health Care Center (1705 Gardner Road, Wilmington, NC 28405) -- drive thru flu clinic Oct. 1 thru Oct. 31 from 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. or by request during scheduled visits or walk in Mon - Fri 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

Hampton VA Medical Center

Main Facility: Flu Vaccines will be available to All veterans starting October 1, 2019 through November 30, 2019. Mon.-Fri. 0800-1530 in the Main Lobby of 110B.

Chesapeake Community Based Outpatient Clinic
Monday - Friday 0800-1530

STORY CONTINUED ON BOTTOM OF PAGE 7



Awoudi smiles as he pets Molly. (Photo: Megan Kon)

National Dog Day at Richmond VA Medical Center

By Megan Kon | RICHMOND VAMC PUBLIC AFFAIRS

In recognition of National Dog Day, Aug. 26, we wished to highlight one of the many therapy dogs who visit Richmond VA Medical Center throughout the year. Molly, a 9-year-old Golden Retriever, stopped by to visit active duty military and Veterans on our polytrauma rehabilitation center. Recreational therapist Paulette Beasley says having therapy dogs visit is beneficial for healing.

“We’ve had Molly and her handler, Susan, here for about six months now,” Beasley said. “With the dogs doing individual visits, we are able to address a variety of different patient needs and abilities.”

Susan Huett moved to Virginia with Molly to enjoy retirement and the weather. Huett is a part of the Alliance for Therapy Dogs organization whose goal is to assist handlers in training their therapy dogs.

“Molly was a rescue who has found her

calling bringing comfort and joy wherever she goes,” Huett said. “Whether it’s sitting quietly while a Veteran strokes her head or doing a high five just showing off, Molly has a special gift for sharing her sweet soul with others.”

Today, Molly made a new friend. Marine Veteran Vavier Awoudi who served four tours in the Middle East. Awoudi chose to serve to give back to a government who’d always been there for him and his family. He came to America in 2000 from Togo, West Africa.

“I love dogs,” Awoudi said. “I was planning to get a service dog. Before I came here, I fell. I think having a service dog would help me. When I fell, my neighbor found me. With a service dog, they could warn others.”

Molly’s seems to be a perfect fit for patients with more complex cognitive or physical impairment, Beasley said. She adapts very well to fit their needs.

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Hunter Holmes McGuire (Richmond) Flu Shot Information

Mall Flu Clinic which starts Oct. 15 and runs weekdays from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Salem VA Medical Center

Enrolled Veterans are invited to use our Drive Thru Flu Vaccine Clinic for convenience to get their FREE annual flu vaccine at the Salem Veterans Affairs Medical Center (VAMC), Monday through Friday, October 1 – October 31, between 8:30 a.m. to Noon and 1 to 4 p.m. (excluding holidays).

Salem VAMC’s Community Based Outpatient Clinics (CBOCs) located in Danville, Lynchburg, Staunton, Tazewell and Wytheville will also offer flu vaccines at their clinic locations during the same dates, Monday through Friday as noted below:

- Danville: 8:30 to Noon and 1 to 4 p.m.
- Lynchburg: 8:30 to Noon and 1 to 4 p.m.
- Staunton: 8:30 to Noon and 1 to 4 p.m.
- Tazewell: 8:30 to Noon and 1 to 4 p.m.
- Wytheville: 8:30 to Noon and 1 to 4 p.m.

Salisbury Information for Getting the Flu Shot:

Kick-off events coming up at:

Charlotte CBOC in the lobby of the front entrance on October 22.

Salisbury Main Campus on Mainstreet, Bldg. 42, October 22 from 7:30 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

GET YOUR FLU SHOT

Flu shots are available at the Salisbury VA Health Care System locations below:

Walk-in locations

- **Employee Occupational Health Clinic:** Building 3, Room 3075 Monday-Friday 8:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.
- **Salisbury Bldg. 20, Room A121** Monday-Friday 8:30 a.m. – 3:30 p.m. (beginning Monday, September 30, 2019)
- **Salisbury Bldg. 21, Main entrance lobby** Monday-Friday from 8:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.
- **Charlotte HCC**, Room 1D10 from 8:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m. (or see your clinic flu champion) beginning Tuesday, October 1, 2019
- **Charlotte CBOC** -see clinic flu champion
- **Kernersville HCC**, 1st Floor, Room 1853 Main Lobby area



VEAC Brings the “VA” to the Veterans

By Joshua D. Edson
DURHAM VAHCS PUBLIC AFFAIRS

When your customers can't come to you, you go to your customers. It was this thought that spurred Veterans Benefit Administration (VBA) and Durham VA Healthcare System (DVAHCS) representatives, participating in the annual Veterans Experience Action Center (VEAC) at the Herbert Young Community Center in Cary, N.C. Held Sept. 12-14, the VEAC gave local — and not-so-local — Veterans a chance to speak to VBA regional officers and Durham VA Health Care System representatives. They were on-site to assist Veterans with filing disability compensation claims, checking on claim decisions, or the status of an existing claim, obtain representation from a Veteran Service Officer, and to receive counseling services through the Vet Center and many other community resources.

“There is clearly a need for this,” says Shelton Faircloth, a Transition Patient Advocate with the DVAHCS Transition Care Management Program. “We have Veterans coming from as far away as California just to attend this event. It's not just about claims either, we try to bring all Veterans services under one roof, like Legal Aid services and Veterans groups like Lone Survivor.”

The VEAC Cary Event was a collaboration between the Cary Chamber of Commerce, the DVAHCS and the Cary American Legion Post 67. Community partnerships such as these are critical to the success of the VEAC. With more than 1,500 Veterans attending the event, the more services provided, the better.

In the four years since VEAC began, attendance has steadily increased. Many Veterans traveled hours for a face-to-face meeting with VBA representatives.

“I came all the way here from Norfolk to learn more about the claims process, and hopefully make some compensation claims,” says Alex Schelebach, a Navy Veteran. “It's been well worth the trip. It's great to have a face-to-face with benefits people. This is a great thing they're doing.”

Truck Pull Brings Awareness to Suicide Prevention

The Fayetteville (NC) VA Coastal Health Care System Suicide Prevention Team, Fort Bragg Harley-Davidson, Department of Defense - Fort Bragg Suicide Prevention Program, Rick Herrema Foundation, and Steven A. Cohen Military Family Clinic at Cape Fear Valley hosted “Pull for Prevention,” a community event to bring awareness to suicide prevention and mental health support Sept. 7, 2019.

The event was developed in line with the VA's national strategy to expand community outreach in efforts to reduce the number of Veterans who die by suicide.

“Veterans are an integral part of this community. While some organizations specifically serve Veterans, it is important to recognize that effective outreach to Veterans requires outreach in diverse settings like a motorcycle dealership,” said Patricia Glenn, FNCCHCS Suicide Prevention Program Supervisor who leads a team that includes a suicide prevention coordinator and a suicide prevention case manager at Fayetteville VAMC, Fayetteville Health Care Center, Jacksonville Community-based Outpatient Clinic and Wilmington Health Care Center, respectively. “Holding the event in collaboration with DOD and community partners creates access and awareness to the community, service members, veterans and their families.”

“Pull for Prevention” began with a four-person parachute jump from the All Veteran Parachute Team out of Raeford, N.C.

Guest Speaker retired Army Master Sgt. Chris Corbin, a former Army Ranger and Green Beret who was wounded in Afghanistan in 2011 provided insight and encouragement for those facing obstacles and mental health challenges often amplified by military service.

More than 40 community, public and private organizations came together during the event to share information about mental health, wellness and resources available to

service members, veterans and their families.

The kids' tent provided free snacks, games and passports to encourage interaction with the vendors, local racecars and service dogs. Other highlights included jeep displays, veteran outreach organizations, free food and live music. The main attraction, the human truck pull and car deadlift allowed more than 200 attendees to challenge themselves physically and mentally to “Pull for Prevention” across the parking lot. The truck weighed in at 10,000 pounds, and the car deadlift approximated a hefty 300-pound lift from the ground.

“Our hope for this event,” Glenn said, “is attendees left with education, information and contacts that can support them in times of distress, crisis, recovery and postvention.”

“We recognize to reach all Veterans, we must build effective networks of support, communication, and care across this community where our Veterans live and work every day. With resources, services and events like these here today, to raise awareness about suicide, reduce the stigma, and encourage prevention we can work together as a community to prevent these tragic deaths by suicide among Veterans and Service Members,” the FNCCHCS Suicide Prevention Program Supervisor added.

FVAMC Suicide Prevention Coordinator Kendra Danzer spearheaded the logistics and planning for this event.

To learn about the resources available for Veterans and how you can **Be There** as a VA employee, family member, friend, community partner or clinician, visit www.mentalhealth.va.gov/suicide_prevention/resources.asp.



Veteran Tony Brown runs a non-profit, Southern CC Inc., in Fayetteville, to empower homeless Veterans by rebuilding and revitalizing communities through networks of support and in turn rebuild their own lives. But here, he's pulling for them.



Happy Veterans, posing for a photo op following the Fayetteville VA baby shower for expectant women Veterans Aug. 28. About 20, including Veterans and spouses attended the event. (Photo by Jeff Melvin)

Fayetteville VA, NC DAR treat pregnant women Veterans to baby shower

FAYETTEVILLE NCVACHCS PUBLIC AFFAIRS

Close to 20 people were treated to a baby shower August 28, courtesy of some Fayetteville, N.C. community partners.

North Carolina Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) donated the gifts and Fayetteville NC VA Coastal Health Care System (Fayetteville VA) employees, Norma Fraser, chief, Voluntary Services; Tammy Hendricks, then-Fayetteville VA Women’s Program Manager; and Jennifer Fisher, Women’s Maternity Care Coordinator made the arrangements to honor the women for their service to our country.

The DAR decided to collect baby items (ultimately, nearly \$20,000 in baby items and monetary donations) for North Carolina’s four VA Medical Centers back in April this year, at the group’s state convention, according to Mary Laraine “Larry” Young Hines, NC DAR Service for Veterans State Chair.

“The generosity of the group was so overwhelming that after the first day we had to rent a storage unit to hold the donations,” Hines said.

Fayetteville chose to host a baby shower, providing diapers, wipes, blankets, onesies, outfits, bath towels, washcloths, socks and accessories to about 14 veterans and 5 spouses.

“Fayetteville VAMC and the Daughters of the American Revolution wanted to honor our expecting veterans who are entering their final trimester,” said Jennifer Fisher, Women’s Maternity Care Coordinator. “We are thrilled to celebrate their upcoming births and to help make sure they are

prepared with gifts and also needed education on topics such as infant/child CPR and car seat safety.”

More than 16,500 women are currently enrolled in the Fayetteville NC VA Coastal Health Care System Women’s Health Service Line, consistently ranking the program in the top 15 for Women Veteran growth across VHA. Women’s Health (WH) staff include a WH Service Line Chief, a Women Veterans Program Manager, a WH Nurse Navigator, a Maternity Care Coordinator, a WH Nurse Manager and an assistant WH Nurse Manager.



Eager Veteran expectant mothers watch closely as RN Carmen Rosado demonstrates how to stop a baby from choking. The demonstration was part of an educational portion of Fayetteville’s baby shower for pregnant Veterans. (Photo by Jeff Melvin)

VA PROVIDES VETERANS FLEEING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE WITH HOUSING AND SUPPORTIVE SERVICES

October is National Domestic Violence Awareness Month

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) reminds Veterans nationwide that VA’s Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) and Grant and Per Diem (GPD) provide housing and other services for Veterans experiencing domestic violence and intimate partner violence.



Additionally, in observance of National Domestic Violence Awareness Month, VA’s Intimate Partner Violence Assistance Program will gather with internal and external national partners this October to help promote the department’s mission to foster healthy relationships and safety.

“VA recognizes the impact domestic violence has on Veterans and their families, and is committed to raising awareness about this serious problem,” said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie. “We want to remind Veterans in these tough situations they are not alone, and that VA is here to help them access safe, stable housing and supportive services.”

Veterans losing their housing because they are fleeing domestic violence are eligible for SSVF rapid rehousing, which is an intervention designed to help homeless Veterans and their families quickly access permanent housing. The GPD program provides housing and supportive services to help homeless Veterans achieve residential stability, increase their skill levels and incomes, and achieve greater self-determination.

In 2017, Public Law 114-315 expanded eligibility for participation in the SSVF and GPD programs by broadening the definition of “homeless” to include any individual or family fleeing or attempting to flee domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, stalking — or other situations making it dangerous to remain in the home — which include situations that jeopardize the health and safety of children. Eligible Veterans must have no other residence, and lack both the resources and support networks to obtain other permanent housing.

Click [SSVF](#) or [GPD](#) to learn more about VA’s domestic violence assistance programs.



JUST START TALKING

Story by: Megan Kon | RICHMOND VAMC PUBLIC AFFAIRS

Songwriting Retreat

Michael Peterson, an Army Veteran who gets his health care at Central Virginia VA Health Care System, took part in a three-day retreat in Nashville, Tennessee, along with nine other Veterans from the VA's Mid-Atlantic Health Care Network. He found it to be a phenomenal experience.

Peterson says participating in Operation Song through songwriting and music has helped him tremendously in the ability to express his daily struggles with post-traumatic stress disorder, chronic pain, anxiety and depression.

"I still struggle most days with heart-ache," Peterson said. "But, I'm more so now, able to manage a little better knowing I'm loved by others who care about me. It's okay to express how I'm feeling and not keep life's burdens inside."

Throughout the retreat, Veterans visited different recording studios with their assigned singer/songwriter. They traveled to and from Warner Music (Nashville), Sony/ATV Music Publishing, Universal, ASCAP, Downtown Music Publishing and BMI. There, they shared their military experience while the songwriter listened and pulled unique themes from their story. On the last day, Operation Song put on a concert, giving each Veteran a chance to sing their story. Peterson got on stage, shared his military background and what the retreat meant to him. A piece of his song is written below.

"So maybe you've got problems, and you're doing your best to solve 'em. You give 'em blood, give 'em sweat, give 'em tears. Funny thing 'bout problems, is we forget that we all got 'em. Some take months, some take

minutes, some take years. You gotta give 'em time."

Peterson served during Desert Storm in the early 1990s.

"We as leaders often forget about ourselves," Peterson said. "The problem I had about two years, well, it all basically blew up in my face. I'm six foot three, 250 plus pounds, but it broke me down like a baby. Since I've been going to the VA, it's just been great to be a part of music therapy, to come here, share my story and not be judged. I can actually talk with someone and feel comfortable."

Operation Song

When memories flash by like a freight train, thoughts are jumbled, and words don't capture the emotion – just start talking. You may just create a song. VA has partnered with Operation Song, a nonprofit organization that offers an avenue for active duty military, Veterans and their families to tell their story through songwriting.

Grammy nominated songwriter Bob Regan founded Operation Song to help heal Veterans one song at a time. Regan explains in an Operation Song promotional video, songwriting can take your truth and make it a masterpiece simply by taking the pieces of your story and creating a focal point to anchor the song on.

The Power of Music

Hope Kumme works as a Board-Certified Neurologic Music Therapist at Central Virginia VA Health Care System. She accompanied these Veterans throughout the retreat. She provided both musical and emotional support

TOP PHOTO: Ten Veterans perform their songs at an Operation Song concert in Nashville. (Photo Credit: Hope Kumme)

during the entire songwriting process.

"Through this wonderful songwriting experience, the inner thoughts and feelings of our Veterans were able to be fully shared in a very powerful and meaningful way," Kumme said. "I call them 'Magical Musical Moments.' It was great to see the magic unfold as the Veteran engaged with the professional singer/songwriter and created a true masterpiece within a few hours. This experience empowered our Veterans and provided them the courage to express themselves. They created new and meaningful relationships with each other and with the professional singers/songwriters and Operation Song staff."

Music therapy is offered at the Central Virginia VA Health Care System for both inpatient and outpatient Veterans. It's also offered as part of our [Veterans Integrative Pain Program](#). Veterans and non-Veterans can also come together for Community Jam Nights on the 1st and 3rd Thursdays of the month in the multipurpose room from 6 - 7:30 p.m. For further information regarding music therapy, please contact your primary care provider or Hope Kumme at 804-675-6100.



Michael Peterson (right) works with his singer/songwriter (Jason Sever) to create his song. (Photo Credit: Hope Kumme)

'Brings People Together' | Man's Tribute to 9/11 Victims Makes Its Way Through Hampton

By Brian Farrell | 13 NEWS NOW, NORFOLK, VA



Officer Bryan Skipworth with the Department of Veterans Affairs Police began running with an American flag years ago to remember people killed on Sept. 11, 2001.

HAMPTON, Va. — Bryan Skipworth was in 8th Grade in upstate New York the day planes flew into the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, when passengers on a third plane brought it down in Pennsylvania. Eighteen years later, you find him running with an American flag in Hampton.

"Just brings people together," Skipworth said. "That's the reason I did it." For Skipworth, the tribute to people who died on Sept. 11, 2001, is a longstanding one.

A few years after the terrorist attacks, he became a volunteer firefighter in his hometown of Baldwinsville, N.Y., following in the footsteps of his brother. Skipworth's dad worked in public safety.

By 2011, he started his honor run, which took him to fire stations in upstate New York. The following year, he deployed as an Army reservist, and other people took up the run while he was gone.

Then Skipworth landed in Hampton Roads, where he continued his tribute of running with an American flag. The member of the Virginia National Guard included military installations in his routes, including Naval Station Norfolk and Joint Expeditionary Base Little Creek-Fort Story. While he served as a deputy with the Newport News Sheriff's Office, he carried the flag from Downtown Newport News to Fire Station to near Christopher Newport University.

Now an officer with the Department of Veterans Affairs Police, his run this year found him leaving the LaSalle Avenue Gate of Langley Air Force Base, snaking through the streets of Hampton, and ending at the Hampton VA Medical Center. "Brings people out," noted Skipworth, who had some of those people stop him along the way.

After reaching the medical center, he and others watched as someone hoisted the

flag to the top of a pole along the water. As the Stars and Stripes moved, Skipworth's final part of the tribute was a salute.

"Being from New York and an emergency service family, it hit very close to home. I wanted to remember and to show that emergency service and military are still out there fighting that fight," Skipworth said. "I also see it from that other side because my wife is active duty and is currently away, and it's my son and I on the home front."

VA AND HEALTH CARE LEADERS CREATE CALL TO ACTION THROUGH NATIONAL SUICIDE PREVENTION TASK FORCE

Focus is to raise awareness and drive change

The [President's Roadmap to Empower Veterans and End the National Tragedy of Suicide \(PREVENTS\) task force](#) hosted a health care leadership meeting at the White House to bring together [leaders across the health care industry](#) to discuss their role in changing the culture around mental health, substance misuse and addiction.

VA recognizes that it must work with communities, faith-based and tribal organizations, private and public partners, as well as state, local and federal government agencies to achieve this goal.

"Collaboration with major healthcare delivery systems is an integral part of VA's public health approach to suicide prevention," said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie. "Sui-

cide prevention and alleviating emotional pain and suffering requires an all-hands-on-deck, comprehensive approach. The work of the PREVENTS task force, like this meeting, moves us closer to solving the problems that lead to Veteran suicide."

VA and the White House Domestic Policy Council established the PREVENTS task force in June via [Executive Order](#) signed by President Trump in March. The interagency task force is charged with implementing a roadmap for Veteran suicide prevention at the national and community levels by March 2020.

Veterans who are in crisis or having thoughts of suicide, and those who know a Veteran in crisis, can call the Veterans Crisis

Line for confidential support available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year. Call 1-800-273-8255 and Press 1, text to 838255 or chat online at [VeteransCrisisLine.net/Chat](#).

Reporters covering this issue can download VA's [Safe Messaging Best Practices fact sheet](#) or visit [www.ReportingOnSuicide.org](#) for important guidance on how to communicate about suicide.



VISN 6 Sites Of Care & VA Vet Centers

MEDICAL CENTERS

Asheville VAMC

1100 Tunnel Road
Asheville, NC 28805
828-298-7911 | 800-932-6408
www.asheville.va.gov

Durham VAMC

508 Fulton Street
Durham, NC 27705
919-286-0411 | 888-878-6890
www.durham.va.gov

Fayetteville VAMC

2300 Ramsey Street
Fayetteville, NC 28301
910-488-2120 | 800-771-6106
www.fayettevilleenc.va.gov

Hampton VAMC

100 Emancipation Dr.
Hampton, VA 23667
757-722-9961 | 866-544-9961
www.hampton.va.gov

Richmond VAMC

1201 Broad Rock Blvd.
Richmond, VA 23249
804-675-5000 | 800-784-8381
www.richmond.va.gov

Salem VAMC

1970 Roanoke Blvd.
Salem, VA 24153
540-982-2463 | 888-982-2463
www.salem.va.gov

Salisbury VAMC

1601 Brenner Ave.
Salisbury, NC 28144
704-638-9000 | 800-469-8262
www.salisbury.va.gov

OUTPATIENT CLINICS

Albemarle CBOC

1845 W City Drive
Elizabeth City, NC 27909
252-331-2191

Brunswick County CBOC

18 Doctors Cl., Units 2 & 3
Supply, NC 28462 | 910-754-6141

Charlotte CBOC

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

Charlotte HCC

3506 W. Tyvola Rd.
Charlotte, NC 28208
704-329-1300

Charlottesville CBOC

590 Peter Jefferson Pkwy
Charlottesville, VA 22911
434-293-3890

Chesapeake CBOC

1987 S. Military Highway
Chesapeake, VA 23320
757-722-9961

Danville CBOC

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

Emporia CBOC

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

Fayetteville HCC

7300 So. Raeford Rd
Fayetteville NC 28304
910-488-2120 | 800-771-6106

Fayetteville Rehabilitation Clinic

4101 Raeford Rd. Ste 100-B
Fayetteville NC 28304
910-908-2222

Franklin CBOC

647 Wayah Street
Franklin, NC 28734-3390
828-369-1781

Fredericksburg CBOC

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

Fredericksburg at Southpoint CBOC

10401 Spotsylvania Ave, Ste 300
Fredericksburg, VA 22408
540-370-4468

Goldsboro CBOC

2610 Hospital Road
Goldsboro, NC 27909
919-731-4809

Greenville HCC

401 Moye Blvd.
Greenville, NC 27834
252-830-2149

Hamlet CBOC

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

Hickory CBOC

2440 Century Place,
SE Hickory, NC 28602
828-431-5600

Hillandale Rd. Annex

1824 Hillandale Road Durham
North Carolina 27705
919-383-6107

Jacksonville CBOC

4006 Henderson Drive
Jacksonville, NC 28546
910-353-6406

Jacksonville 2 VA Clinic

306 Brynn Marr Road
Jacksonville, NC 28546
910-353-6406

Jacksonville 3 VA Clinic

4 Josh Court
Jacksonville, NC 28546
910-353-6406

Kernersville HCC

1695 Kernersville Medical Pkwy
Kernersville, NC 27284
336-515-5000

Lynchburg CBOC

1600 Lakeside Drive
Lynchburg, VA 24501
434-316-5000

Morehead City CBOC

5420 U.S. 70
Morehead City, NC 28557
252-240-2349

Raleigh CBOC

3305 Sungate Blvd.
Raleigh, NC 27610
919-212-0129

Raleigh II Annex

3040 Hammond Business Place
Raleigh, NC 27603
919-899-6259

Raleigh III CBOC

2600 Atlantic Ave, Ste 200
Raleigh, NC 27604
919-755-2620

Robeson County CBOC

139 Three Hunts Drive
Pembroke, NC 28372
910-272-3220

Rutherford County CBOC

374 Charlotte Road
Rutherfordton, NC 28139
828-288-2780

Sanford CBOC

3112 Tramway
Road Sanford, NC 27332
919-775-6160

Staunton CBOC

102 Lacy B. King Way
Staunton, VA 24401
540-886-5777

Tazewell CBOC

141 Ben Bolt Ave.
Tazewell, VA 24651
276-988-8860

Virginia Beach CBOC

244 Clearfield Avenue
Virginia Beach, VA
757-722-9961

Wilmington HCC

1705 Gardner Rd.
Wilmington, NC 28405
910-343-5300

Wytheville CBOC

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

DIALYSIS CENTERS

VA Dialysis and Blind Rehabilitation Clinics at Brier Creek

8081 Arco Corporate Drive
Raleigh, NC 27617
919-286-5220

VA Dialysis Clinic Fayetteville

2301 Robeson Street, Ste. 101
Fayetteville, NC 28305, 910-483-9727

VET CENTERS

Charlotte Vet Center

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

Fayetteville Vet Center

2301 Robeson Street
Fayetteville, NC 28305
910-488-6252

Greensboro Vet Center

3515 W Market Street, Suite 120
Greensboro, NC 27403
336-333-5366

Greenville Vet Center

1021 W.H. Smith Blvd.
Greenville, NC 27834
252-355-7920

Jacksonville, N.C. Vet Center

110-A Branchwood Drive
Jacksonville, NC 28546
910-577-1100

Norfolk Vet Center

1711 Church Street
Norfolk, VA 23504
757-623-7584

Raleigh Vet Center

8851 Ellistree Lane
Raleigh, NC 27617
(919) 361-6419

Roanoke Vet Center

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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