

VOICES OF VISN 6

Excellent Care – Earned by Veterans – Delivered Here



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TOP PHOTO: Dr. Alexei Marquez (right), a Franklin Community Based Outpatient Clinic (CBOC) physical therapist, shows a Veteran how to perform stretches to help alleviate pain. Physical Therapists (PTs) are health care professionals who diagnose and treat individuals of all ages with medical problems or other health-related conditions that limit their abilities to move and perform functional activities in their daily lives. PTs are supported by Physical Therapist Assistants who are able to provide treatment based on a physical therapy plan of care. (VA photo by Juan F. Jimenez)



MESSAGE FROM OUR DIRECTOR

Hi Team,

May is always a significant month for health care when we honor large groups of our team who work to ensure our patients get the care they need every day. As our facilities have focused celebrations for the below employees, I want to share my appreciation for their hard work and dedication to our patients, especially during these last few pandemic years.

Significant Dates & Observations in May

- [Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander Month](#)
- [Mental Health Month](#)
- [Nurses Month](#)
- National Nursing Week (May 6-12)
- National Hospital Week (May 8-14)
- National Skilled Nursing Care Center Week (May 8-14)
- [National VA Research Week](#) (May 16-20)
- Morehead City Ribbon Cutting Event (May 17)
- VA's 12th annual VA2K Walk & Roll event (May 18)
- Memorial Day (May 30)

Entering my sixth month as VISA 6 Network Director, I can genuinely tell you VA is not slowing down; we are only ramping up and expanding access, services, and Veteran benefit opportunities. It all starts with our employees.

You may have heard there are a lot of leadership changes underway at VISA 6. On April 10, we welcomed Dr. James Goff as the Chief Medical Officer. We are also set to announce

the new Deputy Network Director selection in the coming weeks, and the Durham VA Medical Center will welcome Dr. Alyshia Smith on May 23 as their new Executive Director.

We also look forward to announcing the appointment of full-time directors at the Salisbury VA Health Care System and the Fayetteville, NC VA Coastal Health Care System, as Dan Dücker recently departed for the Tennessee Valley VA Health Care System. During the interim, Dr. Jeffrey Morgan, Fayetteville's Chief of Staff, is filling in at the helm as Acting Director. I am proud to bring on leaders who will carry our mission forward with the passion and drive our Veterans deserve.

I have one significant benefits update to share. On April 26, VA announced the addition of nine rare respiratory **cancers** to the list of presumed service-connected disabilities due to exposure to fine particulate matter for Veterans who served any amount of time in the following:

- Afghanistan, Djibouti, Syria, or Uzbekistan during the Persian Gulf War, from September 19, 2001, to the present, or
- The Southwest Asia theater of operations from August 2, 1990, to the present.

VA is taking a new approach to making decisions on presumptives, one that takes all available science into account, with one goal in mind – getting today's Veterans, and Vets in the decades ahead – the benefits they deserve, and as fast as possible.

VA identified, through a focused review of scientific and medical evidence, a biological plausibility between airborne hazards, specifically particulate matter, and carcinogenesis of

the respiratory tract; the unique circumstances of these rare cancers warrant a presumption of service connection.

Veterans and survivors who had claims previously denied for any of the below respiratory cancers are encouraged to file a [supplemental claim](#) for benefits;

- Squamous cell carcinoma of the larynx;
- Squamous cell carcinoma of the trachea;
- Adenocarcinoma of the trachea;
- Salivary gland-type tumors of the trachea;
- Adenosquamous carcinoma of the lung;
- Large cell carcinoma of the lung;
- Salivary gland-type tumors of the lung;
- Sarcomatoid carcinoma of the lung and;
- Typical and atypical carcinoid of the lung.

VA will contact impacted Veterans and survivors to inform them about their eligibility and provide information on how to apply. Veterans and survivors may visit [VA.gov](#) or call toll-free at 800-827-1000 to apply for benefits.

As mentioned above, this month is Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander Month. I want to recognize the more than 300,000 living Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander American Veterans and honor their service and dedication to our country. I encourage you to learn more about their heritage at [www.asianpacificheritage.gov](#).

I want to thank each of our VISA 6 teammates across the region for taking care of our Veterans every day – your dedication does not go unnoticed.

PAUL S. CREWS

MPH, FACHE, VISA 6 Network Director

Goff Starts as New VISA 6 CMO

Dr. James Goff arrived on April 10 to serve as Chief Medical Officer (CMO) of the VA Mid-Atlantic Health Care Network, Veterans Integrated Service Network (VISA 6).

Dr. Goff has 15 years of health care experience with VHA and has served as Vascular Surgery Section Chief, Surgical Service Chief, and most recently as the Chief of Staff for the New Mexico VA Health Care System in Albuquerque, from 2016 until assuming his current role.

As VISA 6 CMO, Dr. Goff oversees medical operations and personnel in VA facilities across two states. VISA 6 comprises 46 sites of care in North Carolina and Virginia, providing

health care to more than 400,000 Veterans through 6.8 million outpatient encounters and 25,000 hospital admissions last year. More than 20,000 clinical and administrative support staff members, and about 4,000 volunteers utilize a \$4.7 billion annual budget to coordinate operations serving Veterans in 7 VA Medical Centers and 32 associated community-based outpatient clinics (CBOCs), 5 Health Care Centers, and two freestanding dialysis clinics.

Following a baccalaureate degree in Biomedical Engineering and Medical School at Tulane University, Dr. Goff completed his residency in General Surgery and fellowship

training in Vascular Surgery at Walter Reed Army Medical Center and an additional Medical Research Fellowship at the Walter Reed Army Institute of Research. Dr. Goff also has additional fellowship training in Endovascular Therapy at the Cleveland Clinic. He maintains dual board certifications in General Surgery and Vascular Surgery.

During his active-duty service, Dr. Goff served in multiple echelons of military health care, including service as a Battalion Surgeon for an armor/mechanized infantry task force with the 1st Infantry Division during Operation Desert Shield/Desert Storm and later as the Deputy Hospital Commander/Senior Triage Officer with the 48th Combat Support Hospital during Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan.

Sticking It Out: Acupuncture Helps Veteran Beat Addiction

By Joshua Edson

DURHAM VAHCS PUBLIC AFFAIRS

The best way to reduce downtime when ill is to avoid becoming sick to begin with. That is part of the reason VA adopted several initiatives through its Whole Health wellness program, using a variety of Complementary and Integrative Health (CIH) practices designed to keep people well, in addition to supporting recuperation and healing. In some cases, it can result in a reduction in medications. For many Veterans, it is changing their lives.

Veterans are becoming more aware of their need for good health. Some are making changes subtly over time, and others are making daily changes. For Wavey Alston, a Vietnam-era Air Force Veteran, change began in June 2017.

“I just couldn’t live with the [back] pain much longer,” said Wavey. “I was taking Morphine tablets, and they helped, but I only felt better until the effect wore off and the pain came back.”

Wavey’s back pain began while he was

in the Air Force. While stationed in Thailand during the Vietnam War, Wavey worked as an aircraft mechanic, which required much physical labor.

“I had fun,” said Wavey, “But I did a lot of heavy lifting. Of course, I was young, and it didn’t seem to be a problem then.”

Once his time in the Air Force was over, Wavey returned home to Durham, N.C., to move on with his life. He found work at a printing company and started a family. Life was good. But then the years of heavy lifting began to emerge in the form of back pain.

“My back just got worse,” said Wavey. “Then our insurance costs went up. I never considered going to the VA until then, but it was the best decision we ever made.”

Eventually, Wavey became a patient at the Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation Clinic at the Durham VA Healthcare System (DVAHCS). During his entrance into VA health, Wavey acknowledged his dependency on opioids to control pain. To him, the morphine tablets were necessary but self-defeating. That is when staff at the clinic suggested a

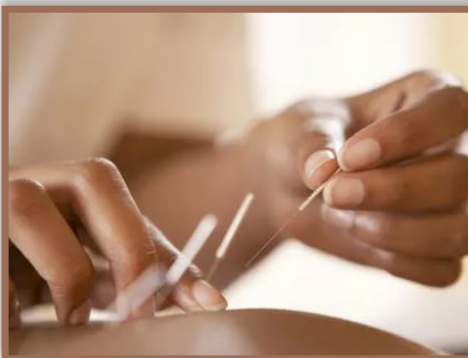
possible alternative — acupuncture.

Acupuncture is a CIH practice involving the insertion of needles at strategic points on the body. It is traditionally and frequently used to treat pain. Studies show that acupuncture is an effective treatment for various conditions, especially chronic back pain. Despite the uneasiness some Veterans initially feel about the use of needles, acupuncture is relatively a painless alternative treatment option that promotes wellness.

“The whole needle thing put me off at first,” said Wavey. “But the doctors explained the benefits to me, and I decided that it wouldn’t hurt to try it.”

It took a few visits, but the treatments began to work. “It was strange at first,” Wavey said. He was seeing an acupuncturist twice a week. “It took a while to start feeling the benefits. I’m glad I stuck with it.”

Wavey has engaged in acupuncture for his chronic back pain for the past four years now. He is sure to meet his acupuncturist once a week. While his pain is not gone entirely, it is not the hurdle it once was.



LEFT PHOTO: Wavey Alston and his wife, Edna. After years of back pain that made him dependent on opioids to function, Wavey found relief through the DVAHCS Whole Health program. Weekly acupuncture appointments now make his back pain manageable. **RIGHT PHOTO:** Acupuncture is a CIH practice involving the insertion of needles at strategic points on the body, often used as a means of treating pain.

“Before I started all this, I could barely move without the morphine,” he said. “It was that bad. Now, I can move around and do more of things that I couldn’t do before. Can’t say I’m a new man, but I really feel like it.”

Fayetteville PACT Member Shows Why Social Workers Deserve Favor

The Fayetteville NC VA Coastal Health Care System salutes the 169 Department of Veteran Affairs social workers across our 19 county Southeastern N.C. region for their dedication and commitment to our Veterans. We asked one social worker to share her story.

Meet Tracy Lewis, licensed clinical social worker. She is a native of Goldsboro, and a graduate of Fayetteville State University and

East Carolina University. She is a Face of the VA.

Tracy Lewis’ desire to help people led her to the social work profession. Her compassion and work ethic is why she is among the best of her peers as the Fayetteville N.C. VA Coastal Health Care System Social Worker of the Year.

Lewis, a Goldsboro, N.C., native, is a Patient Aligned Clinical Team (PACT) social

worker at the Goldsboro Community Based Outpatient Clinic, where she has served Veterans and their families since 2013 when the clinic opened. PACT is a team of health professionals working collaboratively with the patient to provide for the patient’s healthcare needs.

“She [Lewis] clearly represents the value and drive of a social worker to serve others, and she can speak clearly and fluidly about the role of a PACT social worker,” said Courtney Jenkins-Norman, PACT Social Work Supervisor.

A career in social work wasn’t her first choice. “I thought I wanted to be an RN [reg-

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

Fayetteville PACT Member ...

istered nurse], but I just thought that I could do more as a social worker.”

Prior to joining the Department of Veterans Affairs, Lewis worked as a social worker for a local hospital and in the North Carolina prison system, where she sometimes worked with Veterans diagnosed with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder.

Why VA?

“My dad was a Vietnam Vet, and I saw what he went through trying to get the services that he needed,” Lewis said when asked why she chose the VA. “I was an advocate from him, and wanted to do that for other Veterans.”

Rural Roads to City Streets

She supports Veterans in some of the more rural locations in the region — locations with fewer resources and a greater distance from the available resources.

“The population served by the Goldsboro CBOC often resides in rural areas with very limited resources, thus requiring additional measures to meet their needs,” said Theresa Morgan Heath, Caregiver Support Program Manager and Lewis’ former supervisor.

Lewis recalled a story of the relationship she established with a rural, elderly Veteran and his wife, connecting them with resources to assist with fixing their driveway. “The carport was

messed up so bad, he wasn’t able to go outside in his wheelchair,” said Lewis. “I reached out to community organizations to assist in areas that the VA was unable to. And I continue to help them.”

And while the resources in the city are often more plentiful, Lewis says that ensuring that people are connected and understand the needs of Veterans is very important.

“Working with the community can be a challenge,” she said. “But a lot depends on your rapport. It’s about being open, listening, networking, and building relationships.

“Here in Goldsboro, I am very connected to the community. I can just pick up the phone and call the mayor if I need to,” she added with a smile.

According to her former supervisor, she is very community-oriented. “Ms. Lewis is very active in the local community after hours and networks with community organizations to ensure the needs of the Veterans in the community are known and supported,” said Heath.

Her networking know-how has paid off in a big way for some Veterans. Lewis worked with the City of Goldsboro to have public transit fares reduced — first by half, and then eliminated. “Our Vets can now ride free, and I am proud that I played a role in making that happen.

“Knowing that I have helped someone and made a difference in their life makes social work rewarding.”



On April 13, Virginia VA Secretary Craig Crenshaw, second from right, and VISN 6 Network Director Paul Crews, right, receive a guided tour of Salem VA Healthcare System facilities by Rebecca Stackhouse, Executive Director of Salem VA HCS, left. The group saw renovations currently underway in an inpatient ward, where work is being accomplished to turn 2, 3 and 4 patient rooms into single occupancy rooms. The group also received an operations briefing and tours of new facilities such as a more-than-\$9 million dialysis unit that opened recently. Along with Crenshaw were Virginia Deputy VA Secretary Jason Pak, center, and Assistant Secretary Jordan Stewart, second from left.



Daniel Ducker New VA Tennessee Valley Healthcare System Director

Congratulations to Mr. Daniel L. Ducker, who has been appointed VA Tennessee Valley Healthcare System’s new Executive Medical Center Director. Mr. Ducker has served as the Executive Director for the Fayetteville NC VA Coastal Health Care System since 2019. During this time, he provided strategic leadership and oversight for about 2,700 employees serving more than 85,000 Veterans at 15 locations in 19 counties in southeast North Carolina, with an overall operating budget of more than 750 million dollars.

“I am privileged and honored to carry on VA’s mission and serve the Veterans, employees, and volunteers at the VA Tennessee Valley Healthcare System,” said Mr. Ducker. “I am grateful and proud to have served the great Veterans and employees of the Fayetteville NC VA Coastal Health Care System. I have full faith and confidence that the leaders there will continue building on our progress of expanding and modernizing services for our Veterans in southeastern North Carolina – As we say it: One Team, Every Day Better.”

Dr. Jeffrey S. Morgan has been selected to serve as The Interim Executive Director for Fayetteville VA NC Coastal Health Care System until a permanent individual is appointed.

I am proud to have appointed Dr. Jeffrey S. Morgan as the interim Executive Director for Fayetteville VA NC Coastal Health Care System starting April 9, 2022, while we recruit for a new Executive Director.

Dr. Morgan is currently serving as the Chief of Staff for Fayetteville VA NC Coastal Health Care System. He joined VA in September 2017 as an Orthopedic Surgeon after retiring from the United States Army as a Colonel. Subsequently, he has served as Chief of Orthopedics, Chief of Surgery, Deputy Chief of Surgery, and Interim Deputy Chief of Staff.

Dr. Morgan is a graduate of West Point and the East Tennessee State University, James H. Quillen College of Medicine. He has a Master of Business Administration from Duke University, Fuqua School of Business, with a concentration in Health Sector Management. Dr. Morgan is certified by the American Board of Orthopedic Surgery as well as a Fellow of the American Academy of Orthopedic Surgeons and a Fellow of the American College of Healthcare Executives.

We are grateful for both Dr. Morgan and Mr. Ducker’s service to our Veterans, and we look forward to supporting them on their new VA assignments.

Salisbury VA Mental Health Team Eases Burden on Veterans Suffering from Dementia and their Family Members

Story and Photo by Todd Goodman
SALISBURY VA PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICER

Looking after a loved one with dementia and finding long-term care options can be overwhelming to family members. That's where the Behavioral Recovery Outreach (BRO) team at Salisbury VA Health Care System can lend a hand.

Licensed Clinical Social Worker and BRO Team Coordinator Autumn Edmiston is part of an interdisciplinary team comprised of two psychologists, two nurse managers, a behavioral neurologist, a recreation therapist, a social worker, and a pharmacist. The group meets weekly to discuss care options for the most vulnerable Veteran population.

"Our goal is to work with Veterans who have behavioral issues either from a mental health diagnosis or from cognitive impairment such as dementia," said Edmiston.

BRO works with inpatient teams to take non-pharmacological approaches to stabilize behavioral issues such as aggression or verbal outbursts. Team members work to manage those behaviors and follow Veterans for at least six months after they leave VA. In order to be eligible, Veterans must need a caregiver, whether that is at home, skilled nursing, or an assisted living facility.

For Veronica Lilly, whose husband — a Navy Veteran — suffers from dementia, the disease's progression was especially rough.

"I am a retired teacher of special needs children and that made it very difficult for me to see my husband deteriorate the way he did," said Lilly. "I was in denial. I'd go to work every

day for 9 hours with special needs kids and I'd come home to a husband I was starting to not really recognize."

For Lilly the BRO team has been invaluable.

"This program really helped my husband and me," she said. "It brought a level of simplicity to the situation we were going through. They explained all the specifics of the disease and how to address certain situations that may arise when interacting with my husband."

While her husband was an inpatient at Salisbury VA, the team gave Lilly in-depth medical notes. These helped her understand how he interacts with medical staff. Her husband was very leery of people he didn't know and relied on Edmiston to help him.

"Thank God for her, because she was at many of his doctor appointments and that gave him a sense of calm," said Lilly. "BRO team has been phenomenal. Autumn calls regularly to make sure I'm doing okay. In fact, the team did extensive research to find an appropriate long-term facility for my husband that we feel safe about."

A dementia patient's mental health can change when they leave the hospital. An inpatient mental health unit is the highest level of care there is, so when they transition to a lower level, environmental changes really can affect them. It's BRO team's goal to make that switch as seamless as possible for the new caregivers. One way they do this is by developing a behavior plan.

"We brainstorm interventions with the new care team," said Edmiston. "For example, does the Veteran always refuse to brush his teeth? Well, there are things that can be done to improve this behavior. Do we have the toothbrush and toothpaste he likes? How are staff approaching him? Are we circling back later in the day and possibly pairing it with music he likes? What can we do to make it a more enjoyable experience?"

Edmiston measures success in several ways. First, the team has consistently demonstrated a decrease in hospitalizations because they know what has been tried and where to go next. They also have found that compared to community hospitalizations, a Veteran's VA stay with BRO involved is much shorter. The team's goal is to extend time between hospitalizations.

"I love when inpatient teams tell us we're helpful," said Edmiston. "We get lots of positive family feedback. We have seen Veterans go from irritable, anxious, and restless to happy, content, and at the appropriate level of care. I see BRO's role as reducing stress for everyone involved. And I see my personal calling as finding a way to reduce suffering in the world. BRO has a unique way of doing that at a systemic level."

For more information on the BRO team and how it can assist a loved one suffering with dementia, please contact Autumn Edmiston at (704) 638-9000 ext. 14683.





(LEFT PHOTO) Emily Hall (left), social worker, helps a Veteran complete his advance directive during the Advance Care Planning Fair held at the Central Virginia VA Health Care System, April 13, 2022. **(RIGHT PHOTO)** Jodie Cozad (left), Gretchen Sodamann and Querida Sarrer from Social Work Service, distribute information and outreach materials to Veterans, visitors and staff during the Advance Care Planning Fair held at the Central Virginia VA Health Care System, April 13, 2022.

Advance Directives Help Veterans Plan for Future

By Megan Kon

CENTRAL VIRGINIA VAHCS PUBLIC AFFAIRS

Future health care decisions may not be at the top of everyone's to-do list, but in the case of a significant life-changing event, it could turn out to be one of the most important decisions to make for yourself and your loved ones.

Thankfully, Central Virginia VA Health Care System (CVHCS) offers Veterans and caregivers the opportunity to plan ahead with an advance directive.

An advance directive is a legal document that designates who would make health care decisions in case an emergency arises, should you not be able to represent yourself.

CVHCS' Advance Care Planning Team hosts outreach events periodically to allow

Veterans to take ownership of their health care decisions and create advance directives.

"In April, the team hosted an Advance Care Planning Fair, distributing information and providing real-time access to social workers to assist Veterans in completing their advance directives," said Erin Sellers, social worker and Advance Care Planning Program coordinator.

More than 100 people stopped by the event throughout the day, with more than two dozen Veterans completing an advance directive.

Advance Care Planning classes are available and give Veterans an opportunity to share experiences and discuss what they would want in their advance directive.

"The class we offer is another great way to learn about the nuances of Advance Care

Planning with other Veterans," Sellers said.

Jodie Cozad, an Air Force Veteran and program support assistant for Social Work Service, participated in the Advance Care Planning Class last year, and found it beneficial.

"Before I started working with the Advance Care Planning Program, I never really thought much about completing an advance directive," Cozad said. "The experience helped me start the conversation with my family and begin to decide who I would want to speak on my behalf."

VA encourages Veterans to have an active role in their health care journey. Each April, CVHCS recognizes National Healthcare Decisions Day. To schedule for an upcoming class, call 804-675-5760. To learn more, visit: https://www.ethics.va.gov/for_veterans.asp



New X-ray Machines Offer Advanced Features to Improve Veteran Experience

The Central Virginia VA Health Care System radiology service recently invested in four new, portable X-ray machines to improve workflow and productivity in the hospital.

The mobile DRX-Revolution portable machines offer many updated features, such as SmartGrid, LED status lighting, wireless remotes, and increased touch response.

Pictured are several radiation technologists who work with the machines.

ASIAN AMERICAN AND NATIVE HAWAIIAN PACIFIC ISLANDER HERITAGE MONTH

VA Celebrates Asian American, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander Heritage Month

The observance of Asian American, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander (AANHPI) Heritage Month is an occasion to remember the patriotism of AANHPIs who have served our military and the rest of the country.

May was chosen as the observance month to commemorate the arrival of the first Japanese immigrants to the United States on May 7, 1843, and to mark the anniversary of the transcontinental railroad completion on May 10, 1869. The majority of the workers who laid the tracks of that nation-unifying railway were Chinese immigrants.

In 1978, the AAPI recognition reached the legislative branch of the federal government and Public Law 95-419 was passed by the

House and Senate, which designated the week beginning on May 4, 1979, as Asian/Pacific American Heritage Week. In 1979, President Jimmy Carter accepted this call to action and issued Presidential Proclamation 4650 in support of the AANHPI week-long observance.

In the years that followed, U.S. Presidents annually issued proclamations for Asian/Pacific American Heritage Week. But in 1990, President George H.W. Bush extended the weeklong acknowledgement to a monthlong celebration, Asian/Pacific American Heritage Month. In 1992, President Bush permanently designated the month of May as Asian/Pacific American Heritage Month, via Public Law 102-450.

In a 2009 presidential proclamation,

President Barack Obama expanded the Asian/Pacific American commemoration to include Pacific Islanders and issued his proclamations in honor of Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month.

Celebrated in May each year, Asian American, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander Heritage Month recognizes the challenges faced by Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders and their vital contributions to the American story.

Adapted from <https://www.dodea.edu/dodeaCelebrates/Asian-American-Pacific-Islander-Heritage-Month.cfm>.

VA Establishes Presumptive Service Connection for Rare Respiratory Cancers for Certain Veterans

WASHINGTON — As part of [President Biden's Unity Agenda](#) commitment to support the nation's Veterans, the Department of Veterans Affairs is adding nine rare respiratory cancers to the list of presumed service-connected disabilities due to military environmental exposures to fine particulate matter.

The following list of rare respiratory cancers have been added to [VA's regulations through an Interim Final Rule](#) published in the Federal Register on April 26, 2022:

- Squamous cell carcinoma of the larynx.
- Squamous cell carcinoma of the trachea.
- Adenocarcinoma of the trachea.
- Salivary gland-type tumors of the trachea.
- Adenosquamous carcinoma of the lung.
- Large-cell carcinoma of the lung.
- Salivary gland-type tumors of the lung.
- Sarcomatoid carcinoma of the lung.
- Typical and atypical carcinoid of the lung.

VA determined through a focused review of scientific and medical evidence there is biological plausibility between airborne hazards and carcinogenesis of the respiratory tract — and the unique circumstances of these rare cancers warrant a presumption of service connection.

The rarity and severity of these illnesses and the reality these conditions present, is a situation where it may not be possible to develop additional evidence, prompted VA to take this action.

“Last year we made promises to fundamentally change and improve how we establish and expedite presumptions — now we're keeping them,” said VA Secretary Denis McDonough. “We are taking a new approach to presumptives that takes all available science into account, with one goal in mind — getting today's Veterans — and Vets in the decades ahead — the benefits they deserve as fast as possible.”

VA will begin processing disability compensation claims for Veterans who served any amount of time in the [Southwest Asia theater of operations](#) beginning Aug. 2, 1990, to the present, or Afghanistan, Uzbekistan, Syria or Djibouti beginning Sept. 19, 2001, to the present.

Any Veteran who has or had one of the listed cancers at any time during or after separation from military service may be eligible for disability compensation benefits. VA will contact impacted Veterans and survivors to inform them about their eligibility and will provide information on how to apply.

Veterans, survivors or dependents who had claims previously denied for any of these respiratory cancers are encouraged to file a [supplemental claim](#) for benefits. If you are a Veteran, survivor or dependent applying for the first time, file a new claim [here](#).

To apply for benefits, Veterans and survivors may visit [VA.gov](#) or call toll-free at 800-827-1000.

View the interim final rule for [Presumptive Service Connection for Rare Respiratory Cancers Due to Exposure to Fine Particulate Matter](#) and leave comments.

MAY 2022 - Moving the Body

Being active can help you prevent or manage a wide range of health problems and concerns, including high blood pressure, stroke, metabolic syndrome, type 2 diabetes, depression, certain types of cancer, arthritis, and falls. Any time you use your energy to move large muscles in your body, you are being physically active. Some activities increase your stamina, like walking, while others improve your strength, such as resistance training or lifting weights. You can increase your flexibility and balance by doing activities like yoga or tai chi.

Follow these tips to get started:

- If you have concerns about adding activity to your day, check with your care provider.
- Choose something that you like to do and think you can stick with it, but it is fine to try different things.
- Build up gradually. Perhaps start with short walks or light weights. Add duration, repetitions and/or intensity to keep challenging yourself.
- Honor your body. The activity may not be comfortable at first, but should not be painful.

- Find a workout buddy. You will encourage each other, especially on those days that you wish you could just sleep in or watch television.

Moving your body in these ways can improve your ability to do more of the things you want to do and keep you independent.

One Way to Move in May - Participate in Your Local VA2K!

VA's 12th annual VA2K Walk & Roll event is back with goals of moving the body in support of your whole health and wellbeing, while also helping homeless Veterans. The event is scheduled for May 18, 2022, at VA medical centers around the nation. To find out what is going on at your facility, check with your [local coordinator](#).

You can also check out [Team Red, White and Blue](#) for community options to be physically active. The VA's [MOVE! Program](#) has some physical activity [videos](#) you can use. In addition, [MOVE! Coach](#) is also available on your smartphone for self-guided care, and offers video instruction.

During the month of May, the [National](#)



Staying active is key to prevention and management of a broad range of health problems.

[Center for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention](#) highlights the monthly topic [Be Physically Active](#) and encourages all Veterans to sit less and [Move Your Way](#), to improve their health.

Join VA's 12 Annual VA2K Walk & Roll on May 18, 2022

VA's 12th annual VA2K Walk & Roll event is back with goals of moving the body in support of your whole health and well-being, while also helping homeless Veterans. The event is scheduled for May 18, 2022, at VA medical centers around the nation. The community is invited to participate in the free, VA2K event which often includes a short two-kilometer walk (1.24 miles). However, activities and date may vary per location.

To help area homeless Veterans, participants are encouraged to bring a voluntary donation such as clothing, toiletries, packaged food or bottled water. These donations will be collected and distributed

Join in VA's 12 annual Walk & Roll!

to local homeless Veterans. Donations are not required in order to participate.

Since 2011, more than \$2.7 million in donations of these type have been raised nationally to help homeless Veterans.

Community groups who are interested in participating in the event should contact the local VA2K coordinator. Find out more about the VA2K, Whole Health and Moving the Body at: [VA2K and Moving the Body - Home \(sharepoint.com\)](#)



Current chairman Cheryl Mason

VA Secretary Statement on the Leadership Change at the Helm of VA's Board of Veterans' Appeals

WASHINGTON — President Biden has announced his intended nominee to serve as the chairman of the Veterans' Board of Appeals for the Department of Veterans Affairs.

The current chairman, Cheryl Mason, will continue to serve in that role until a nominee is confirmed by the U.S. Senate.

The department wants to recognize the extraordinary contributions chairman Mason has made during her tenure as the board chair. As the first woman, military spouse and suicide survivor to serve as chairman, she has been a dedicated advocate and champion for Veterans, their families and caregivers. Her work at the board has resulted in increased access and improved outcomes for Veterans and their families — doubling the number of hearings and decisions of her predecessors.

Chairman Mason has been tireless and hugely successful in her stewardship of the board, and the department and our Veterans are much the better for it.

Upon stepping down from the chairman's position, Ms. Mason will continue working with the department on the challenges of military spouse employment, a subject on which she is one of the nation's leading experts.

Clear App Lets Veterans Carry Their Vaccine and Health Records Anywhere

Like millions of Americans vaccinated against COVID-19, you might find yourself digging for your vaccine card to enter restaurants, shops, concerts and other venues. To help make life easier for Veterans and family members, VA accepted onto its list of available third-party mobile apps the CLEAR Health Pass app — which stores and displays mobile vaccine cards.

CLEAR Health Pass is one way for you and your family members to have handy at all times a digital vaccine card and show proof of vaccination right on your smartphone.

How to Access the Free App

Thanks to CLEAR's participation in VA's Lighthouse program, Veterans can transform their paper vaccination cards into a digital format that is easily accessible by mobile phones and other devices. With the app, Veterans can quickly and securely verify their identities, then upload a photo of their vaccination card for seamless on-demand access.

The digital vaccination card app is free and has gone through VA security checks. Making a digital vaccine card is simple and can be done in minutes.

- Download: Veterans can download the free CLEAR app by going to VA's [Find Apps You Can Use webpage](#). For Clear Health Pass, select Find app. Scroll to the top of the page and at the "Connect your vaccine info to Health Pass in the CLEAR app and get back to what you love" prompt, and select DOWNLOAD NOW.
- Enroll by scanning in an official state identification card, followed by uploading a "selfie" photo to complete verification of user identity.
- In the app, tap on the blue digital vaccine tile, and follow instructions. You can also set it up to access via mobile your other health records.

What You Should Know About Third-Party Apps

The company behind CLEAR developed the app in collaboration with VA's Office of Information and Technology's (OIT) Lighthouse project, a public-private digital innovation

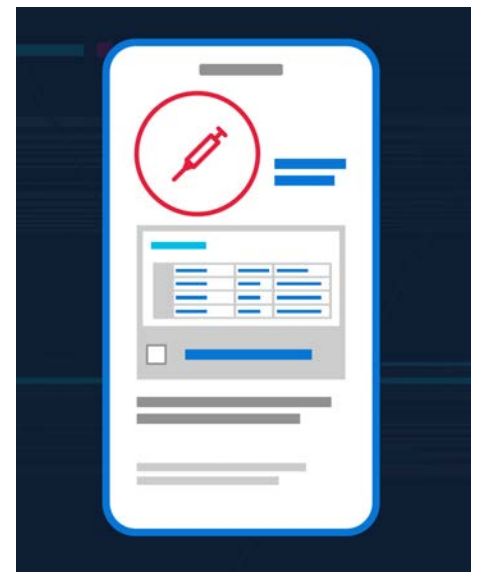
hub where engineers and other technologists build tools and products like third-party apps to improve Veterans' experiences and access to the health care and benefits that they've earned.

They're called "third-party apps" because VA doesn't create them directly. And you're never required to use them. A third-party developer creates the app in collaboration with VA's Lighthouse project office. VA specialists and quality control experts conduct thorough efficacy, security and safety testing on every app featured on the Find Apps You Can Use page.

As growing numbers of cities and towns nationwide are returning to full operation following two years of limited service due to the coronavirus pandemic, and might require proof of vaccine for access, the app lets Veterans more easily provide proof of vaccination for indoor dining, attending large-scale events, for traveling, and a range of other public environments.

Veterans retain control of their information in a secure virtual environment inaccessible to commercial data-mining efforts. [Get answers to common questions about third-party connected apps.](#)

Want to try out the app? Download the CLEAR app from VA's [Find Apps You Can Use webpage](#).



VA Advances Equity in Benefits, Services and Health Care

Action plan addresses discrepancies among underserved Veterans

WASHINGTON, DC — The Department of Veterans Affairs released its [Equity Action Plan](#), April 14, to eliminate barriers to health care, benefits and services, and create opportunities to improve access and experiences for historically marginalized Veterans.

VA's Equity Action Plan is part of the Biden-Harris administration's broader focus on advancing equity as outlined in [Executive Order 13985, Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government](#).

"The department's mission is to ensure equity and access for all those who served their country in uniform and the Equity Action Plan is a natural extension of that mission," said VA Secretary Denis McDonough. "We have efforts

underway to change policies, processes and procedures, as well as identify infrastructure and data enhancements to enable access to all Veterans, including underserved Veterans."

To serve all Veterans, VA must reach the most marginalized and underserved — regardless of race, gender, age or socio-economic status. The plan sets forth a myriad of goals to effectively incorporate equity across the department. To help achieve broad equity in every area of VA operations and engagement this includes:

- Building and maintaining trust with underserved Veterans.
- Developing data to measure equitable delivery of care and services.

- Improving access for advancing outcomes when it comes to:
- Health care, benefits and services for underserved Veterans.
- Contracts awarded to minority, small disadvantaged and women-owned businesses.

This follows the creation of an Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Access task force, [April 1, 2021](#), which developed a set of [20 recommendations](#) to ensure equitable treatment and experiences for all VA employees and Veterans and their families, caregivers and survivors.



Hampton VA's New Associate Director of Patient Care Services Is a North Carolina Native

Hampton VA Health Care System (HVAHCS) staff recently welcomed their new Associate Director of Patient Care Services. Ms. Marie Robinson-McLaughlin is a highly experienced and accomplished healthcare leader with nearly 30 years of experience in nursing and nursing management. In this role she will manage all nurses, nursing operations, Chaplain, and Nutrition and Food Services at the hospital, ensuring patients have the best experience and care while at HVAHCS.

Prior to her arrival in Hampton, she served as the Associate Director of Patient Care Services at VA Central Western Massachusetts Healthcare System, Leeds, Mass. Under her leadership, the facility's Community Living Center remained COVID-19 free, the only VA facility to accomplish that in the nation during the pandemic.

She began her VA career in 1984 at Salisbury VAMC as an Intensive Care Nurse, and later transferred to Durham VAMC. Her career has since taken her to VA medical facilities in Wilmington Del., Coatesville, Pa., West Palm Beach Fla., and Fayetteville, N.C. She also spent time at the John Hopkins Bayview

Geriatric Center. During her seven-year stint in Fayetteville, she served as Nurse Manager, managed the Women Veterans Program and Chief Nurse of Inpatient Acute/Mental Health and the Community Living Center.

Ms. Robinson-McLaughlin received her commission as an Army Officer in 1986, a member of the U.S. Army Nurse Corps. She has served in support of Operation Desert Storm, Operation Enduring Freedom, Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation New Dawn, and Freedom's Sentinel. Ms. Robinson-McLaughlin is presently assigned to the 315th Aeromedical Evacuation Squadron as a Colonel.

Ms. Robinson-McLaughlin has Masters of Science degrees in Gerontology and Administration from the University of North Carolina – Greensboro to complement her Bachelor of Science degree from Winston Salem State University. Her career began as a Clinical Nurse at Duke University Medical Center.

Ms. Robinson-McLaughlin served on the National Nursing Leadership Council (NNLC) as an advisor to the Assistant Under Secretary for Health for Patient Care Services

(VHA). She has been nationally recognized for achieving a perfect Joint Commission Survey for Home and Community Based Programs, implementing group Home Telehealth Clinic Appointments utilizing Clinical Video Telehealth.

According to Hampton Director Taquisa Simmons, "We're excited to have someone with Ms. Robinson-McLaughlin's experience, commitment and leadership on board at Hampton to take charge of our patient care services program, to help guide our incredible and hardworking staff squarely into the future."

VA Expands Reimbursement Agreement Program to Urban Indian Organizations

WASHINGTON — The Department of Veterans Affairs partners with Health and Human Services' 41 Indian Health Service grant-funded Urban Indian Organizations serving eligible American Indian/Alaska Native Veterans.

The collaboration is part of a recent expansion of VA's health care [Reimbursement Agreement Program](#).

UIOs provide unique access to quality health care and culturally appropriate services for AI/AN people living in urban areas, who may not have access to Indian Health Service or Tribal health care services because they do not live on or near a reservation or reside outside of an IHS area.

The partnership is possible through Section 1113 of the [Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021](#) which amended [Sharing Arrangements with Federal Agencies](#) to allow UIOs to participate in the department's Reimbursement Agreement Program to deliver health care to the 70% of AI/AN Veterans now living in urban areas.

"VA has partnered with the Indian Health Services/Tribal Health Program since 2012 to deliver the Reimbursement Agreement Program — which continues to evolve to meet the needs of all Veterans," said Acting Chief Medical Officer of VA's Office of Integrated Veteran Care Sachin P. Yende, M.D. "Partnering with Urban Indian Organizations will widen access to culturally sensitive care and build mutually beneficial relationships to better serve American Indian/Alaska Native Veterans."

Visit [Community Care](#) for more information on VA's Reimbursement Agreement Program and eligibility. Find more information on the [41 Urban Indian Organizations](#).



Veterans can expect:

- Your Choice of Provider

Veterans can choose to receive care from an IHS, THP, or VA medical facility.

VA Issues Notice of Funding Opportunity for Staff Sergeant Parker Gordon Fox Suicide Prevention Grant Program

WASHINGTON — As part of the Department of Veterans Affairs and White House national suicide prevention efforts April 15, VA published a [Notice of Funding Opportunity](#) for approximately \$51,750,000 in suicide prevention grants.

Under Section 201 of the Commander John Scott Hannon Veterans Mental Health Care Improvement Act, grants will be awarded to organizations that provide or coordinate suicide prevention services for Veterans at risk of suicide and the families of those Veterans.

"Communities are important partners in our work to end Veteran suicide," said VA Secretary Denis McDonough. "The Staff Sergeant Parker Gordon Fox Suicide Prevention Grant Program will fund pro-

grams in local communities that provide suicide prevention services and resources to Veterans and their families, along with ensuring Veterans have access to our community partners who know how to reach them."

Organizations may apply for grants worth up to \$750,000 as well as apply to renew awards from year to year throughout the length of the three-year community-based grant program. VA will host [a technical assistance webinar for grant applicants](#).

The [Notice of Funding Opportunity](#) provides information about the [Staff Sergeant Parker Gordon Fox Suicide Prevention Grant Program](#) eligibility and award process.



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U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs

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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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