

VOICES OF VISN 6

— Excellent Care – Earned by Veterans – Delivered Here —



Charles George VA MEDICAL CENTER



Inside This Issue

- 3 A Place to Rest For the “Missing Man”
- 4 Salisbury VAHCS Recognizes Veteran Deaths with Honor Bells
- 5 Mother of All Rucks
- 8 VA Marks 15th Anniversary of My HealtheVet Online Patient Portal
- 9 VA Researchers Named to Time Magazine’s List of 50 Most Influential People in Health Care

(ABOVE PHOTO) Pictured is an aerial shot of the Charles George VA Medical Center Saturday, Dec. 8, during Winter Storm Diego. Although the medical center remained open, medical center leadership activated its Emergency Preparedness Plan on Dec. 6. During the course of the storm, the Grounds Crew worked around the clock to ensure that the parking lots and pathways were clear for staff and Veterans. VA staff around the VISN worked to keep facilities open and available throughout the storm, but several facilities were forced to reduce services or close clinics briefly.

(Photo credit: Cory Short of Cory Short Productions)



Message from the Network Director

First, I would like to wish all a happy and safe holiday season. I would also like to remind you that as the days pass and the holiday season approaches, depression and anxiety can heighten, especially among our Veteran community. It's imperative that we remember that holidays are not always joyful for everyone, and we need to check on one another. As you begin to prepare for special gatherings, take time to list the Veterans Crisis Line number (800-273-8255, press 1) in your cell phone contact list. What a comfort to know the helpline is always there to provide emotional assistance in a time of need. The 20 Veterans a day committing suicide is a portion of the 120-plus Americans a day who are taking their own lives. The helpline is available to help all, so please keep the number handy and with you.

The winter months also mean that it's time again to protect yourself and others from the impact of flu season by scheduling a time to get your flu shot and to remind all Veterans and staff to get theirs, too. Did you know that until March 31, 2019, VA and Walgreens will continue their national partnership to provide no-cost quadrivalent flu shots to enrolled Veterans of the VA health care system? Enrolled Veteran patients nationwide have the option of getting their flu shot at any of Walgreens' 8,200 locations, in addition to their local VA health care facilities. No appointment is required; Veterans can go to Walgreens, tell the pharmacist they receive care at a VA facility, then show their Veterans Health Identification Card and another form of photo ID. After all is said and done, the Veteran's immunization record will be updated electronically in their VA electronic health record.

Soon you will also begin to notice more Whole Health options. Our own [#LiveWhole campaign](#) is creating awareness of the benefits of living to prevent illness and injury, no matter your age — truly living a whole and fulfilling life. By doing things in our lives that strengthen our mind and bodies, like find a way to move, whether it's walking, gardening, running; to eating better, getting good amounts of rest and taking time to relax, we can fend off sickness. We can also take advantage of alternative therapies that naturally help our bodies instead of relying solely on medications for recuperation. You'll see flyers and posters, announcements about training sessions and informational pieces that describe in more detail how incorporating some of these practices into our lives can help each of us live more fully. Our providers are sharing the news with Veterans and will be happy to discuss with you, whenever asked. What better time to take stock of ourselves than as we move into a new year?



I wish each of you a happy & healthy holiday season and 2019!

— DeAnne M Seekins, Network Director



CLC Makes Veterans Feel at Home

By Sydney Dudley

RICHMOND VAMC PUBLIC AFFAIRS VOLUNTEER

The Community Living Center (CLC) is a critical part of Richmond's McGuire VA Medical Center. Made up of three distinct living areas, or neighborhoods, the CLC fosters an enjoyable and caring environment for both short- and long-term residents.

Residents come from a variety of backgrounds and age groups, and stay at the CLC for various lengths of time. No matter how long their stay, the medical center keeps things active for them.

The staff utilizes a jam-packed activity calendar to provide entertainment and enrichment. From weekly music therapy sessions to trips and bowling outings, there is always something to do.

Rhonda Toms, chief nurse of Geriatrics and Extended Care, oversees the nurses in the CLC. She elaborated on the fantastic selection of activities offered by different therapists on the units.

"The Cultural Transformation Committee works to maintain a homelike environment through multi-generational activities," Toms said. "The committee hosts events with kids such as Easter egg hunts on hospital grounds."

The CLC staff plans to expand their current programs and create new ones. For example, they are working to implement a snoezelen room for dementia patients.

Snoezelen rooms are therapeutic areas designed to provide highly stimulating elements to patients with dementia, brain injuries, autism and other developmental disabilities. The rooms use a combination of lighting, colors, scents, sounds and textures to create a high-sensory experience for patients.

Toms hopes the creation of a snoezelen room, along with the construction of a ten-bed dementia care unit, will help improve the lives of dementia patients at McGuire.

Of course, many of the current and future endeavors in the CLC are only possible thanks to its dedicated, hard-working staff.

"The staff at the Richmond CLC is amazing at developing close relationships with residents," Toms explained. "Staff members get to know residents well enough to list their likes and dislikes with ease."

Toms said she and the other staff members strive to make a home away from home for our nation's heroes.



Halloween celebrations and Easter egg hunts with local children are some of the many activities planned for Veterans at the CLC.



A Place to Rest for the "MISSING MAN"

By Bart Major | SALISBURY VAHCS PUBLIC AFFAIRS

On Nov. 7, Salisbury VA Health Care System added a chair to the lobby of the main hospital building on the Salisbury campus. It is a simple wooden chair, painted black, with a black and white shield on the backrest; the chair sits on a small pedestal. The chair remains empty as a memorial to military members who are missing in action. The shield on the backrest holds the Prisoner of War (POW)/Missing in Action (MIA) emblem. The chair is a Chair of Honor.

"The Chair of Honor represents the place an MIA service member would occupy with their military brothers and sisters if they had come home. It is a way of showing that we will never forget them," said Chaplain Ryan Wager, Chief of Chaplain Services at Salisbury VAHCS.

"This was an exceptional idea from our Veterans and Family Advisory Council to commemorate those service members who are still missing in action," said Joseph Vaughn, Salisbury VA Health Care System Director. "I hope this assures the Veterans and family members who come through our lobby — especially those who know someone who is still classified as MIA — until every service member returns home or is laid to rest, we will not forget them."

When a military member cannot be found, they are classified as missing in action. For U.S. MIA in combat zones, this frequently means they have been killed, wounded, or captured and are unable to return to their unit. A service member is only declared killed in action (KIA) if they are positively identified or it is determined that the body is not recoverable. While in MIA status, a service member's family continues to receive military pay and benefits, or the salary is placed in a trust until their return, or until their remains are recovered.

As of Nov. 16, there are 82,177 service members still missing in action, dating back through WWI.

The Prisoner of War (POW)/Missing in Action (MIA) emblem, which appears on the POW/MIA flag, features a white disc bearing the black silhouette of a man, a watchtower with a guard on patrol, and a strand of barbed wire. Above the disc in white are the letters POW and MIA with a white five-pointed star between them. Below the disc is a black-and-white wreath above the white motto: "You are not forgotten."

For further information about VA services visit www.explore.va.gov or like us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/VASalisbury.

The Chair of Honor sits in Salisbury VAMC's Building 2 lobby and was dedicated in a POW/MIA "missing man" ceremony on Nov. 7.

Veteran Can See Enough to Work, Thanks to VA

When doctors diagnosed 82-year-old Air Force Veteran William Poole with macular degeneration, an eye disease that causes vision loss, he wasn't ready to quit working. To Poole, his eyesight is particularly important because he's a designer.

"I do product design and home design," Poole explains. He estimates "more than a mil-

lion people" live in homes he designed. So the odds are pretty good you've at least seen one of them. His designs aren't just in the U.S. They have been built in Australia, New Zealand, Brazil, Germany, Canada, Belgium and Japan. And he also designs furniture, lamps, lighting and other items for the home.



Air Force Veteran William Poole is able to continue designing with the VA-installed enhanced vision magnifier at his workstation.

tion. Now, his drawings are magnified onto a 27" computer screen so he can see his work as he draws it. His staff digitizes the design when a drawing is complete.

"Design became increasingly difficult" before his enhanced vision magnifier was installed, Poole said. Now he expects to continue working for at least a little while longer.

Now, Poole credits the VA for helping him continue his work. "I'm able to continue to design with the aids VA has given me," said Poole. In October, the VA installed an enhanced vision magnifier at Poole's worksta-

tion. Now, his drawings are magnified onto a 27" computer screen so he can see his work as he draws it. His staff digitizes the design when a drawing is complete.

VA has also provided a magnifier at Poole's home, for reading the newspaper, books and other paper materials he wouldn't be able to see. He even uses a bi-optic telescope system, allowing him to continue driving after passing a driver training course and road test.

The vision aids are available to Poole through Salisbury VA's Advanced Low Vision Clinic (ALVC), which provides training, resources and vision aids for Veterans with eye diseases and other low vision problems,

including blindness. Poole's family drives him from Wilmington, NC to Salisbury to come to the Advanced Low Vision Clinic, so they stay in the Salisbury VA hospital, where Veterans who travel more than 50 miles can request to stay overnight, at no cost. But to Poole, the trips have been worth it.

Poole asks, "Can you imagine what it would be like to not be able to read?" He continues, "your quality of life would be diminished greatly ... without the services of VA's advanced low vision team and support services I would not be driving, and certainly would not be working."

Gary Mancil, Salisbury VA's chief of optometry said, "Our Advanced Low Vision Clinic is the only VA low vision clinic in North Carolina and serves Veterans throughout the state." He continued, "I am extremely proud of the excellent work done in our clinic, and the significant impact this has on countless Veterans' lives."

Joseph Vaughn, Director of the Salisbury VA Medical Center, said, "I'm very proud of the Advance Low Vision Clinic. It is a prime example of a unique service offered at Salisbury that makes a tremendous impact in a Veteran's daily life."

To be seen by the Advanced Low Vision Clinic, Veterans in VISN 6 can talk with their VA primary care provider, VA Optometrist or Ophthalmologist, or by contacting their assigned Visual Impairment Services Team coordinator.

SALISBURY VAHCS RECOGNIZES VETERAN DEATHS WITH HONOR BELLS

Starting Veterans Day, Salisbury VA Health Care System began playing eight honor bells throughout the campus to alert employees, visitors and fellow Veterans when a Veteran in the Medical Center has died.

The ringing of bells to announce a death date back through history, and at sea, sailors knew the time by the ringing of bells during each four-hour watch. The watch's first half hour was marked with the ringing of one bell, adding an additional bell every half hour and ending with the ringing of eight bells at the end of the four hours. From this practice came the phrase "eight bells and all is well."

Because the ringing of eight bells signified the end of a watch, it also came to be used for the death of sailors, to signify the ultimate end of their watch. As an homage to this tradition, Salisbury VA now plays a bell tone eight times from the overhead announcement system throughout the Salisbury campus, whenever a Veteran dies at the Medical Center.

"We hope that everyone who hears the bells takes a moment out of their busy day to remember the sacrifices that many Veterans make during their service, and are reminded of the honor we have in serving Veterans and their families," said Joseph Vaughn, Salisbury VA Medical Center Director.

For further information about VA services visit www.explore.va.gov or like us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/VASalisbury.



Photo of Salisbury VAMC carillon bell tower.

Remembering Pearl Harbor: “It Was My Honor and Privilege”

By Joshua D. Edson | DURHAM VAHCS PUBLIC AFFAIRS

Seventy-eight years later the memory remains sharp in Mrs. Anne Capucille's mind. Every detail: the emotions of fear, shock and excitement recalled as if the events described had only happened yesterday.

“I was getting ready for work,” recalls Capucille of that fateful day. “At the time, I lived in a dormitory across the street from the Glenn L. Martin factory in Baltimore. I was listening to the radio when the announcer interrupted the broadcast with a special bulletin. Pearl Harbor had just been bombed.”

When she arrived at the factory floor, Mrs. Capucille immediately informed almost everyone she knew of the events unfolding in Hawaii. The reaction she received was less than comforting.

“They didn't believe me,” says Mrs. Capucille. “Most of them had been at work since earlier that morning and hadn't had much time to listen to the radio. Word got around that I was making up rumors, that I didn't really listen to the broadcast and probably misheard what the announcer was really saying.”

Vindication came a short time later, when the plant's director came to the floor with an announcement of his own.

“He had everyone stop working to tell us the news,” remembers Mrs. Capucille. Afterward, “we listened to President Roosevelt's famous speech and the director personally apologized to me. Sounds a little arrogant now, but I remember feeling rather good about that at the time.”

With the United States now at war, Mrs. Capucille joined the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps (WAAC), which later became the Women's Army Corps (1943). Among the first wave of WAAC volunteers, Mrs. Capucille trained at the Fort Des Moines Provisional Army Officer Training School in Iowa. Joining the WAAC was quite a move for a

young lady from Raleigh, looking to make her mark on the world.

“It was an exciting time,” says Mrs. Capucille. “It was a bit of shock. I remember the uniforms especially. The shirts were originally fitted for men, so they had to cut the sleeves to fit us. The shoes were lovely though, made in England. I felt so proud to be doing my part. We were so motivated. In fact, they dropped the “Auxiliary” from our name because we were anything but. We were real soldiers.”

However, that pride was often tested. Women in uniform were something of a new concept at the time, and not everyone was completely convinced that women had a place in the armed forces.

“People would say some really mean things to us,” said Mrs. Capucille. “What hurt most, was the things women on the civilian side said. I can't tell you how many times someone confronted me in public, blaming me for being the reason why their husband, brother or son was sent to the front. Plus, they didn't really know what to do with us at first. I became really good at softball during my first few months in the service.”

Despite her rough start, Mrs. Capucille soldiered on and left the WAC as a Technical Sergeant in 1946. The Army rank of technical sergeant existed from after World War I until 1948, when it was renamed sergeant first class. She met her husband, an Army captain, married, and settled into life as an Army spouse.

“In essence, I never left the Army,” says Mrs. Capucille. “I just put my uniform in the closet. I'm 99 now and I'm proud of my service. It was my honor and privilege to serve. My country needed me, and I'd do it all over again.”



Anne Capucille shared her memories of where she was when she heard about the attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941.

MOTHER OF ALL RUCKS

Photo and Story by: Scott Pittillo

ASHEVILLE VAMC

Parking can be an issue at busy VA medical centers across the United States, for Veterans and staff alike. It's also not uncommon to hear an occasional complaint from someone about having to walk a long way from their car to their appointment. But it's unlikely anyone has walked much further than Victor Vincelette, an Army and Navy Veteran from Gilbert, Ariz.

Vincelette walked all the way across the country to get to his appointment at the Charles George VA Medical Center in Asheville. To make this feat even more impressive, he isn't just walking, he's rucking. He carries a 40-pound rucksack, familiar to anyone who has been in the Army, where ruck marches are a favorite.

Vincelette is part of the Mother of all Rucks Foundation, comprising Veterans whose mission is to raise awareness and inspire others to improve the daily lives of Veterans. They are committed to providing Veterans afflicted by their time in service with a better quality of life.

If that were the end of Vincelette's story, it might be worthy enough. But he has been through much more on his life's journey than courageous ruck marches across America.

In 2015, Vincelette was diagnosed with cancer, and after enduring a long run of chemotherapy, doctors gave him two weeks to live in July of 2016. While most of his healthcare providers had given up, Vincelette attributes a VA doctor with saving his life.

“Dr. Nathanael Gay saved my life, literally 100 percent, went out of his way and found the trial, and he did this on his own time,” said Vincelette. “Those guys were awesome.” Gay is a VA doctor in Portland, Ore., where Vincelette was receiving care. Vincelette says Gay found a clinical trial at the National Institutes of Health called, “CAR T Immunotherapy.”

“I had no other choice, it was the roll of the dice,” said Vincelette. The treatment involved regular injections of genetically modified T-Cells over a four-month period. The treatment worked and Vincelette's cancer went into remission.

At his lowest point Vincelette says he endured constant pain from the cancer and was nothing but skin and bones. Now he strikes an imposing figure with the physique of a body builder.

“The things you worry about before being sick are not the things you worry about after. I couldn't make this up,” said Vincelette.

Now he is rucking across the country and from VA to VA where he still receives care. Most importantly, he advocates for a seamless transition for all Veterans from the military to civilian life, including VA health care. The ruck marches are meant to raise awareness and make sure no Veterans are left behind during that transition.

Vincelette, like so many Veterans walking through the doors of the Charles George VA, has an amazing story — a story that can inspire Veterans and staff alike to never give up and keep on rucking.



Veteran Victor Vincelette stops by the Charles George VA Medical Center on a Ruck march across the United States, summer of 2018.



◀◀◀ Army Veteran James Mills celebrates his last chemotherapy treatment with friends, family and Fayetteville VA staff at the Fayetteville VA's Oncology/Infusion Clinic. To signify the event, Mills rang a bell to proclaim his achievement.

Patient Rings Bells, Celebrating End of Chemotherapy

By Jeff Melvin | FAYETTEVILLE VAMC PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICER

Slightly more than a year after its opening, Fayetteville VA's Oncology/Infusion Clinic achieved a milestone Nov. 5, when Army Veteran James Mills became the first of the clinic's patients to successfully complete chemotherapy treatment.

To mark the occasion, the clinic held a ringing out ceremony, when family and staff form a circle and clap as the patient rings a bell to commemorate this significant milestone.

"We are excited for Mr. Mills to have the opportunity to ring the bell as this not only symbolizes the end of his course of treatment, but

brings hope to other patients in the clinic that hear the bell ring out that one day they will finish their course of treatment and ring the bell too," said Rosetta Daniel, Chief Nurse Patient Care Services, Acute Care, who arranged to have a "Ringing Out" plaque created and mounted on the clinic's wall. "This is really a big day for our Veterans, their families, our clinic, and the staff."

It certainly was big day for the 38-year old Mills, whose colon cancer is now in remission. He was joined by his fiancée and his nephew.

"I couldn't have possibly had a greater group of nurses," said Mills. "There was never a day that they didn't come to me and say, 'Mr. Mills, it's going to be alright.' There was never a day when I felt like they weren't trying to help me, bringing me blankets and hot tea when I was cold."

The Fayetteville VAMC Hematology/Oncology Department treats a variety of cancers and diseases that primarily affect the blood, following patients closely throughout their ongoing treatment as well as for surveillance and survivorship after completion of treatment. The department is led by a board-certified hematologist/oncologist and includes an Oncology Nurse Practitioner, Oncology-certified pharmacists, and infusion clinic nursing staff.

The program was implemented at Fayetteville in October 2017 to present patients Veterans with an alternative to traveling to Durham for treatment.



(LEFT PHOTO) Friends, family and staff look on as Army Veteran James Mills rings the ceremonial bell in Fayetteville VA's Oncology/Infusion Clinic, signifying his last Chemotherapy treatment.

VA Marks

15th Anniversary

OF MY HEALTHeVET ONLINE PATIENT PORTAL

Tool Helps Veterans Manage Their Health Care

WASHINGTON — This month, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is celebrating the 15th anniversary of My HealtheVet, an online patient portal created to empower Veterans to become active participants in their health care.

Launched on Veterans Day 2003, My HealtheVet has grown from a simple website to a robust suite of tools and resources that further enables Veterans to take charge of their health care by allowing them to refill their VA prescriptions, exchange private secure messages with their VA health care team, access their VA health records and more.

“My HealtheVet elevates the level of service offered to our Veteran patients by ensuring they can easily access and manage their VA health information,” said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie. “It’s a great example of VA’s modernization efforts and is a significant tool in increasing Veterans’ access to care.”

To date, My HealtheVet has more than 4.5 million registered users who have requested over 127.7 million prescription refills, downloaded nearly 32 million personal health records and exchanged more than 69.4 million secure messages with their VA health care teams.

Earlier this year, My HealtheVet won a 2018 Government Innovation Award for the VA Medical Images and Reports feature, which allows Veterans to view, download and share electronic copies of their radiology studies, such as X-rays, MRI and CT scans from their VA electronic health records.

For more information on My HealtheVet and its 15th anniversary, visit the site today.

All Veterans and service members are encouraged to create a My HealtheVet account at www.myhealth.va.gov.

Veteran Lea Turns 100!

Sherman Lea, a Roxboro, N.C., native who served in the Army during World War II, turned 100 in October. Durham VA Health Care System’s home-based primary care team visits him monthly and gathered to honor him on his milestone birthday. They also presented him with his written history as a part of the Durham Veteran Affairs Health Care System’s My Life, My Story project, which captures the living histories of Veterans to help foster a deeper connection with their health care team and improve the quality of care they receive.

“I’ve lived a long time,” he said. “I’m 100 years old, born the second to the youngest child in a family of 12 kids: seven girls and five boys, two sets of twins. I’m the only one left.”

Lea was drafted into the Army at the beginning of WWII, in 1941.

“I was 23 at the time. After basic training, I was assigned to the Quartermaster Corp and sent overseas where I served in the Asiatic Pacific Theater Campaign,” he said. “Our company provided supplies to troops in the region.”

According to the Army’s Center of Military History, the Asiatic Pacific Theater Campaigns were attempts to combat Japanese military aggression during World War II. Some of these campaigns occurred in Papua, New Guinea, the East Indies and the Philippines.

While in the service, Lea traveled through Papua, New Guinea and the East Indies.

Before his time in the military, Veteran Lea had never been outside of North Carolina. He was born, raised and lived all his entire life in Roxboro, N.C.



Happy centenary birthday to Veteran Sherman Lea!

“I thought Australia was a beautiful place, especially at night when it is all lit up,” he said. “It was a place where you could have a good time, if you knew how to get around. I stayed overseas for three years and I enjoyed it. But, after a while, it felt like I had been gone from home so long. I was glad to get back. You know the old saying, ‘there’s no place like home.’”

He was discharged in 1945 from Fort Bragg and moved back home to Roxboro. He returned to where he’d worked prior to being drafted to go off to war.

“I worked at an appliance store that had a pool hall in the basement. I enjoyed that job and ended up working there for over 30 years. After that job, I worked at Crown Aluminum; they made aluminum building products like siding. I helped load and organize product. I retired from that company after working there, maybe, 25 years,” he said.

September is **Suicide Prevention Month**

#BeThere



for Veterans and Service members.



Confidential crisis chat at
VeteransCrisisLine.net

VA Marks Suicide Prevention With ‘Be There’ Campaign

Initiative urges communities to support at-risk Veterans through simple actions

WASHINGTON — The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is shining a light on effective ways to prevent Veteran suicide with its Be There campaign.

The campaign highlights the risk factors and warning signs for suicide, provides information about VA mental health and suicide prevention resources, and helps individuals and organizations to start the conversation around Veteran mental health in their communities.

“In our various communities, everyone is in a position to make a difference for a Veteran who may be at risk for suicide,” said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie, who recorded a video about VA’s strategies to prevent Veteran suicide. “A common misconception is that you need special training to talk safely about suicide risk or show concern for someone who is in distress. One simple act of kindness could help save a life. I encourage everyone this September, and beyond, to take the

first step in acting as that support system.”

Talking with a Veteran about mental health or suicide risk may be challenging, but VA encourages community leaders, colleagues, family and friends to simply “Be There” by sharing messages of support that can help show a Veteran you care. VA has also collaborated with community partners and is asking individuals across the country this month to share resources with Veterans in their lives via the BeThere-ForVeterans.com webpage.

Veterans in crisis or having thoughts of suicide — and those who know a Veteran in crisis — can call the Veterans Crisis Line for confidential support 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year. Call 800-273-8255 and press 1, chat online at VeteransCrisisLine.net/Chat or text to 838255.

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Veterans Crisis Line

1-800-273-8255
PRESS 1

Your actions could save a life.

Showing you care can make a big difference to someone in crisis.

VeteransCrisisLine.net

