



# ANNUAL REPORT 2017 VA

Clement J. Zablocki VA Medical Center, Milwaukee, Wisconsin



U.S. Department  
of Veterans Affairs

# Letter from the Director

With as fast as this year has gone, it's easy to see how 150 years can add up so quickly!

My first day on the job here was June 27, 2016. It seems I blinked and a year and more went by — and what a whirlwind year it was, as we celebrated 150 years of Veteran care.

It's really remarkable to think about — our first Civil War Veterans came onto these grounds for care in May 1867, and we've been providing world-class healthcare ever since. The modern-day Department of Veterans Affairs traces its origins right back to this campus.

At that time, in 1867, this type of care for our nation's Veterans was a new concept. What's remarkable about VA is we've been innovative ever since, and I'm proud of the life-saving and life-changing work we do every day at your Milwaukee VA!

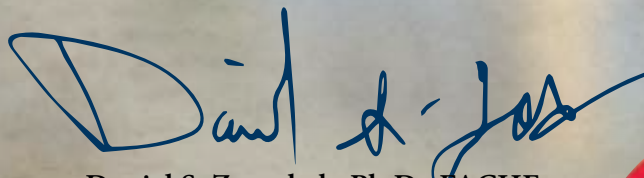
As you thumb through this year's Annual Report, you can see it's been a year of remarkable accomplishments. Perhaps one of our biggest community events was our 150th anniversary celebration right on the grounds, where we brought together military re-enactors, music groups and more.

Some things you can read about here are how our nurses are collaborating to provide better care to Veterans — whether it's with an IV, or serving those with dementia. Our Sleep Lab — now in its second year — is treating up to 500 Veterans a year to help them reduce health risks by providing a good night's sleep. And our Mental Health Residential Rehabilitation Treatment Program created numerous safety and security upgrades so our Veterans can get the extra care they need for post-traumatic stress and other illnesses.

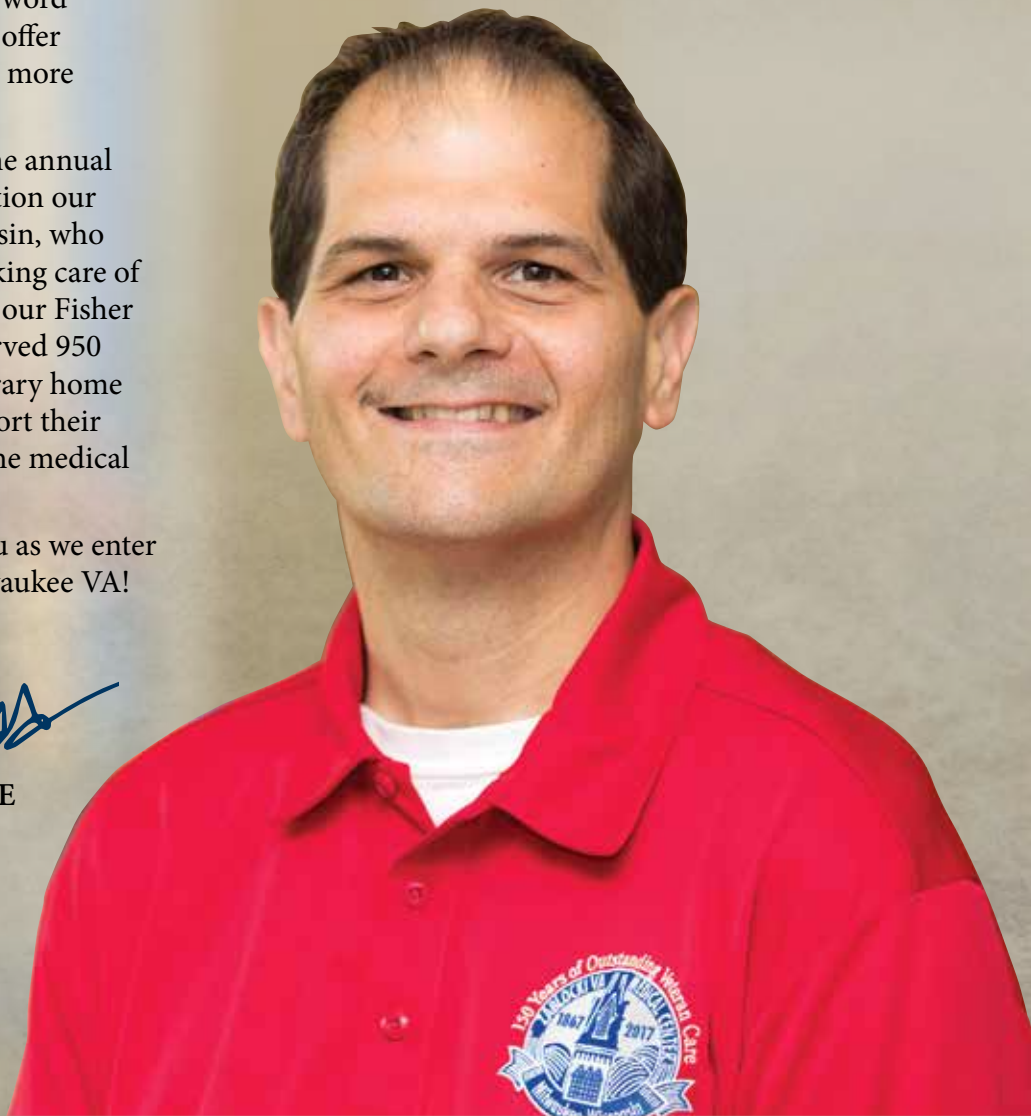
You may have also seen us on television or heard us on the radio in Milwaukee and Green Bay — something new we are doing to get the word out about the wonderful healthcare we offer to our nation's heroes. You can look for more commercials in the coming year.

It's impossible to get everything into one annual report, but I'd be remiss if I didn't mention our partnership with Fisher House Wisconsin, who continues to support our mission of taking care of our Veteran families. In the 18 months our Fisher House has been open, we've already served 950 families, providing them a free, temporary home away from home so they can best support their loved ones receiving inpatient care at the medical center.

What a great year! I'm glad to serve you as we enter our next 150 years of care at your Milwaukee VA!



Daniel S. Zomchek, Ph.D., FACHE  
Medical Center Director/CEO



# Our Leaders



**Daniel S. Zomchek,  
Ph.D., FACHE**  
Medical Center Director/CEO

Dr. Daniel S. Zomchek was appointed Director of Zablocki VA Medical Center June 27, 2016. Prior to Milwaukee, he served as Associate Director of the Edward Hines Jr. VA Hospital since September 2012.

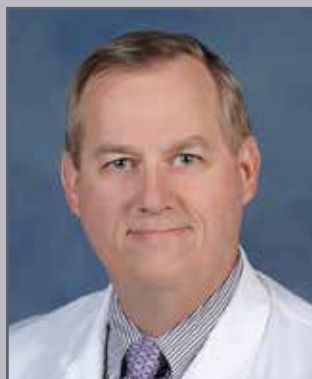
Dr. Zomchek's previous VA experience includes several positions of increasing responsibility at the Jesse Brown VA Medical Center in Chicago, Illinois, including staff psychologist, assistant chief of Outpatient Mental Health and Systems Redesign coordinator for the facility. He served as acting Hospital Director at Hines VA Hospital from November 2014 to February 2015, and again from June through October 2015.

Previously, he served as the Associate Director at Edith Nourse Rogers Memorial Veterans Hospital in Bedford, Massachusetts. Additionally, he served as a health systems specialist for the VA Healthcare System of Ohio, where he managed various programs and initiatives across five medical centers. While in this position, Dr. Zomchek spent two months as acting Associate Director of the Iron Mountain VA Medical Center in Iron Mountain, Michigan, and as acting sub-initiative lead for one of the VA Secretary's Major Transformation Initiatives.



**James D. McLain, FACHE**  
Deputy Medical  
Center Director

James McLain is a retired Army lieutenant colonel, having deployed in 1990 for Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm, and in 2003 for Operation Iraqi Freedom. He received his master's in health administration from Baylor University.



**Michael D. Erdmann,  
MD, MS**  
Chief of Staff

Dr. Michael Erdmann serves as associate dean for VA Affairs and professor of medicine, Division of General Internal Medicine, at the Medical College of Wisconsin.



**Christina Orr, DPT**  
Assistant Medical  
Center Director

Dr. Christina Orr is responsible for Medical Information Systems, Human Resources, Occupational Safety and Health, Veterans Transportation Services, Privacy, and the Community Engagement and Relations Division.



**Annette Severson, EdD,  
RN**  
Associate Director for Patient  
Care Services and Nurse  
Executive

Dr. Annette Severson provides leadership to Sterile Processing, Nutrition and Food Service, nursing and ancillary disciplines across the medical center and community clinics.



# 150 YEARS OF MILWAUKEE VA HISTORY



When 60 Veterans first made their way onto the Milwaukee VA campus and moved into existing farm buildings, things looked a lot different than today.

The campus sprawled over 425 acres of rolling grass, hills and lakes.

Little by little, year by year, and decade by decade, more buildings were added to meet the burgeoning need of Veteran healthcare.

More than 1,500 visitors stepped into the past on June 3, 2017, to see

the campus and those we served through the years, during our huge 150th anniversary bash. The day was replete with re-enactors from different military eras, historic campus tours, adaptive sports demonstrations and a closer look at our Fisher House and Spinal Cord Injury Center.

The day before, WKLH 96.5 Hometown Rock brought their morning show on the road to promote the event from our South Entrance.

Each part of the campus was reserved for a different military era. Visitors got the chance to tour an authentic Vietnam encampment in one area, and learn what it was like to serve as part of the all-black, 27th U.S. Colored Troops in another. A wealthy, Civil War-era couple stood on the porch of the Ward Theater to talk about society during the 1860s, while World War I and World War II re-enactors held sway over spellbound onlookers in their camps. At Wood National Cemetery, voices from our military



past came to life to tell their story. Even the modern military was represented with the 409th Area Support Medical Company out of Madison, Wisconsin.

Considering the thousands upon thousands of Veterans who called this place home and passed through the grounds — from the Civil War to today's military hospital where we serve more than 64,000 Veterans annually — it all felt right. Even today, our main hospital looks far different from when it opened

in 1966. Many floors have been remodeled, and the facility now provides world-class cardiac, cancer care and mental health services. Our recent changes include the Spinal Cord Injury Center, robotic surgery and new catheterization lab. These improvements support innovative, life-saving and life-changing care to Veterans of all ages and eras.

We're proud of our first 150 years of service and look forward to 150 more.

*Milwaukee VA celebrated 150 years of history with re-enactors, Veterans and visitors to our medical center. (PHOTOS CLOCKWISE FROM PAGE 4): The 1st Brigade Band, a Civil War-era music group, give a hats-off salute to the crowd at the end of their performance. There were several musical events of all eras throughout the day. Medical Center Director and CEO Dr. Dan Zomchek, along with VISN 12 Director Renee Oshinski, share a laugh with Glen Grippen, the Medical Center Director from 1997 to 2007. WKLH 96.5 Hometown Rock DJs Dorene Michaels, Katrina Cravy and Dave Luczak pose with Veteran James Veltri. The radio show broadcast June 2 from our South Entrance. Tom Staats (seated) gives visitors an up-close look at military artifacts and weapons from the Revolutionary and Civil War in our Wadsworth Library during the 150th celebration. Bikers bow their heads in prayer during the annual Veteran Bike Blessing, also held during the 150th, in the chapel.*

# Community Clinics

## **Green Bay Milo C. Huempfer Health Care Center** 2851 University Avenue

We opened the new Green Bay Health Care Center in August 2013, nearly tripling the number of enrolled Veterans in the area!

This state-of-the-art, 161,525-square-foot facility has 1,200 parking spaces and 300 staff. They care for nearly 17,000 Veterans including those who travel from Iron Mountain, Michigan, and the surrounding areas.

We are open 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday. For more information, call 920-431-2500.

### **Services include:**

- Primary Care
- Mental Health
- Primary Care Mental Health Integration
- Laboratory
- Imaging, ultrasound and CT scans
- Podiatry
- Optometry
- Ophthalmology
- Cardiology
- Gynecology
- Urology
- Orthopedic
- Nephrology
- General surgery
- Pharmacy
- Audiology
- Pulmonary function testing
- Dental
- Hematology/Oncology
- GI Procedure
- Chemo infusion
- Dialysis
- Telehealth
- Mobile MRI
- Ambulatory surgery



Starting the first week of March 2017, the mobile MRI returned to the Green Bay Health Care Center and is available two days a week. This is a direct result from Veteran input from one of our Green Bay Town Hall Meetings. VA saw a strong need to return the MRI after consultations with Veterans and other key stakeholders in the area.

## Appleton John H. Bradley Clinic

10 Tri-Park Way

Our 152 staff members at the Appleton Clinic are proud to serve more than 11,000 Veterans in the Fox Valley area. The clinic opened in 1994. The original site at building 1 houses Primary Care and support/specialty services. We opened building 2 in 2008, where our Mental Health programs, and Iraq and Afghanistan Veteran case management services are located.

Our clinic is open 7:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday. Extended hours in Primary Care are available until 5:30 p.m. on Thursdays, and 8 a.m. to noon on Saturdays. Earlier and later Mental Health appointments are available based on patient needs. For more information, call 920-831-0070.

### Services include:

- Primary Care
- Mental Health
- Pharmacy
- Phlebotomy
- Telehealth
- Optometry
- Basic Radiology
- Laboratory
- HUD/VASH services
- Referrals to Specialty Care at Green Bay HCC and Milwaukee VA Medical Center



## Cleveland Clinic

1205 North Avenue

Our Cleveland Clinic opened in 1999, and we currently have 23 staff members. We serve more than 3,500 Veterans from Cleveland and the surrounding area.

Our clinic is open 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday. For more information, call 920-693-5600.

### Services include:

- Primary Care
- Mental Health
- Phlebotomy with limited laboratory services
- Telehealth



- Referrals to Specialty Care at Green Bay HCC and the Milwaukee VA Medical Center

## Union Grove Clinic

Shemanske Hall, 21425 Spring Street

Our Union Grove Clinic is located on the same grounds as the Southern Wisconsin Center located near Union Grove, Wisconsin. We serve more than 3,500 Veterans in the Racine County area. Our original clinic opened in April 1998, and we moved in May 2015 to our current location.

Our clinic is open 7:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday. For more information, call 262-878-7001.

### Services include:

- Primary Care
- Mental Health Care
- Home-Based Primary Care
- Telehealth
- Phlebotomy with limited laboratory services
- Referrals to Specialty Care at the Milwaukee VA Medical Center



# Veteran Story

## «Deanna



“My heart was so broken. My life was so broken. If I wouldn’t have gone to the Milwaukee VA, I’d be dead. They made me see what I had been trying not to see for so long.”

Deanna O’Neill joined the Army in 1979, but was raped by a supply sergeant and her first sergeant. When she reported the rape, they threatened to kill her.

She tried to bury the sexual trauma for years, but an abusive husband later broke her leg, and she got hooked on Vicodin.

“It gave me that euphoric feeling that it was alright; I was going to be OK. It helped drown out the other stuff. It just got to the point where I was taking Vicodin so much, I couldn’t function. I was losing my family and had to do something, but I wouldn’t listen.”

With nowhere to go, she came to the Milwaukee VA residential rehabilitation women’s program in 2013.

“I tried to play games for the first week, but they didn’t let me get away with anything, and boy am I glad.”

She credits VA for saving her life not once, but twice — first at the residential rehabilitation program, and then two years later when she was diagnosed with tongue and throat cancer. She received radiation treatment through a private hospital using VA Choice in the Green Bay community, and chemotherapy and other healthcare at the Green Bay Milo C. Huempfer Health Care Center.

“It was awful, it was brutal, but I’m in remission and I’m living life. Thank God for that, and thank God for the VA. When I couldn’t love myself anymore, they would love me. When I couldn’t feed myself anymore, they were going to feed me. When I couldn’t cry, they were going to be the shoulder to lean on.”



# Veteran Story

## Mike»

Nothing was ever the same again for Mike Orban when he came home from Vietnam, and nobody understood.

He drank heavily, and eventually ran away from his problems altogether — spending years in Africa with the Peace Corps. But when he came home eight years later, the drinking, isolation and thoughts of suicide only got worse.

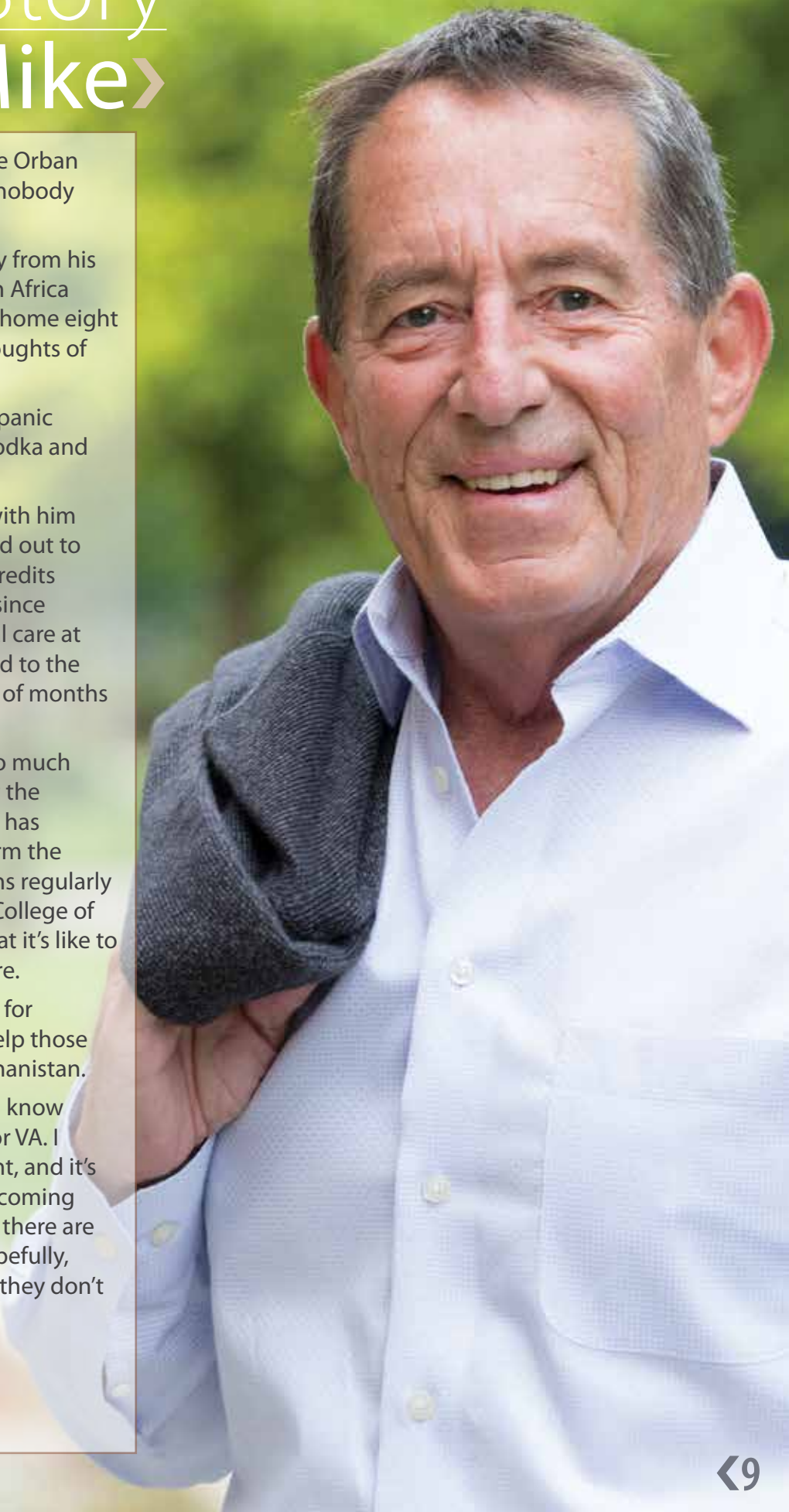
“I lived in a constant state of anxiety and panic attacks, driving around with a bottle of vodka and six-pack of beer in the car,” he said.

Civilian psychiatrists wouldn’t even talk with him about Vietnam. In desperation, he reached out to the Tomah VA Medical Center, which he credits with saving his life. Mike has been sober since 2001, and these days, “I get all my medical care at the Milwaukee VA, from the tip of my head to the bottom of my feet. Literally, every couple of months I’m at VA for one procedure or another.”

But Mike, also a published author, does so much more. He gives presentations throughout the community on post-traumatic stress, and has joined one of our local psychiatrists to form the Warrior Partnership. He and other Veterans regularly meet with future doctors at the Medical College of Wisconsin to answer questions about what it’s like to be a Veteran, and how to best provide care.

He also provides peer mentor counseling for Veterans of all eras, especially trying to help those who recently returned from Iraq and Afghanistan.

“I remember what it was like for me, and I know I would not be alive today if it were not for VA. I understand the psychological punishment, and it’s my passion to help the men and women coming back, to let them know there is hope and there are answers, and they can find that at VA. Hopefully, we can help them get help right away so they don’t have to suffer in silence.”



# Our Employees

Countless doctors, nurses and medical assistants provide world-class care to our Veterans. But with a total staff of more than 3,900, there are many others who keep the lights on and things moving in the medical center.

Whether it's a friendly smile or any number of efforts behind the scenes, we're grateful for all our employees who work hard every day to make our medical center and clinics a health care center of choice!

The following pages highlight a few who make a difference.



*Denzil Crosby from Environmental Management Service sorts through linens at the Milwaukee VA Medical Center. EMS handles a wide range of duties to keep things moving — from cleaning and waxing to infection control. They are one group that touches multiple areas throughout the hospital.*

## Environmental Management Service

The silver, R2D2-looking robot is wheeled into a room. With a push of a button, it raises its head to scan the room before a burst of blue, ultraviolet light blasts the area in a germ-killing glow, literally scrambling and destroying bacteria and potentially cutting infections by as much as 50 percent. In the case of the Xenex robot, a two-person crew uses the machines to do a deeper disinfection than human hands and hard work can match. It is just one of the ways EMS is evolving with new, technological ways to clean and disinfect.

If you thought Environmental Management Service was about sweeping, mopping and waxing floors, you'd be right. But that's only a small fraction of what this division of 190 employees does, day in and out — from constant cleaning and infection control, to hanging pictures on the wall and ensuring there are clean pillows for our Veterans to sleep at night. The mission of this department is to provide a healthcare environment that is sanitary, aesthetically pleasing and fulfills the needs of patients, visitors and employees alike.

"EMS is the heartbeat of healthcare," said Jai Reneau, EMS division manager. "Sometimes we are the first person the Veteran comes in contact with. Many of us have served in the military, and share that bond of serving together. Our daily mission is to make a Veteran smile or help a Veteran in any way!"



*The Xenex germ-busting robot goes to work at the Spinal Cord Injury Center. Milwaukee has two of the robots that obliterate bacteria with 67 pulses of ultraviolet light per second.*

EMS has a hand in virtually all areas of the hospital, including the early phases of construction projects, to picking the type of flooring in and around the hospital. That can dramatically improve the appearance of an area by keeping dirt out and making cleaning and disinfecting more efficient. In addition, two EMS interior designers, Lynda Lepak and Kay Roblee, have the enormous task of selecting furniture, art work and flooring that will endure high usage. Their most recent work includes the newly renovated South Entrance in building 111 and way-finding signage throughout the hospital. Some housekeepers work around the clock keeping floors clean,

while others oversee garbage removal. Thanks to the housekeeping team, Milwaukee VA diverted 54 percent of our waste from landfills. The medical center recycled more than 1,381 tons last year and brought in \$21,777.85 in recycling revenue. The housekeeping team is constantly working on new innovations to save money and become more Earth-friendly, using more eco-friendly cleaning supplies and machines that get the job done while protecting the environment.

Other EMS departments include linen distribution, which delivers 1.5 million pounds of freshly laundered linen every day, while also ensuring pillows and pillow-cases are fresh, clean and sanitized. They are also responsible for ordering and sizing employees with proper uniforms, handling patient effects and maintaining lost and found items.

One of the most critical tasks in EMS is making sure critters and pests stay outside where they belong. Milwaukee VA has one of the most effective, in-house pest-control managers in the business, Val Adricula. His sole job is keeping an eye on vulnerable areas, ensuring our Veterans have a clean, safe environment to heal. He is responsible for the entire VA medical campus and uses an integrated pest management style that keeps insects and rodents at bay instead of reacting afterward.

# Our Employees

## Welcome Desk

A first impression is a lasting impression, and we want all our Veterans, family members and guests to know it's our honor to serve those who served. That starts as you walk through the doors.

Our employees staff the Milwaukee VA welcome desk weekdays from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m., and for special holiday and weekend events. In addition to a smile and friendly wave, they call for rides, give patient room locations, provide hospital directions and more. Our goal is to always be courteous. If these folks don't know the answer, they will find it.

As you walk into our spacious Green Bay Health Care Center, you'll be greeted by a cadre of volunteers at the welcome desk. From ages 14 all the way to 84, our volunteers are Veterans, family members and caring people in the community. They are always ready to give directions, escort a Veteran, push a wheelchair or even provide some good conversation.

While we don't have big welcome desks in Appleton, Union Grove and Cleveland, we are just as grateful for our volunteers and staff who greet everyone and are ready to offer a smile and a helping hand. When you



*Debbie Dahms, Daniel Bertrand and Frank Fameree are among the many volunteers who meet up each day at the Green Bay Health Care Center to welcome visitors, answer questions and help Veterans get to appointments.*

walk through our doors, we want you to feel you are walking home, because you're family.

## Facility Management

You can think of Facility Management as the physical skeleton that supports the campus — designing, building and maintaining what you see and a lot of what you don't see or notice — until something doesn't work.

It's the job of 140 FM troops to maintain more than 2 million square feet and 50 buildings on campus.

FM is responsible for the boilers and chillers, air handling units, water and sewer piping, electricity, motors, pumps, medical gas systems, refrigeration systems, ceilings, walls, painting, insulation, plastering, floors, roofs, roads, sidewalks, snow and ice removal, vehicle maintenance, grass cutting, quarters management, key issuance, Veteran transportation, staff moves and more.

FM staff are called upon at all hours, weekends and



*Jon Stelzner, a Facility Management electrician, checks the oil in an emergency generator in the medical center. FM staff design, build and maintain most of what you see — and many times, don't see — on campus.*

holidays to respond to utility issues and emergencies to meet the needs of the medical center.

“Been working here for six years,” says Marine Corps Veteran Jon Stelzner, one of our electricians. “There are so many different aspects to what we do, but it’s nice to give something back to the Veterans. When we get a call that a television is out in a patient room, that’s something we must fix right away. We can’t just let someone lay in bed and not have a TV. It’s about

taking care of our Veterans, and that camaraderie we all share.”

Retired Army Veteran Peter Hansen, who works the grounds, said that keeps him coming to work each day.

“I take pride in helping create the ambiance of this campus,” he said. “We plant grass, mow grass, shovel snow, water the trees and flowers, you name it. When you walk around and see how the place is taken care of, that’s going to hopefully make you feel better.”

## Police

The men and women of the Milwaukee VA Police Service want you to know they are here to protect and serve — and not from a distance. With vehicle and foot patrols along with one-on-one interactions, they want everyone to feel safe while visiting the hospital, walking the campus or recovering in a hospital bed. They pride themselves on being approachable and customer-service oriented.

The police force is made up of 54 employees who oversee the safety, security and law enforcement of the Milwaukee campus, Appleton and Green Bay clinics, Regional Benefits Office, cemetery and 245 acres of grounds. The police dispatchers serve as the nerve center for the campus by overseeing all alarms, emergency medical rapid responses, answering 9-1-1 calls, assisting those who come to the front window and coordinating with police officers in the field, among other duties.

The department also oversees several security guards who help with patient and vehicle flow outside, an additional resource to keep everyone entering or leaving the building out of harm’s way.

Besides traditional law enforcement, the officers also have special de-escalation training to deal with volatile situations.

“Our goal is to create a safe and secure environment for not only our Veterans and employees, but all of our visitors,” said Police Chief Tim Jantz. “Many of our police officers are Veterans themselves which has



*Police dispatcher Komesha Blockton sends information via radio to officers from the communications center. The police force here is made up of 54 employees who oversee the safety, security and law enforcement of the Milwaukee campus and community clinics.*

been advantageous while de-escalating situations associated with other Veterans. The commonality of being a Veteran is a bond which tends to lower tensions while speaking with the officers.”

ASSAULTS  
▼ 26%

DISTURBANCES  
▼ 6%

In fiscal 2017, Milwaukee VA police promoted safety by decreasing assaults by 26 percent and decreasing disturbances by 6 percent.

# Our Employees

## Nutrition and Food Services

It's 6 a.m., and while most won't get to work for another few hours, things are bustling inside the Milwaukee VA Medical Center kitchen, where work on the morning meals is just beginning. For the next three hours, the kitchen morning crew will scramble 175 eggs, cook 130 pieces of bacon and prepare a gallon of oatmeal. They'll also cook therapeutic and mechanically altered foods for those with dietary restrictions. Then, the staff will deliver about 150 meals throughout the hospital. Even before one meal is completely delivered, work is starting on the next.

And so it goes, 14 and a half hours a day, seven days a week.

It takes a staff of 136 in Nutrition and Food Services to keep our hospitalized Veterans fed, and provide meals for residential rehabilitation and food service in our designated outpatient areas such as Adult Day Health Care.

The food service side of Nutrition and Food Services is responsible for snacks and nourishments, food safety and sanitation monitoring. The clinical side of the division is responsible for assessing at-risk Veterans as well as monitoring and evaluating outcomes based on Medical Nutrition Therapy interventions.

Since 2014, the staff has transitioned to a cook-serve method, instead of the old-fashioned cook-chill preparation where food was cooked, chilled and reheated. Now, food is cooked and delivered hot to each patient, which improves the look, quality and nutrition of hospital meals. Bigger changes are on the horizon with plans in the next year to provide most patients personalized room service, which will offer a more patient-centered approach to eating.

Employees also work hard to pass on healthy cooking tips to Veterans. Registered Dietitian Sam Schleiger and Occupational Therapist Katie Powell held gardening classes for spinal-cord injured Veterans every Thursday, and helped them grow rosemary, thyme, tomatoes, peppers, cucumbers and more.



*Teresa Ramsey, a food service worker in Nutrition and Food Services, checks afternoon meal requests. The kitchen staff works more than 14 hours a day, seven days a week, preparing and delivering meals to our hospitalized Veterans.*

Another initiative, along with the Paralyzed Veterans of America, provided Veterans who have to fast for their annual spinal cord exam with an insulated lunch bag and nutritious snacks.

Dairy Waste	56 lbs	SAVINGS	\$723
▼	PLASTIC		Bakery
1.9 M lbs	▼ landfills		\$302
			Dairy

### NFS NEW ORDERING PROCESS

NFS leaders engaged in a green initiative by creating a new ordering process that significantly reduced waste and saved money. Dairy waste decreased by more than 1.9 million pounds. Through inventory management and ordering individually wrapped bread slices, NFS saved 56 pounds of plastic, or 7,042 wrappers from entering a landfill. Overall, NFS saved about \$723 a month in bakery costs and \$302 a month in dairy costs. One of the most exciting highlights in NFS this past year was being selected as winner of the VISN 12 Earth Day 5s Award for their redesign of the dry storage room.

# Women's Health

One in 10 Veterans is a woman. Women Veterans make up almost 12 percent of those who served in Afghanistan and Iraq during the last decade. Of those women, 57.4 percent have sought care at a VA facility.

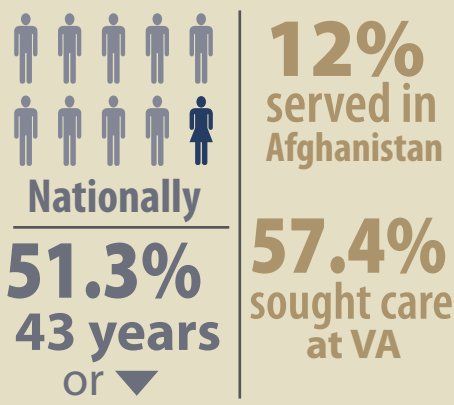
When compared to their male comrades, Women Veterans of Afghanistan and Iraq seek VA medical care in greater numbers, 51 to 48 percent. Their average age is 48, compared to 63 for men.

Since 2002, the number of enrolled women Veterans has jumped more than 130 percent. We treat about 4,179 women Veterans at our medical center and four clinics, and expect that number to grow.

Our hope is to reach more women currently not getting care in the Milwaukee area. The Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs estimates there are 38,000 women Veterans in Wisconsin. Of those, 10,199 live in four major southeastern Wisconsin counties — Kenosha (1,558), Milwaukee

(5,365), Racine (1,215) and Waukesha (2,061).

Women who seek care here find a healthcare system tailored to their unique needs in primary, specialty and mental health care.



The Women Veterans Health Program offers patient education including diet and nutrition, family planning, menopause management, wellness and healthy living and smoking cessation.

The program also includes primary care, gynecology and fertility, mammography and preventative health screenings.

Reproductive health care includes maternity care, infertility evaluation and treatment, sexual dysfunction, tubal ligation, urinary incontinence and others. Our female sexual health and dysfunction clinic offers a multidisciplinary approach to treatment. The team includes a medical doctor, psychologist and pelvic floor physical therapist.

VA maternity care includes birthing and infant care classes, prenatal visits, ultrasounds, lab tests, delivery, childbirth preparation, and seven days of postpartum care for the newborn, as well complications that may arise during pregnancy. VA also covers one follow-up visit, recommended six weeks after delivery.

“We know how to deal with this population (of women Veterans) in a way that a lot of doctors on the outside don’t understand,” said Dr. Jill Feldman, Women Veterans Health program manager. “They don’t know what’s special about the patients we treat.”



*Dr. Akeira Johnson, our director of Women's Health, discusses female healthcare options with a Veteran. Our Women Veterans Health Program offers a wide range of care for the 4,179 women Veterans we treat each year.*

# Nursing



*Martin Mikell, an Emergency Department nurse, starts an intravenous tube on a Veteran. In any given year, more than 36,000 Veterans here may require an IV to deliver medication. Our nurses found better ways to provide care to eliminate inflammation and infections associated with IVs.*

During the Civil War, many nurses were volunteers trying to nurture soldiers with injuries from the battlefield, with little knowledge of infection control and post-traumatic stress. By the time Old Main opened in 1869, the nursing career field was just becoming professionalized as caregivers learned more about treating illnesses and injury.

Professional nursing is now considered an integral part of the healing process. Many of our VA nurses hold advanced degrees with skills in patient assessment, evidence-based practice and prevention of infections and illnesses.

Each day, our nurses collaborate to find new and better ways to deliver efficient care. Here are a few areas where Milwaukee VA nurses have made a difference in the last year.

## Reducing skin irritation and inflammation

In any given year, 36,000 Veterans or more may need an intravenous tube to deliver medication. While this is an efficient way to deliver medicine and speed healing, it could make a Veteran susceptible to skin inflammation, which can put someone at risk for infection.

Milwaukee VA nurses brought inflammation cases caused by intravenous tubing down from a high of 5.6 percent in October 2013 to 2.1 percent two years later. And from October 2015 to January 2017, they brought it down to zero.

“Just staying in a hospital setting can make some susceptible to additional infections, so this is a key part of our treatment,” said Nurse Scientist Mary Hagle from our Milwaukee VA. “Our nurses routinely collaborate on ways to deliver more effective care so our Veterans can focus on healing.”



Nurses had three different options for dressings, but each one had different results. After studying the issue, nurses found the best material, including the ideal tape to hold dressings. They then

standardized the material that kept tubing in place. Lastly, the team created a timeline to change dressings, and simplified the labeling.

Nurses also educated the Veterans on the symptoms of infection, so they could speak up sooner when noticing a skin issue, and have a voice in their treatment.

## Community Living Center hydration rounds

Our Community Living Center is a long-term care home for many of our senior Veterans and some with cognitive disabilities. Because of this, it's easy for those Veterans to not recognize thirst and drink fluids when necessary. Keeping these Veterans hydrated is key to their well-being.

Every day at 2 p.m., our Community Living Center residents get a special treat when nurses offer a refreshing, fruit-filled beverage or alcohol-free "mocktail."

This partnership between nurses of the CLC and Nutrition and Food Services staff decreased dehydration diagnoses from 17.9 percent to 11.1 percent. Also, those with more than one episode of dehydration decreased from 10.3 percent to 2.8 percent. Veterans admitted to the hospital for dehydration decreased from 5.1

*Nursing Assistant Lashiek Jenkins delivers a "mocktail" to a Community Living Center resident. This partnership with CLC and Nutrition and Food Services has decreased dehydration diagnoses from 17.9 percent to 11.1 percent.*



percent to 2.8 percent. Urinary tract infections decreased by more than 50 percent.

"Our Veterans look at this as a treat. Plus, it gives us a chance to

connect with them throughout the day and go above and beyond," said Sue Gresser, Rehabilitation, Extended and Community Care co-division manager.

## Engaging Veterans with dementia

Nurses always look for innovative ways to engage patients. Under the old-school method of nursing, it might be normal to refer to patients just by their diagnosis — "The Hip Fracture," or "The Knee Replacement." The Milwaukee VA takes a different approach and engages patients as people. Our Veterans are more than a number or illness. They are someone's father, son, mother or grandmother.

Previously, dementia patients were

admitted to acute care inpatient units without any psychosocial stimulation. This caused disruptive behavior and falls.

Two of our advanced clinical nurse specialists, Molly Hendricks and Val Kolmer, came up with a way to engage our dementia patients with an array of exercises from a mobile multi-sensory environment cart. The results show promise, with Veterans becoming more engaged, less aggressive and less likely to accidentally fall.

Nurses now use Snoezelen therapy, which was originally developed for children with autism. This approach uses different methods to reach Veterans, whether it is hands-on exercises, artwork or aromatherapy.

"Everything we do here is finding a better way to engage those Veterans, potentially allowing us into that locked part of their mind that we can't reach without this type of stimulation," said Annette Couchenour, division manager for Acute and Critical Care Service.

# Residential Rehabilitation

Nothing is more important than the safety of our Veterans, and nowhere is that more evident than in our Mental Health Residential Rehabilitation Treatment Program in building 123, where Milwaukee put \$1.6 million in security upgrades in the last fiscal year.

While we have a sacred bond to care for those who have borne the battle, VA also recognizes some of our most vulnerable Veterans need extra care — whether it be for post-traumatic stress, military sexual trauma, homelessness or substance abuse. Our residential rehabilitation program provides intensive, evidence-based care for these and an array of other issues, with care lasting 45 days to seven months or more.

“The goal is to meet Veterans where they are at and help them to help themselves,” said Dr. Martha Carlson, who oversees the program. “We offer empirically supported, gold-standard treatments, and a variety of holistic treatments, including art, recreation and occupational therapies. We want to provide Veterans the care they need while they are here, and the tools they will need to be successful once they go home.”

Realizing opioid addiction is a nationwide issue with more than 340 drug overdose deaths in 2016 in Milwaukee alone, the residential rehabilitation program offers intensive substance abuse treatment. 329 Veterans completed the program last year.

Treating severe addictions can be one of the most challenging parts of providing care, as VA doctors and therapists work to break the cycle of abuse and prevent illegal drugs from entering the building. No one program is 100 percent fool-proof, but Milwaukee VA began making drastic changes to the safety and security of the building and program in July 2016.

Medical Center Director and CEO Dr. Daniel Zomchek, who arrived here at the end of June 2016, along with Dr. Carlson, increased safety and security further with a 36-point plan. Work began on the plan in September, and by August 2017, all 36 key areas were addressed.

Some security changes include locking and sealing windows to prevent contraband from getting into the building. We also have a full-time security guard who monitors visitors, checks bags and food and has everyone empty their pockets when coming inside the building. Staff are on hand to monitor each wing of the building, and there are regular room checks throughout the day.

The residential program has a total of 123 cameras and a screech alarm system that sounds if any locked doors are opened.

Because holistic care is a key part of recovery, Veterans are also given the opportunity to participate in art and music therapy as part of their care, including ceramics, Guitars 4 Vets and equine therapy.

“We’re proud of the care we provide, but know we can always get better,” Dr. Carlson said. “With these safety measures in place, we know our Veterans have the best chance for success.”

*Art therapy is an integral part of the care and healing process in our residential treatment program.*



# Medical Center Highlights

## Northeastern Wisconsin psychiatry residency

Veterans will have more access to mental health care at the Green Bay VA Health Care Center now that we've partnered with the Medical College of Wisconsin for another psychiatric residency program, adding to the one we have in Milwaukee.

The first four residents arrived in July 2017, and will spend nearly two of their four years in residency training and practicing at the Green Bay HCC. We'll continue to bring on four more residents each summer.

This will give these physicians hands-on experience in unique mental health issues some of our Veterans face, such as post-traumatic stress and military sexual trauma.

Those who leave after four years will take with them a knowledge of trauma-informed care, an insight into Veterans' issues and an understanding of the VA system.

## Sim Center certification

In March 2017, our Simulation Program received intermediate level facility certification from the Veterans Health Administration's National Simulation Center.

Prior to March, only six other VA medical centers acquired this certification. The submission requirements included a detailed account of simulation modalities, equipment, curricular outcomes,

scholarship activities and more.

This certification validates our center's ability to provide high-caliber, local delivery of simulation-based training and increase access to developed instructional curricula, improving clinical standards across our medical center.

## Pathology and Laboratory Medicine

Our Lab is the only one within VISN 12 that does all mycobacterial testing, which allows us to better pinpoint infections and illnesses not just for our patients, but thousands of Veterans at seven other VA medical centers throughout the region.



*A lab technician uses a state-of-art MALDI target plate to pinpoint a specific bacterial infection. Our VA is the only one within VISN 12 that does this type of testing, and can run up to 100 tests a day.*

With improved, state-of-the-art equipment such as the MALDI target plate, the Lab can now run up to 100 blood and other tissue samples a day, and get results back

within minutes instead of 18 to 24 hours, the previous turnaround time. The equipment also allows technicians to drill down further to find specific bacteria causing illness or disease. This enables doctors to treat Veterans more efficiently to speed the healing process.

## Sleep Lab

A poor night's sleep can leave a Veteran with far more problems than grogginess the next day. Sleep disorders can lead to serious, long-term health problems such as obesity, heart disease, heart attacks and diabetes.

Milwaukee VA is making a difference for hundreds of Veterans each year thanks to our Sleep Lab. We've nearly doubled the number of Veterans treated since opening the lab in February 2016.

The lab consists of two sleep suites, temporarily located in the Spinal Cord Injury Center, with plans to create a four-room suite to accommodate more Veterans in the future. Technicians measure heart rate, breathing, brain activity and awake time during sleep to pinpoint specific issues, including breathing disorders from sleep apnea, narcolepsy, seizure disorders, excessive snoring, and REM and non-REM sleep patterns.

This information can be used to determine if a Veteran can be treated with medicine, surgery, C-PAP — Continual Positive Air Pressure therapy — or less invasive procedures.


# Veterans Transportation Services

The Milwaukee VA is making it easier for Veterans to get world-class care and save a substantial amount of money in the process with Veterans Transportation Services.

In its first full year of operation, VTS provided 3,000 rides to and from the medical center, and saved \$208,219.14! Now at full staff, the program hopes to double that number in the coming year.

The mission of VTS is to efficiently increase access to care and offer top customer service to all those who depend on VA for healthcare.

Milwaukee currently has four vehicles that are handicapped-accessible — two buses, one mini-bus and a minivan. We have four drivers on staff, along with a dispatcher and mobility manager who keep the program running. The drivers operate Monday

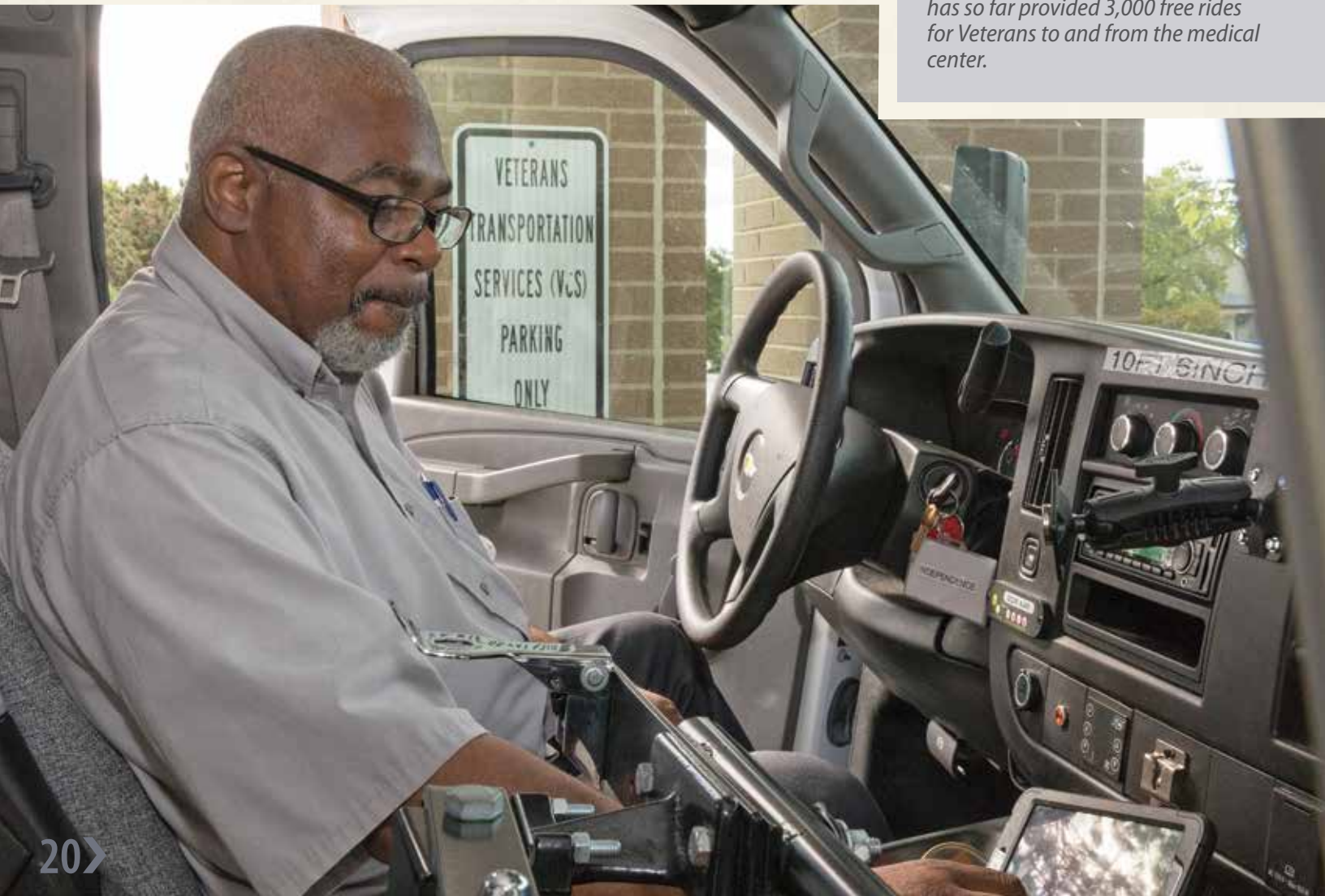
3,000   
\$208,219.14

through Friday from 5:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., and provide door-to-door service for Veterans in the Milwaukee County area. There is also a Saturday run to Iron Mountain, Michigan, returning Veterans home after receiving care at the Milwaukee VA.

Drivers pick up Veterans at their home, then meet them at their appointment location or clinic to take them home afterward. Unlike contract services, VTS can provide a ride for a Veteran regardless of his or her travel benefit eligibility.

Additional ride services are offered by Disabled American Veterans and contract and commercial services. Eventually, VTS hopes to absorb 80 percent of the contracted services, at a significant savings to the government.

*Isaih Miller Jr. checks his route to prepare for his next Veteran pick-up. Veterans Transportation Services has so far provided 3,000 free rides for Veterans to and from the medical center.*



# Construction Updates

Nothing stays the same around the Milwaukee VA Medical Center. We are in a constant state of change and modernization to bring Veterans world-class healthcare.

Here are a couple of our bigger projects in fiscal 2017:

## Catheterization Lab

Veterans have less wait time and precision-point diagnoses with a new Catheterization Lab and \$855,000 in state-of-the-art equipment.

This \$1.3 million construction project was completed in July 2017, and cut wait-times in half, with most Veterans seen for procedures in two weeks.

Our Cath Lab uses diagnostic imaging equipment to visualize the arteries and chambers of the heart and treat any stenosis or abnormality. Thanks to the new machinery, we're able to get better imaging, which allows us to provide better stents with precision accuracy. For our Veterans, this means better blood flow, less chance of clotting and more long-term success.



*A Milwaukee VA Medical Center team prepares a patient for a procedure in our heart Catheterization Lab using the \$855,000 Siemens Artis Zee Ceiling Intervention Cardiology System.*

## Mental Health Outpatient Clinic

This one-year, \$1.9 million remodeling project to building 43, completed in June 2017, improved outpatient Mental Health services by consolidating administrative offices; bringing substance abuse programs together to make it easier for Veterans to receive care in one area; and improving the waiting room area.

All told, the renovations covered 8,472 square feet. The project also corrected utility issues in the building to improve energy efficiency and repair perimeter heating.



*The new Behavioral Health Outpatient Clinic in building 43 offers a more open and inviting area for our Veterans and was part of a \$1.9 million improvement project.*

# Homeless Housing

Our Civil War Veterans moved from farmhouses on the Milwaukee VA campus to dormitories within Old Main when construction was completed in 1869. The modern-day Veterans Affairs traces its roots back to these hallowed grounds as the Milwaukee Soldiers Home was one of the first three in the United States.

The gothic-building, which stretches seven stories into the Milwaukee skyline, was home for thousands of Veterans of the Civil War, World War I, World War II, Korea and Vietnam, and continued as a place of healing and care through 1989, when it was closed and replaced by more modern facilities.

Thanks to our partnerships with the National Trust for Historic Preservation, the Milwaukee Preservation Alliance, National Park Service and Wisconsin State Historic Preservation Office, we are now seeing Old Main come full circle.

In July 2016, VA announced a partnership with The Alexander Company to help turn Old Main and several other historic buildings into housing services for homeless Veterans.

We're now in the process of entering an Enhanced Use Lease with The Alexander Company. In the first phase, the company will work exclusively in Old Main, with plans to start work in early 2018.

The goal is to create a combination of 80 single and family units in Old Main, and more than 100 apartments overall, in all the buildings.

This work underscores the community commitment to serving those who served our country.



*The historic Old Main will provide 80 single and family homeless units as part of an Enhanced Use Lease project with The Alexander Company.*

# Systems Redesign

Systems Redesign keeps us on a continuous journey of excellence and focuses on the Lean process of making things work more efficiently and eliminating waste. From Huddle Boards that help staff engage in continuous daily improvement, to 5s projects designed to make work more efficient and long-term Yellow and Green Belt team projects, Milwaukee VA employees have created hundreds of improvements across the medical center. That means better care for our Veterans.

We are also in our third year since opening our Lean Center in building 6, which allows teams to meet and strategize in a central area dedicated to improvement work. The Lean Center has a facilitator on hand who can help teams work through issues with consultation and coaching.



Simply put, Systems Redesign is intended to empower everyone in the organization to improve and make the system better in a meaningful way. It is a combination of enlightened leadership that drives change, and a facilitator who teaches and instructs departments how to improve. This makes life easier for our front-line staff.

The following pages show some ways we are using Systems Redesign.

*A team of VA employees works in the Lean Center to strategically plan the best way to implement VA Community Care in Milwaukee.*

## Huddle Boards

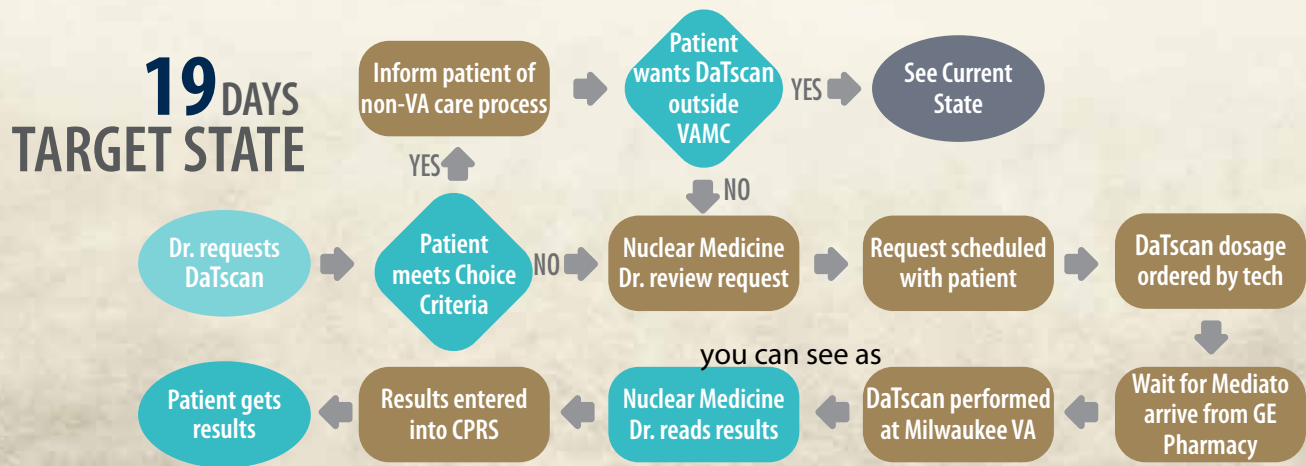
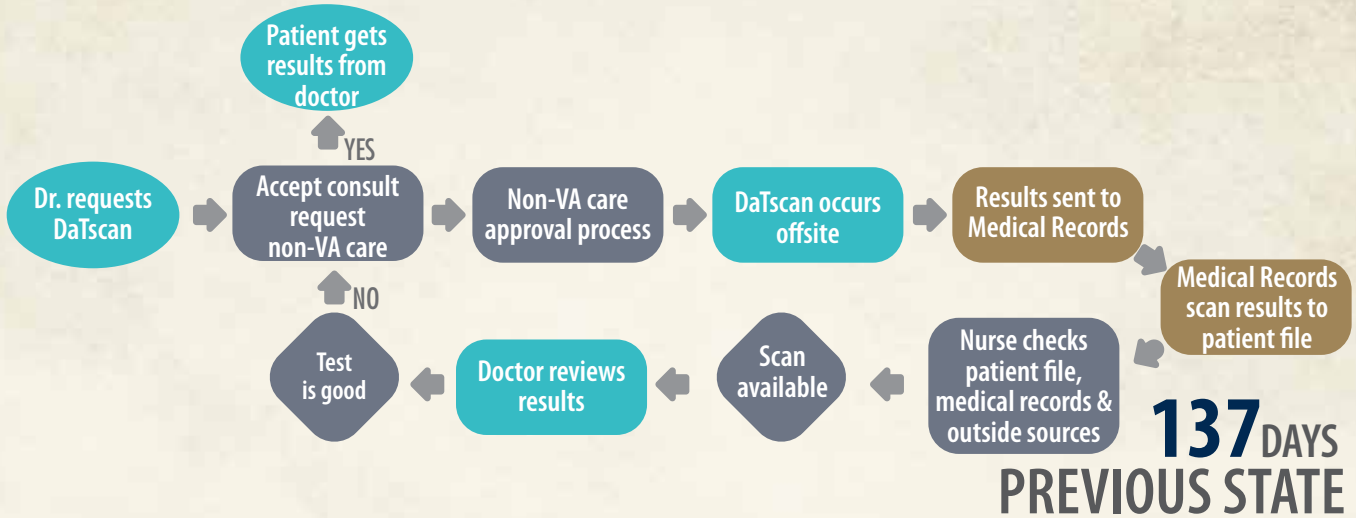
The Huddle Board process of putting ideas into action is used nationwide. Here in Milwaukee, employees created a visual Huddle Board that is broken into six sections and can help employees better picture and plan each step along the way. In essence, it's a road map that guides employees in a systematic way to improve their own work.



# Parkinson's treatment improvement

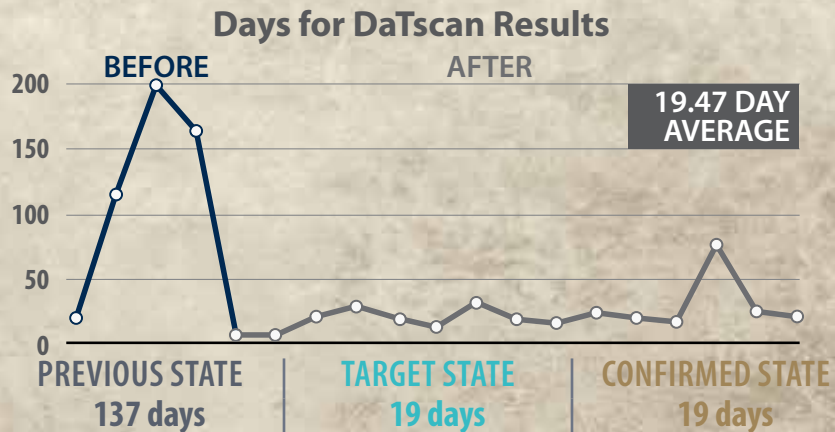
## PROBLEM STATEMENT

The DaTscan is a recent innovation to detect Parkinson's disease. At Milwaukee VA, we currently send Veterans to the community to have this test performed. Having the community hospital perform this test leads to an average wait time of 137 days from the time of initial consult to when the doctor reviews the results. Having the test performed off site doesn't fully use our staff and creates extra administrative work to approve and schedule the test. Additionally, this causes more wait time for the Veterans and forces them to go outside of the VA healthcare system for their care. This Yellow Belt project cut the time from 137 days to 19.



## RESULTS

**87%** ↓





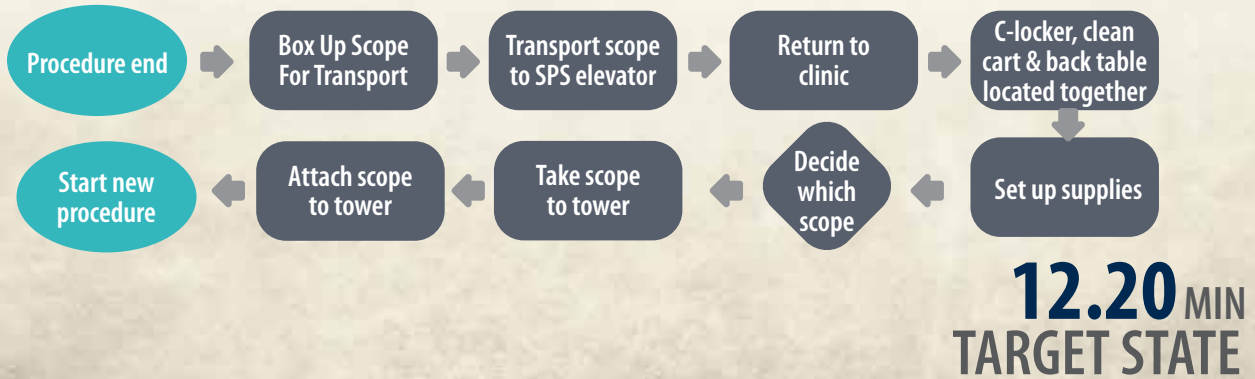
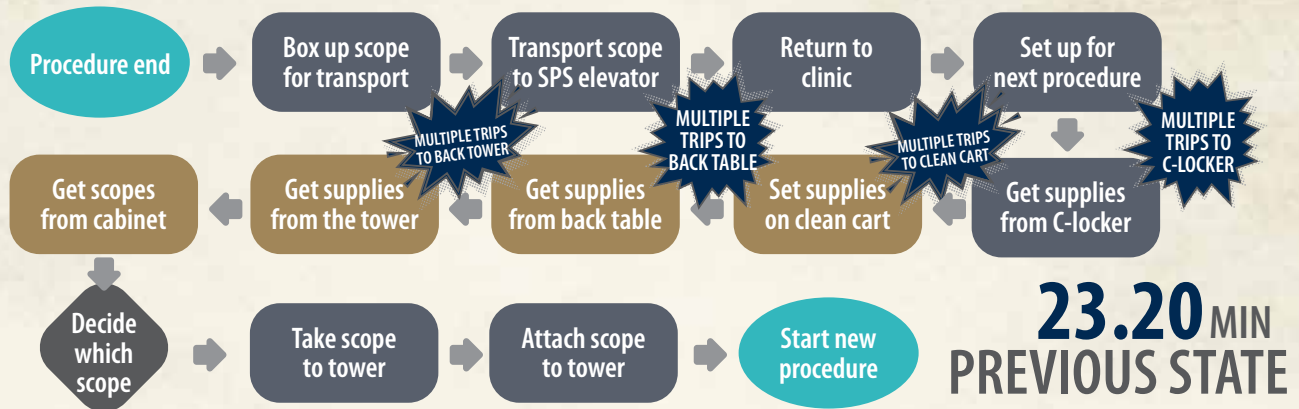
# GREEN BELT

A Green Belt project is more complex, crosses divisions and clinical disciplines and has a broader scope.

## GI Room turnover

### PROBLEM STATEMENT

Room turnover is staffed with one to two techs, with turnover taking 20 to 25 minutes. The goal was to have one tech break down, manage and set up the procedure room within 12 minutes (50% decrease). Our staff found the new way was more efficient, turning a room in a little more than eight minutes.



### RESULTS

64% ↓

PREVIOUS STATE	23:20
TARGET STATE	12:20
CONFIRMED STATE	8:27

# Awards

While Milwaukee VA prides itself on exceptional care to our Veterans, some people and departments went above the call of duty and were recognized. Here are some of our top award winners from 2017.

## Secretary's Award for Excellence



Vicky Russell, a registered nurse who works on the Cardiac Unit, earned the Secretary's Award for Nursing Excellence. Russell was honored for providing exceptional Veteran-centered care and continuous leadership in quality improvement efforts that

improved outcomes at unit and organizational levels.

## Top physician assistant



Krista Berner, who works in the Neurosurgery Department, was awarded the Outstanding Physician Assistant Leadership Award by the VA Physician Assistant Association.

Throughout her career, she expanded her clinical duties and leadership roles, including taking directorship

of the Milwaukee VA physician assistant post-graduate residency program in primary care.

## ACHE Regent's Award



Deputy Director James McLain was honored by the Wisconsin Chapter of the American College of Healthcare Executives and awarded the Senior-Level Healthcare Executive Regent's Award.

This award recognizes those who are

experienced in the field and have made significant contributions to the advancement of healthcare management excellence.

## Three national awards for Dr. Lee



Dr. Kenneth Lee, our Spinal Cord Injury Center manager who was seriously wounded by a roadside bomb in Iraq, won three national-level awards this year.

Dr. Lee received the Silver Helmet Award from AMVETS. The organization only gives five of the awards each year,

nationwide. Lee was recognized for his commitment to helping wounded Veterans. He also received the Speedy Award from the Paralyzed Veterans of America, in recognition of significant contributions to improving the lives of America's paralyzed Veterans, and the Disabled American Veterans' Outstanding Disabled Veteran of the Year.

## Milwaukee wins two environmental awards

Our Medical Center won two, national environmental awards from Practice Greenhealth, a national group that recognizes hospitals who promote principles of environmental stewardship.

The group gave our Medical Center the Practice Greenhealth Emerald Award for diverting 54 percent of our waste from landfills. The organization also awarded the Circle of Excellence Leadership Award for being environmental leaders for holding a community-wide electronics recycling drive two years in a row — collecting 150,000 pounds in fiscal 2017.

## Communications awards

Public Affairs Specialist Benjamin Slane was named a top communicator in the nation, taking first place for his Memorial Day program campaign, which led to a crowd of 1,500 — the largest ever.

Gary Kunich from Public Affairs and Kim Chapman from Medical Media also won first place for the best Annual Report in the Department of Veterans Affairs.

# 2017 STATS

Veterans Served	<b>63,910</b>
Male	<b>59,731</b>
Female	<b>4,179</b>
Bed Totals	<b>740</b>
Hospital	<b>468</b>
Community Living Center	<b>113</b>
Domiciliary	<b>150</b>
Transition	<b>9</b>
Total Bed Days of Care	<b>114,797</b>
Hospital Visits	<b>848,972</b>
Outpatient	<b>817,245</b>
ED Visits	<b>24,027</b>
Inpatient Admissions	<b>7,700</b>
Surgical Procedures:	<b>4,189</b>
Clinical Laboratory Tests:	<b>2,900,000</b>
Prescriptions Filled	<b>1,356,044</b>
Prosthetic Services Rcvd	<b>32,044</b>
FY17 Expenditures	<b>\$608,365,380</b>
Construction	<b>\$15,312,758</b>
Volunteer Hours	<b>120,635</b>
Donations	<b>\$4,906,832</b>
Monetary	<b>\$1,994,704</b>
Volunteer Value	<b>\$2,912,128</b>
Pathology Test Volumes	<b>\$ 2,673,929</b>
Clinical	<b>\$2,622,886</b>
Anatomic	<b>\$51,043</b>



16 counties served  
 ▲ 7,500 square miles  
 ▲ 67,000 enrolled Veterans

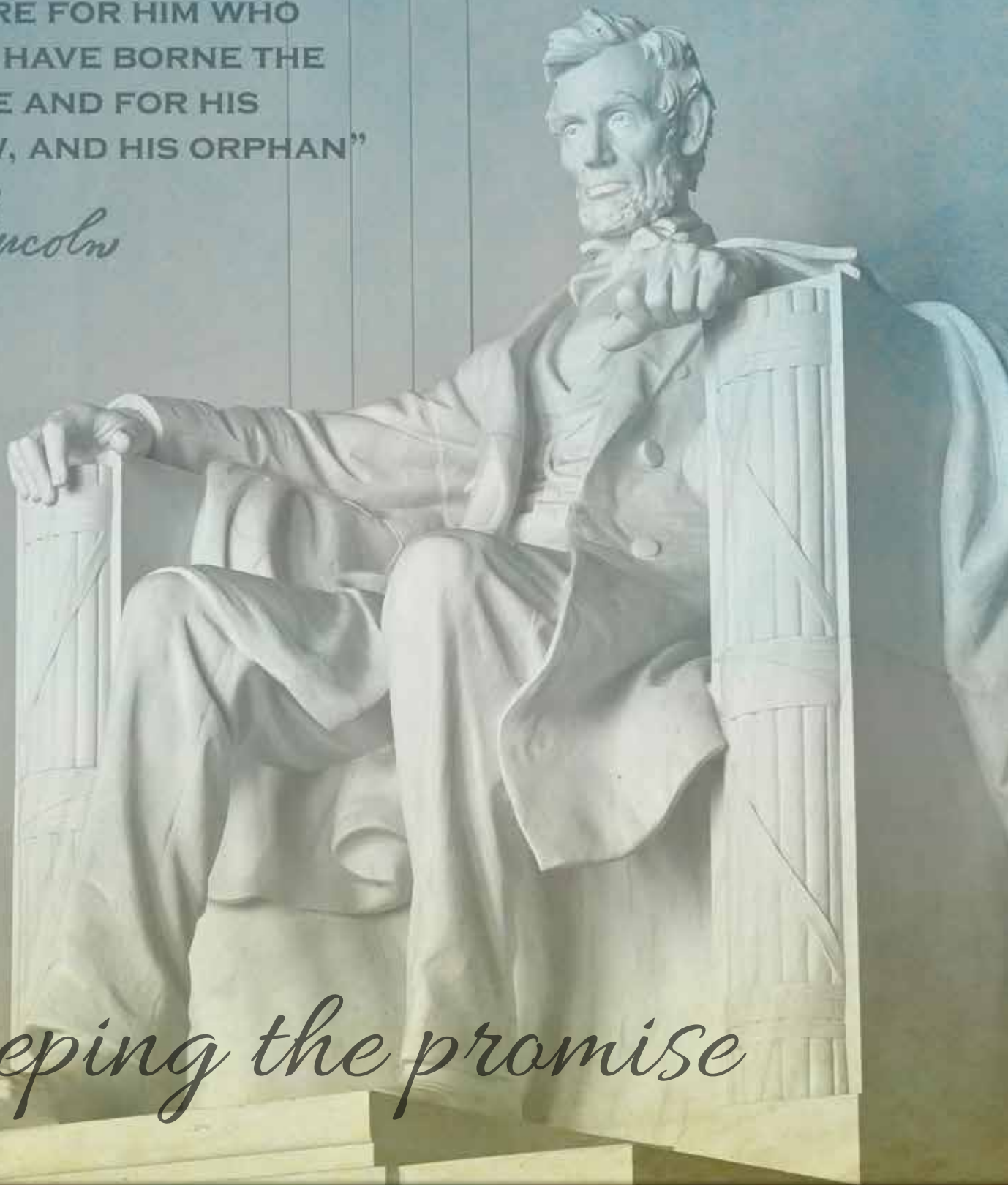
**Demographics**

## Workforce



“TO CARE FOR HIM WHO  
SHALL HAVE BORNE THE  
BATTLE AND FOR HIS  
WIDOW, AND HIS ORPHAN”

*A. Lincoln*



*Keeping the promise*



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