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Full Circle

Spring/Summer | 2008





Perspective from the Director

HERE AT VA BUTLER HEALTHCARE, we strive to provide quality care and services that treat the whole veteran. There are many supportive services that veterans—and their families—can take advantage of in order to enhance their overall well-being. The provision of care does not end after a doctor's visit. The VA offers many programs that compliment the treatment a veteran is already receiving through their primary care physician. Some examples of these support programs are listed below:

- **My HealtheVet** and the **HealthierUS Veterans initiative/MOVE!** program enable veterans to take a more active role in managing their healthcare needs, as well as, how to develop and maintain a healthier lifestyle.
- **Operation S.A.V.E. Training** provides veterans, families, friends and the community with valuable information about suicide, the signs and how to find help for those contemplating such as tragedy.
- **Support Groups** offer camaraderie and familiarity to share experiences and learn new things.
- The **Operation Enduring Freedom/Operation Iraqi Freedom (OEF/OIF) Focus Group** provides an opportunity for veterans and their families to share experiences, concerns, and obtain information on programs to meet their particular need.
- The **Voluntary Services Department** offers an opportunity for those with a little extra time on their hands to do something productive by helping out fellow veterans in need.

Our goal at VA Butler Healthcare is to put patient care first. To accomplish this, we will continue to provide not only the appropriate infrastructure, but the staffing, primary care and supportive services necessary to meet veteran needs – now and in the future. I encourage all veterans to take the opportunity to learn more about these special programs and initiatives, and as appropriate, incorporate them into their own lives.



Patricia Nealon
Medical Center Director

During National Salute to Hospitalized Veterans Week, Feb 10 -16, **Special Guest** Maverick Sutton, 2007 Little Mr. Butler County, visited with residents and handed out valentines and carnations. Maverick poses with veteran, Bob Sankey, during his National Salute visit.

on the
cover

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Stats

(as of March 31, 2008,
1st and 2nd Quarter of FY2008)

Number of
Employees

545

Number of
Volunteers

570

Number of
Volunteer Hours

21,918

Number of
Veterans Served

15,956

Number of
Outpatient Visits

60,782

Number of
Unique Patients

15,956

Number of
Inpatients Treated

335

Power of Performance Goals

Michael J. Kussman, M.D., Under Secretary for Health, has established four priorities for the Veterans Health Administration (VHA), to help meet today's challenges, and tomorrow's. These goals are:

- put **PATIENT CARE** first
- practice progressive **LEADERSHIP**
- promote improved **BUSINESS PROCESSES**
- produce meaningful **PERFORMANCE MEASURES**

"With these four priorities guiding us, we can take VHA to an even higher level of service to veterans and excellence," states Kussman.



Mark your calendar!

Second Annual Welcome Home Celebration Scheduled August 6, 2008

VA Butler Healthcare, in conjunction with Pennsylvania CareerLink, are hosting the Second Annual *Welcome Home* Celebration for Operation Enduring Freedom/Operation Iraqi Freedom (OEF/OIF) service members, veterans and their families on Wednesday, August 6, 2008. This year's event features a special program entitled **The Western Pennsylvania Regional Veteran's Career and Benefits Fair**. The program will be held from 11 a.m.-4 p.m. at the Belmont Complex, Kittanning, Pennsylvania, and features career opportunities with local employers, information about community service programs and veterans benefits. Veterans interested in career and benefit information are welcome to attend this information-packed event. For more information, contact Bill Cress, OEF/OIF Program Manager, at 724-285-2493 or Tod Conner, OEF/OIF Family Support Coordinator, at 724-282-5583.

MISSION:

Our mission is to provide excellent healthcare and services to our nation's veterans.

VISION:

We will continually improve healthcare services to every patient we serve. We will be a leader in providing healthcare value and be the employer of choice for our staff.

VALUES:

Compassion, Commitment, Excellence, Professionalism, Integrity, Accountability, Stewardship.

Integrated Ethics

Improving Ethics Quality in Health Care

What is Integrated Ethics?

A national education and organizational change initiative that provides comprehensive approach to ethics in health care. Integrated Ethics is designed to improve *ethics quality* across VHA.

Integrated Ethics addresses ethics quality at all levels—at the level of decisions and actions, at the level of the systems and processes that drive decision making, and at the level of the values, environment, and culture that shape ethical practices overall.

Why does VA need Integrated Ethics?

VA needs to ensure that ethics is valued just as much as other organizational priorities. When ethics quality in an organization is high the organization benefits in many ways: through increased employee morale, higher patient satisfaction, and greater productivity and efficiency. Ethics consultation can even help the bottom line by reducing length of stay and costs among high risk patients.

What is an Integrated Ethics program?

Effective ethics programs must do three things well: respond to ethics concerns on a case by case basis, address ethics issues on a systems level, and foster an environment and culture that is conducive to ethical practice.

Local Integrated Ethics programs achieve these goals through three core functions
ethics consultation • preventive ethics • ethical leadership

In addition to ethics consultation, preventive ethics, and ethical leadership coordinators, in each facility an *Integrated Ethics Program Officer* is responsible for day-to-day operations and an *Integrated Ethics Council* coordinates ethics-related activities across the organization.

Integrated Ethics: Closing the Gap

From . . .

- Isolated pockets of ethics activity
- Ad hoc, variable processes
- Reactive, casebased
- Limited assessment of effectiveness
- Rules

To . . .

- Comprehensive, organized program
- Systematic, clear standards
- Proactive, systems-focused
- Improvement-oriented, accountable
- Rules + values



For questions or concerns related to clinical or organizational ethics, please contact one of the resources below:

Ethics Consultation Coordinator: **Jonathan Klemens, ext. 5512**

Preventive Ethics Coordinator: **Rose Woodward, ext. 2597**

Integrated Ethics Program Officer: **Sharon Parson, ext. 5023**

Be Active, Eat Healthy – *MOVE!* and Get Fit for Life

Obesity and overweight is a healthcare epidemic affecting not only veterans, but the general public. Currently, 70% of our nation's veterans are obese or overweight. Persons who are overweight or obese are at a higher risk for illnesses such as diabetes, stroke, heart disease, sleep apnea, gall bladder disease and some types of cancer. The expense of medical care has increased, costing tens of millions of dollars each year. A challenge now exists to create a greater understanding of the severity of being obese and overweight, and to establish effective prevention methods that enable individuals to be healthier.

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is leading the way and has been working closely with other healthcare agencies to implement aggressive awareness campaigns, and health and weight management programs, to better serve the veteran population. The HealthierUS Veteran (HUSV) initiative and the Weight Management Program for Veterans or *MOVE!* are preventative care services that are specifically designed to help veterans who are obese or overweight to become more physically active and make healthy lifestyles changes. **(NOTE: Before beginning any regimented weight loss and/or exercise program, individuals should consult their primary care physician first.)**

The HUSV initiative is a collaborative effort between the Department of Health and Human Services and the Department of Veterans Affairs. The focus of the initiative is to encourage and educate veterans and their families about the health risks of obesity and diabetes, and to eat healthy and be active. There are five main components that make up the initiative:

- *MOVE!* Weight Management Program
- Prescription for Health—a paper prescription that states BMI (Body Mass Index) and health risks if the BMI is too high and lists recommended daily physical activities
- Fitness Challenges
- Collaboration between VA medical facilities and “Steps to a HealthierUS” and other Health and Human Service programs
- Fit for Life Volunteer Corps—Fit for Life volunteers assist staff and provide encouragement and support to the veterans.

MOVE!, Weight Management for Veterans Everywhere, is a program developed by the VA National Center for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention, a part of the Office of Patient Care Services. *MOVE!* is an evidence-based, patient-centered weight management program with a comprehensive focus on behavior, nutrition, and physical activity. The goal of the program is to help veterans lose weight and keep it off. The *MOVE!* program is available in every VA medical center and some community based outpatient clinics across



the nation. To participate in the *MOVE!* program, veterans must meet certain criteria and be referred by their physician.

Here at VA Butler Healthcare, HUSV/*MOVE!* has been reorganized into one program and comprises a dedicated team of health professionals, coordinated by Laurie Conti, MPT, and Susan Leslie, RD, who oversee the development and implementation of the program's objectives.

Through the *MOVE!* program, the team has developed two levels of weight management. Level 1 is self management. Veterans complete a questionnaire that will help design a plan to help them lose weight. They will then receive a tailored set of handouts for education. Veterans may participate in a weekly phone-in clinic for information from a Dietician, Physical Therapist, Behavioral Health Specialist, or nurse and have group support from other callers. Level 2 participation includes all of level 1, plus an 8 week comprehensive group program with education on nutrition, physical exercise/activity and behavior modification. The group meets weekly for one hour. For veterans who are unable to attend weekly group sessions, individual counseling by a Dietician, Physical Therapist or Behavioral Health Specialist is available on a one-on-one basis. Participants are also encouraged to take advantage of VA Butler's Wellness Center to increase their physical exercise (prior authorization required). To date, 275 consults have been received for the program with 12-15 members participating in the group session each week. Group sessions are by appointment.

To generate awareness, and to make getting healthy fun, there are a variety of fitness challenges in which individuals can participate. The HUSV/*MOVE!* team has been very active in promoting some of these challenges at the facility. On November 15, 2007, veterans, family members, staff and volunteers helped kick off the Champions Challenge to walk 100 miles in 100 days. Over 200 individuals signed up to participate with 27 achieving the 100 mile objective. The *MOVE!* Employee program started March 26, 2008, to generate health awareness and promotion of weight management for staff. The program holds monthly “Lunch & Learn” sessions for staff on a variety of health and wellness topics. The President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports launched the first National President's Challenge, a self motivated six-week physical activity competition to encourage Americans to be more active. The Challenge kicked off March 20, the first day of spring, and concluded May 15 during National Physical Fitness and Sports Month. May 21, 2008 is the National Employee Health and Fitness Day. The HUSV/*MOVE!* team has planned a Walk for Wellness and Health Fair to promote being active, eating healthy and getting fit for life.

For further information about the HealthierUS Veteran initiative or the *MOVE!* program at VA Butler Healthcare, interested persons can contact Laurie Conti, MPT, at 724-285-2238, or Susan Leslie, RD, at 724-285-2425. Additional information can be obtained by logging onto www.healthierusveterans.va.gov and www.move.va.gov.



NATIONAL SALUTE TO HOSPITALIZED VETERANS WEEK



VA BUTLER HEALTHCARE celebrated National Salute to Hospitalized Veterans with a variety of programs and events throughout the week of February 10-16, 2008. During the week in-house veterans were treated to special recreational activities, a special meal was served on Valentines Day, red Carnations were distributed by the VFW Ladies Auxiliary on Valentines Day, and special guests from the community visited with residents, handing out valentines and well-wishes.

Despite wintry weather conditions, 74 special guests visited with residents during the week. Rocky Bleier, Former Pittsburgh Steeler and Vietnam veteran, visited with the residents for several hours signing pictures, Terrible Towels, t-shirts and footballs. He talked to the veterans about his experiences, not only as a Steeler, but as a veteran himself.

This year, visitations were offered Monday through Friday, in the morning and afternoon, to better accommodate the schedules of the veterans and visitors. The restructuring of the visitation allowed special guests to have more time to interact with the veterans—making the experience more meaningful for everyone. Visitors were escorted by staff, volunteers and VAVS Committee organizations—The Marine Corps League, Paralyzed Veterans of America, American Legion, American Legion Auxiliary, and the VFW Auxiliary—who also provided an overview about the facility and the volunteer program.



National Salute to Hospitalized Veterans week is an excellent opportunity for individuals to learn about the many volunteer programs that exist at the facility and see first hand volunteers at work. VA Butler Healthcare has 700 volunteers who support a myriad of programs and services.

Currently, volunteers are needed to help feed residents, provide “one-to-one” companionship, escort residents to and from in-house appointments and provide entertainment. For more information, interested persons should contact VA Butler Healthcare’s Voluntary Services Department at 724-285-2576 or 724-285-2575.



MyHealthVet

Your Gateway to Veteran Health Benefits and Services

IN AN EFFORT TO PROVIDE veterans with improved access to their medical information, the VA has created the only online program of its kind in the healthcare industry developed specifically for veteran use. Called **MyHealthVet (MHV)**, this Internet-based portal is a gateway to veteran health benefits and services.

Since its launch on Veterans Day 2003, the **MyHealthVet** website has become a vital tool for veterans interested in an electronic alternative to access their medical record. To date, the VA Butler Healthcare **MyHealthVet** program has registered nearly 600 veterans who use this secure website to order prescriptions, review prescription history, research healthcare concerns and conditions, and learn more about the newest approaches to wellness with links to the *MOVE! Weight Management Program* and **HealthierUSVeteran**. Users may also click on the MyHealthVet *Track Health* link to record *Daily Activities* and *Food Intake*. And coming soon (Summer 2008), veterans will be able to access key portions of their healthcare record through **MyHealthVet**. This exciting option will provide veterans with a higher level of privacy and convenience, as well as assist employees in meeting the "paperless" initiative.

To better serve our nations' heroes and help them better manage their healthcare, VA Butler is encouraging staff and volunteers to take the time to learn more about the MyHealthVet program and promote this valuable healthcare tool. Simply log onto the MyHealthVet website at: www.myhealth.va.gov today to learn more about this information-rich resource for veteran health benefits and services.

For additional information about the MyHealthVet Program or to register, contact Lauren Heiger, MyHealthVet Coordinator, at 724-285-2404 today.



Operation S.A.V.E.- Suicide Prevention

Suicide is the 11th most frequent cause of death in the US and is considered a preventable public health tragedy.

The Department of Veterans Affairs recognizes the seriousness of this problem and is leading the way in suicide prevention. The VA has more than 10,000 mental health experts who are dedicated to helping veterans with emotional concerns and crises. In July 2007, the VA established a 24-hour National Suicide Prevention Hotline, **1-800-273-8255 (TALK)**, to ensure that veterans, who may be contemplating suicide, have immediate access to a trained professional. Hotline staff are prepared to talk with veteran callers (and concerned family and friends) about their problems and direct them to help at their local VA facility or community hospital/clinic. In addition to the hotline, the VA has established a website (www.mentalhealth.va.gov) to provide information about suicide prevention.

The next phase in the VA's ongoing suicide prevention efforts is to increase awareness for the family and friends of a veteran. Operation **S.A.V.E.** was specifically developed to teach individuals, who have daily contact with a veteran, how they can contribute to VA's life-saving efforts. Operation **S.A.V.E.** is a free, two hour edu-

cational experience that covers the steps every person needs to know to help prevent suicide. This training covers:

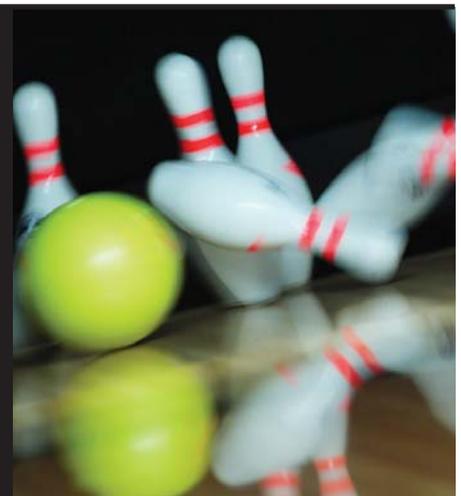
1. A brief overview of suicide in the veteran population
2. A discussion of what is being done locally and nationally to prevent suicide
3. A discussion of suicide myths and misinformation
4. The importance of identifying suicide risk factors
5. The four steps for preventing a veteran suicide—called Operation **S.A.V.E.**—**S**igns of suicidal thinking, **A**sk questions, **V**alidate the veteran's experience, **E**ncourage treatment and **E**xpedite getting help

The VA encourages family, friends, and all those that care about veterans to seek out and participate in Operation **S.A.V.E.** training through their local VA facility.

For Operation **S.A.V.E.** training dates and times in your area, or for more information on suicide prevention and available services, contact Pete Albert, RN MSN, Suicide Prevention Coordinator at VA Butler Healthcare, at 724-285-2737. Operation **S.A.V.E.** can also be offered at local Reserve and National Guard units, VFW, American Legion, or other veteran service organization locations.

Attention Employees!

The VA Butler Bowling League is looking for new members to join the team. The 2008-2009 season begins September 3, 2008. Please contact Ed Mills at extension 2548 for additional information and to register. Deadline is August 8, 2008. Location for the league is to be determined.



Happenings



VA Butler Healthcare recognizes the accomplishments of its employees with a quarterly Employee Awards Ceremony. In January, 32 awards were presented to employees for years of service to special projects, such as the Combined Federal Campaign (CFC). Pictured are several members of the CFC Committee receiving their award from VA Butler's Associate Director for Operations, Richard Cotter.

On Friday, April 25, 2008, VA Butler Healthcare celebrated the Grand Opening of its Community Based Outpatient Clinic (CBOC) for Lawrence County with a Ribbon Cutting Ceremony and Health Fair. There were over 200 veterans who attended the event. Cutting the ribbon (pictured left to right) are: Patricia Nealon, VA Butler Healthcare Director; Michael E. Moreland, Network Director, VISN 4; State Representative Michelle Brooks; State Representative Jaret Gibbons; State Representative Chris Sainato; Lawrence County Veteran Services Director, Shirley Noga; Lawrence County Commissioner Rick DeBlasio; and Lawrence County Commissioner Steve Craig.



Employees are always hard at work. Here, Mike Hustak, Mail Clerk and 22 year VA employee, completes his daily task of delivering and picking up mail.



VA Butler Healthcare recognized the accomplishments of 154 volunteers at their Annual Volunteer Recognition and Luncheon Awards ceremony on Friday, May 2, 2008. Medical Center Director, Patricia Nealon, poses with recipients of the 5,000 hour service award recipients Betty Stuckie, Philip Shank, Marlene Hollobaugh and Hugh Burgess.



During National Patient Safety Awareness Week (March 2 – 8, 2008), VA Butler Healthcare held an informational fair for staff and volunteers. Carl Mancini, VA Butler Environmental Services Specialist, discusses the latest products and equipment for environmental safety and infection control with Trudy Levere, RN.



Employees with 20 or more years of service

20 years

Teddy Davis, Transitional Care
Naomi Day, Transitional Care
Pat Dunkerly, Chief of Staff's Office
Carol Pry, Transitional Care
Lois Rumbaugh, Transitional Care

25 years

Greg Bean, Chief of Staff's Office
Anne Marie Bogdan, Chief of Staff's Office
Nancy Bowser, Chief of Staff's Office
Katherine Chilcott, Office of the Director
Leonard Codispot, Facility Management
Tim Evanoff, Ancillary Services
John Kimmel, Chief of Staff's Office
William Kircher, Chief of Staff's Office
Mary Leitem, Transitional Care
Douglas Nemeth, Facility Management
Marie Polardino, Business Office
William Ritzert, Chief of Staff's Office
Charlie Saeler, Chief of Staff's Office

30 years

Judith Dudas, Business Office
Denise Luttrell, Transitional Care
Varsha Mehta, Chief of Staff
JoAnn Petanovich, Ancillary Services
Michael Selfridge, Chief of Staff's Office
Carol Weitzel, Transitional Care
Robert Wilhite, Facility Management
Rose Woodward, Office of the Director
Laurie Young, Business Office

35 years

David Bembem, Ancillary Services
Bev Brown, Business Office
Donald Clark, Facility Management
James Fortuna, Ancillary Services
Doug George, Business Office
Rebecca Henry, Facility Management
Ed Kemper, Facility Management
Carol Knox, Chief of Staff's Office
Sandra Pearce-Mato, Business Office
Gary Piper, Ancillary Services
Carol Niggel, Business Office

(The employees listed achieved these milestones during the 4th quarter of Fiscal Year 2007 and the 1st and 2nd quarter of Fiscal Year 2008.)