

HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS

U.S. Army Veteran Gary Boylan celebrates 9 months clean from addiction this December, as well as a new home, new job, and an opportunity to celebrate the holiday season with his children and grandchildren. Gary's own desperation and commitment, along with the VA's support has helped him get to where he is today.

When he first came to VA Butler Healthcare, Gary had no job, no money, and was living in his aunt's house rent-free. He came for primary care, as well as services in the Center for Behavioral Health, attending groups and seeing a therapist to

work on his addiction. In March 2012, he stayed at VA Butler's Domiciliary (Dom) to work on his recovery. By December of 2012, he had relapsed.

Gary became "desperate for change" and entered the Domiciliary for a second time almost exactly two years later in March 2014. "My desperation for change was the first step in getting me involved in serious recovery. Two years ago, when I came to the Dom they told me things I didn't want to hear, and I didn't want to listen. I wasn't really 'ready.'"

Things were much different for Gary during his second stay at the Domiciliary. "If you do what it takes, the Domiciliary can be a real life-changer—and, the staff

at the Dom are probably the most caring and understanding group I have met at any of the rehab I have been in, and there have been many."

After leaving the Dom this fall, Gary was working, and received assistance from HUD-VASH and Soldier On for housing. "I have a very nice two-bedroom apartment now." In addition to the new home, Gary is transitioning into a new job to be a Certified Peer Support Specialist. "The past 60 days have been simply amazing, and I'm really happy with where I am."

Gary encourages Veterans to ask for help. "There are lots and lots of programs, designed specifically for those of us that are homeless or were homeless, are in recovery, or even just struggling with 'Do



I really want to be clean? I had to be willing to say, 'I need help.' There is help available; Veterans just have to ask for it."

We can ALL do something to end Veteran homelessness this holiday season. Explore va.gov/homeless to learn about VA's programs for Veterans, or contact VA Butler's Healthcare for Homeless Veterans Program Coordinator at 800-362-8262 Ext. 4437.

“I have a very nice two-bedroom apartment now. I'm really happy with where I am.” —Gary Boylan, U.S. Army Veteran

THIS MONTH IN HISTORY...DECEMBER

- 3 A test engineer for Sema Group sends the world's first text message, using a personal computer and the Vodafone network [*"Annie" is coming soon, and will give VA patients the option to receive personalized and targeted text messages from VA...stay tuned!*] (1992)
- 10 American Veterans of WWII (AMVETS) is founded (1944)
- 24 A treaty of peace between the United States and Great Britain, ending the War of 1812, is signed at Ghent, Belgium (1814)
- 25 The General Court of Boston levies a five shilling fine on anyone caught "observing any such day as Christmas" (1651)
- 28 The Pledge of Allegiance is recognized (1945)
- 29 A Christmas truce is observed in Vietnam, while President Johnson tries to get the North Vietnamese to the bargaining table (1965)



THANK YOU VETERANS, AND HAPPY HOLIDAYS!

As we celebrate this holiday season, VA Butler Healthcare wants to say a special thank you to our Veterans, past and present, who sacrifice so much for our privileges, comforts and well-being. Thank you for all you do, and have a blessed holiday.



'TIS THE SEASON FOR INCLEMENT WINTER WEATHER

Veterans, keeping safe this winter is easier if you think and plan ahead. Always keep an eye on the local weather report, and if the National Weather Service puts out an advisory against traveling or issues an official recommendation, follow it!

Five tips to help keep you safe during winter weather:

- **Think ahead for your prescriptions.** When a winter storm hits, you can be stranded without access to a pharmacy. Stay ahead of schedule and have an extra supply of your prescriptions. My HealthVet's online Prescription Refill (www.myhealth.va.gov) lets you renew and track your prescriptions online.
- **Check your carbon monoxide detector.** As the temperature drops, home heating usage rises and so do the risks for carbon monoxide exposure. Make sure that you have a working carbon monoxide detector with fresh batteries and avoid "The Silent Killer," carbon monoxide.
- **Stock your pantry and have water on hand.** When a winter storm strikes, you may not be able to make it to your local grocery store. Be prepared by keeping your pantry stocked with healthy dry goods. Safe, clean drinking water also should be stored in your home in case your water pipes freeze and burst.
- **Dress for the weather.** If you must go outside or if you lose your heat, be sure to dress to preserve your body heat.
- **Prepare your car.** Get your vehicle ready by having it thoroughly checked by a mechanic. During the winter, pay special attention to the antifreeze levels and functionality of the heating system.

TRAVEL LESS WITH TELEHEALTH

Bundling up in warm clothes, scraping ice off your vehicle, and navigating treacherous roads covered in snow—it is winter time again in Western Pennsylvania. Traveling in winter weather is not pleasant, and can even be dangerous during severe winter weather. With VA Butler's Telehealth programs, we are working to bring health care closer to you, alleviating some of the stress winter travel often brings.

Telehealth at VA Butler helps ensure you get the right care in the right place at the right time — and aims to make your home into the preferred place of care, whenever possible. VA Butler is always expanding telehealth services and adding new programs. Talk with your health care team at VA Butler; call VA Butler's Telehealth Coordinator at 724.477.5037, or visit www.butler.va.gov/services/Telehealth.asp for more information. Remember, if you need to travel this winter, *be safe!*



NEED HELP STAYING HEALTHY BEFORE, DURING, AND AFTER THE HOLIDAYS?

Check out www.butler.va.gov/services/Health_and_Wellness.asp to learn more about VA Butler's fitness classes, Wellness Center, MOVE! program, My HealthVet, and more!

We want to hear from you! Email amanda.kurtz2@va.gov to share your story with us!

EVENTS

What's going on at VA Butler Healthcare each month? From free fitness classes five days a week to weekly and monthly support groups, there's always something going on at VA Butler. Keep up-to-date with the latest news, events, and more by visiting our website www.butler.va.gov and checking out the VA Butler calendar —www.butler.va.gov/calendar.asp. Also "like" or follow us on our social media pages to stay connected. Happy Holidays and we look forward to seeing you in 2015!



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