

Full Circle

Official Newsletter of VA Butler Healthcare



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Perspective from the **Director**

THE VA IS IMPLEMENTING NEW AND WONDERFUL THINGS due to VA Secretary Shenseki's vision of transforming the VA to focus more on you, the Veteran. The Guiding Principles for this transformation include being VETERAN centric, results driven focusing on access and quality of care for the VETERAN, and forward driven by anticipating VETERAN needs and proactively meeting them. Following these principles, VA Butler Healthcare is developing and enhancing programs to better meet the diverse needs of Veterans. The "one size fits all" approach is no longer appropriate. We are all individuals, with unique needs, and what may be best for one person may not be best for another.

Focusing on the diverse needs of Veterans, we have begun to transform some of our programs and services ...and add additional programs. For example, in December 2009, we opened a new Community Based Outpatient Clinic in Cranberry Township, Pennsylvania, to improve access to care for the Veterans who reside in that area. We have, and are developing further, a Women's Health Clinic to provide coordinated care for the increasing number of women Veterans into the VA. And, we have implemented the Veterans Justice Outreach Program that helps to divert Veterans to treatment in lieu of incarceration or help Veterans re-enter the community after incarceration. These noted examples are just a few of the options and choices that are enabling Veterans to develop a healthcare plan that is right for them.

As with any transformation, key to its success is the continual development of staff to model these principles...and VA Butler Healthcare employees and volunteers are certainly exemplifying these principles through the good work they do each and every day. High quality care and services are gleaned from staff who pursue continual improvement through training, higher education and who are empowered to action.

I am excited about the future of VA Butler Healthcare and what we are, and will do, to make the lives of Veterans better. And I want you to know that we are YOUR VA, meeting YOUR specific needs now and in the years to come.

Patricia Nealon
Medical Center Director

on the cover

In the next issue of Full Circle, read about John Harding's personal journey from homelessness and how the VA's Homeless Veterans Program and local community service partnerships are working together to aid Veterans in the fight against homelessness.

To submit articles, editorials, letters or story ideas for possible inclusion, please contact Paula McCarl at 724-285-2575 or email at Paula.McCarl@va.gov.

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Stats

As of 3/31/2010
(1st & 2nd Qtrs., Fiscal Year 2010)

Number of
Veterans Served

15,854

Number of
Outpatient Visits

60,847

Number of
Unique Patients

15,854

Number of
Inpatients Treated

210

Number of
Employees

644

Number of
Volunteers

523

Number of
Volunteer Hours

19,859

Health Care Reform Will Not Affect Veterans

Recently, the House of Representatives passed bills H.R. 3590 and H.R. 4872 in order to provide millions of Americans more affordable and available health coverage. Many Veterans are asking: "How will this new law change the healthcare they already receive through the Department of Veteran Affairs?"

According to VA Assistant Secretary Tammy Duckworth, it won't change their quality of healthcare at all. "Let me be unambiguous," stated Duckworth in a statement provided by the White House. "The healthcare that Veterans receive through the VA system, including dependents of Veterans enrolled in the CHAMPVA program, will be safe and sound under health reforms. The Secretary of Veteran Affairs would continue to maintain sole authority over the system and for enhancing the quality and access for all eligible Veterans."

Veterans who receive their health care through VA Butler Healthcare will see no change in the high quality services that they have always received. In fact, Veterans are finding increasing commitments to the programs that are being extended to our nation's heroes.

The Department of Veteran Affairs has added additional care eligibility for Vietnam Veterans who are assumed to have been exposed to Agent Orange, new Gulf War illness presumptions, and the largest budget increase in 30 years.

Representative Bob Filner (D-California), Chairman

of the House Committee on Veteran Affairs, affirmed Congress' commitment to ensuring the public that the new health care reform will not affect Veteran benefits. "This plan will not jeopardize the current health care services and benefits provided by the VA. We will keep our promise to our nation's heroes of the past, present and future."

Currently, VA Butler Healthcare serves over 18,000 of the 56,000 Veterans living in Armstrong, Butler, Clarion, Mercer and Lawrence counties. VA Butler would like to see every eligible Veteran receive their care through their system. "Our job is to provide the best health care possible for our Veterans," said VA Butler Healthcare's Director Patricia Nealon. "Many Veterans don't even know that they are eligible to be seen here or how many great programs we have available to make their lives better."

"Fears that Veteran's health care and TRICARE will be undermined by the health reforms legislation are unfounded," stated Secretary of Veteran Affairs Eric Shinseki. "We pledge to continue to provide the men and women in uniform and our Veterans the high quality health care they have earned."

VA Butler Healthcare is the provider of choice for over 18,000 Veterans throughout Armstrong, Butler, Clarion, Lawrence and Mercer counties; and parts of Ohio. With over 600 employees, VA Butler Healthcare provides primary care, specialty care, mental health and social support services to our nation's Veterans.

VA Butler Hosts 1st Post Deployment Health Re-Assessment

VA Butler Healthcare, in conjunction with the Pennsylvania National Guard and the Department of Defense (DOD), hosted its first Post Deployment Health Re-Assessment (PDHRA) at the facility's main campus on Sunday, January 24, 2010. There were 240 service members who participated in the post deployment re-assessment event.



The purpose of the assessment was to evaluate and address any issues relative to the medical and/or mental health condition of service members prior to,



and upon return from, deployment. Additionally, hosting the program at a VA facility helps to ensure a smooth transition into the VA healthcare system by enrolling service members and/or scheduling VA appointments as necessary on the spot, providing important information about VA services, benefits and other community programs, and familiarizing the service member with the facility. During the event, 69 service members were enrolled.

Any Veteran and current Operation Enduring Freedom/Operation Iraqi Freedom (OEF/OIF) Service Member who would like more information about enrollment, VA programs and benefits, should contact Bill Cress, Program Manager, at 724-285-2493.

The Veterans Justice Outreach Program is an initiative that offers a therapeutic treatment option to Veterans facing incarceration and examines the many facets that can, and often do, lead to inappropriate, illegal behavior. The ongoing Operation Enduring Freedom/Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF/OEF) wars have yielded many Veterans who are returning from war with incidences of substance abuse, domestic violence, PTSD, Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI), employment, depression, anxiety, suicidal inclinations, redeployment and other issues that are affecting not only their well-being, but the well-being of their families and friends. The transition from military to civilian life is sometimes difficult for Veterans to manage whether they were exposed to combat or not. Veterans often isolate themselves and may turn to inappropriate behavior (i.e. substance abuse) as a coping mechanism to deal with what they experienced in the military. The war's unpopularity has resulted in enlistment standards being relaxed over the past few years to allow recruitment of those with criminal records, commonly referred to as the moral waiver process. As was a similar practice used during the Vietnam Era, these Veterans are encountering the Criminal Justice System (CJS) post-deployment or post-discharge and are in need of a treatment alternative to incarceration. Thus, the emergence of Veteran's Courts.

VETERANS JUSTICE OUTREACH PROGRAM

Within the Pennsylvania Court system, as well as across the nation, Veteran's Courts are a growing therapeutic jurisprudent approach; and, are challenging the traditional roles of Judges, Courts, Jail Corrections Counselors, Warden's, County Sheriff's, State Police, Probation Officers, Police Chief's and Police Officers and Department of Veterans Affairs staff to develop and implement unique collaborations, alternatives

and sanctions in an effort to address the needs of military Veterans who turn to various crimes in the aftermath of military service. The Veteran's Courts are a special docket within the court system and specifically target Veterans charged with non-violent felony offenses. The Veteran's Courts are very similar to the Mental Health, Drug and DUI Courts in structure and processing, with the exception that it is for Veteran's only.

Veteran's Courts address the needs of all Veterans who are willing and able to abide by the court sanctions and who are willing to make the necessary changes in their lives. The need for intervention, therapeutic services and treatment related to their military service has drastically increased in the last several years, especially with the impact of the OEF/OIF wars amid a turbulent economy. The rationale behind this assumption is based on the psycho-social issues of combat PTSD, non-combat PTSD (military sexual trauma), economic hardships, substance abuse, domestic violence and readjustment. Most of these Veterans are generally law-abiding, but as the pressures of these noted issues increase so does the likelihood of criminal behavior.

In traditional courts, an offender is sentenced if found guilty. Alternative courts, such as Veteran's Courts, offer qualified participants an opportunity to participate in court-supervised, community-based treatment in lieu of typical criminal sanctions. Some studies on drug courts have shown a lower recidivism rate and cost savings than traditional court approaches. All parties in these courts work together toward



a holistic outcome that focuses on recovery and support rather than incarceration. Generally, these alternative courts and VA staff meet routinely with the Veterans for case management and progress documentation. Some court systems may assign

There are key elements that make up the Veteran's Court. These elements are:

1. **Local County Courts, Police, Pre-Trial, Jails and/ or Magistrate Jurisdiction's**
2. **A reliable mechanism to verify Veteran's status**
3. **Court liaison to interface with the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)**
4. **Development and implementation via a partnership between court systems, corrections, police, VA and other advocate parties**
5. **Treatment, mentoring, monitoring, advocacy and support**
6. **Availability of programs to all Veterans from all era's of service**

a mentor or adviser to assist with the Veterans recovery and monitor their progress. Once the requirements or sanctions have been completed, charges may be reduced and/or the case may be dismissed or expunged. On the other hand, failure to meet the requirements or sanctions may result in the Veteran facing their original criminal charge(s) and possibly jail and/ or imprisonment.

In 2008, the first Veteran's Court was established in Buffalo, New York, by Judge Robert Russell. Since then, Veteran's Courts have opened in: Orange and Santa Clara Counties in California; Tulsa, Oklahoma; Rochester, New York; and Anchorage, Alaska. With most jurisdictions in these locations encountering 100-150 Veterans per month. Veteran's Courts are soon to open in Pennsylvania with operations in Pittsburgh, Philadelphia and Scranton, and later in Chester and Montgomery Counties. On February 3, 2010, the first meeting of a statewide task force on Veterans and the Criminal Justice System was held in Pennsylvania. The task force is co-chaired by Justice Seamus McCaffery, Supreme Court of Pennsylvania, and Mr. Michael Moreland, Director, Veterans Integrated Services Network (VISN) 4.

To learn more about the program, log onto the Veterans Treatment Court Clearinghouse at: <http://www.nadcp.org/learn/veterans-treatment-court-clearinghouse> and the Pre-Trial Justice Institute at: <http://www.pretrial.org/SpecialTopics/Pages/Veterans.aspx>. For more information about the Veterans Justice Outreach Program at VA Butler Healthcare, persons can contact **Brad Schaffer** at (724) 285-2240 and/or email: Brad.Schaffer@va.gov.



Coordinating the Veterans Justice Outreach Program at VA Butler Healthcare is Brad Schaffer. He has over 24 year's federal service and is a USMC Veteran. Schaffer has developed a particular expertise with incarcerated Veterans & re-entry, diversion, domestic violence prevention and fatherhood programs for Veterans. He is a Licensed Master Social Worker (LMSW) and Board Certified Diplomat (BCD) in Clinical Social Work. Since September 2009, Schaffer has encountered 221 Veterans with various criminal charges and convictions. These Veterans are experiencing issues such as probation, child support, homelessness, medical, drug and alcohol, domestic abuse, income and mental health. "Sometimes incarceration is not the answer and it can even make things worse for the Veteran," states Schaffer. "The Veterans Justice Outreach Program seeks to educate all those involved in the justice system about the underlying effects of a person's behavior and that treatment, rather than imprisonment, can be a more effective means of rehabilitation." Schaffer does reiterate that the success of the program is dependent upon the Veteran's willingness to abide by the rules and requirements of the treatment plan and their willingness to make changes in their lifestyle.



Women Veterans

This is the beginning of an on-going series saluting women Veterans—their unique accomplishments and their perspective on their military service. Look for more interesting and exciting stories in upcoming issues.

Her Story

VA LAUNCHES PROGRAM

To commemorate the lasting and profound contributions of women Veterans, the VA launched an extended campaign stemming from Women's History Month in March that will celebrate the accomplishments of women Veterans through the "Her Story" program. The goal of "Her Story" is to encourage VA program offices and facilities to acknowledge and honor the service of women Veterans. VA's Center for Women Veterans is working with the National Foundation of Women Legislators (NFWL) to encourage recognition of women Veterans in every state of the Union through the "Her Story" campaign.

VA headquarters kicked off the "Her Story" program on March 11, with a Salute to Women Veterans and Women Veteran employees. The Center for Women Veterans has asked women Veteran employees to submit their photos and military history summaries to be shared during the course of the campaign. The Center encourages VA facilities across the nation to find ways to share the stories of their local women Veterans with special events, such as exhibits highlighting women Veterans, showing the "Lioness" documentary film (available in VA Libraries), and sharing written narratives in newsletters and other local media.

The Center also asks that VA facilities encourage women Veterans to submit their oral histories to the Women in Military Service for America (WIMSA) Memorial (<http://www.womensmemorial.org/index.html>) and the Library of Congress' Veterans History Project (<http://www.loc.gov/vets/>). Both Web sites provide guidance in offering oral histories and background information on Veterans.

The VA "Her Story" campaign will continue with special events on Women's Equality Day in August and Veterans Day in November.

JANIE L. FRANKLIN

Enlisted in the United States Air Force as an Inventory Management Specialist and served for 20 years achieving the rank of TSgt. Franklin is currently working at VA Butler Healthcare as a Certified Medical Supply Technician. Of her military service, Franklin comments: "I joined the United States Air Force during the Vietnam Conflict. I strongly believed in our country and felt the need to give it my best. What I got in return was discipline, a vocation, a quality education, travel that opened up whole new worlds for me, and a permanent family of friends that span the globe. Joining the Air Force was without a doubt the best decision I ever made."



Her Story

PAULA MCCARL

Enlisted in the United States Air Force as a Lawenforcement Specialist serving from 1986-1990 at Eglin Air Force Base in Fort Walton Beach, Florida, achieving the rank of E-3, Senior Airman. McCarl currently is employed with VA Butler Healthcare working as a Voluntary Services Specialist/Public Affairs and is a member of the Community Relations Team. Of her military career, McCarl states: "When I tell people that I was a police officer in the military, they can't believe it. My voice is not that authoritative. Though being a police officer was not my first choice as a career, I do not regret it. My decision introduced me to my husband of 19 years and gave me our daughter, Erica. I learned a lot from the military and was given many opportunities to grow as a person and to fulfill my educational pursuits. I have always had great admiration and respect for those who served, and that has not changed."



ROSA R. RODGERS

Enlisted in the United States Marine Corps as an Administrative staff serving four years ('84-'88) at 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing (3rd MAW) El Toro, California, achieving the rank of E-4. She worked in Personnel ensuring Marines were eligible to be considered for a special duty (Drill Instructor, Recruiter, Reserve Center, or Security Guard). Rosa is currently employed with VA Butler Healthcare working as a Program Analyst with The Office of Information & Technology. Of her military service, Rodgers recalls that "it was a quick way to learn a solid work ethic, self-discipline, and to run many miles!" The decision to join the military enabled me to work alongside many different ethnic groups with varied cultural backgrounds, apply benefits to earn a college degree, purchase a home, meet my husband (retired USMC '92), and to be able to reflect on a unique life-experience.



Women Veterans Health Program

Focused health care services for women in the VA date back to 1982 when the Women Veterans Advisory Committee was appointed to oversee and correct system inequities for women in the VA system. The Veterans Health Care Act of 1992 enabled the VA to dramatically improve its programs for women Veterans and move toward a goal of establishing state-of-the-art facilities and programs that focus on women's health. The legislation authorized VA to provide gender-specific services, general reproductive health care and sexual trauma counseling to eligible women.

Services for women have steadily expanded and improved and the VA has responded to growing numbers of women Veterans by developing programs and facilities to meet their health care needs. Today, the Women Veterans Health Program encompasses all VA facilities with comprehensive health care for women Veterans as the rule, rather than the exception. The Women Veterans Health Program Strategic Plan guides efforts to ensure that women Veterans receive the care they need.

Today, Women Veterans Program Managers at every VA facility are coordinating and developing comprehensive primary care programs for women while VA researchers across the country study and work on solutions to the impact military service has on women.

VA Butler Healthcare is committed to meeting the unique needs of female Veterans by delivering the highest quality healthcare to each woman—while offering her the privacy, dignity, and sensitivity to gender specific needs that she deserves.

Brenda Sprouse, RN, BSN, the Women Veterans Program Manager for VA Butler Healthcare, is responsible for helping women Veterans maneuver through the health care system, maintaining continuity of care and care coordination among the various health-care disciplines. "My role is to advocate for women's healthcare and to insure that women Veterans are getting the services they need—the services they deserve—when they need it. This is even more imperative given the fact that more and more women are seeking the VA for their healthcare," comments Sprouse. VA Butler Healthcare has seen a steady increase in the number of women Veterans registering for care. In 2009 for example, there were 569 women Veterans enrolled at VA Butler Healthcare representing a 5% increase from 2008 and a 12% increase from 2007.

Looking towards the future, VA Butler Healthcare has and will continue to enhance and improve services to women Veterans providing them with choices to better meet their diverse healthcare needs. VA Butler's new state-of-the-art Health Care Center (expected completion date of 2013) will include a section designated specifically for women Veterans. "Our goal is to provide you, the Veteran, with quality care that fulfills your specific needs ...to provide you with options for healthcare that is right for you in a comfortable and private environment," comments Patricia Nealon, Director of VA Butler Healthcare.

For more information about the Women Veterans Healthcare Program at VA Butler, interested persons should contact **Brenda Sprouse**, Women Veterans Program Manager, at **724-285-2756** or email **Brendalee.Sprouse@va.gov**. Additional information about women's healthcare can also be obtained by logging onto **www.publichealth.va.gov/womenshealth**. Information about benefits can be obtained by contacting the Veterans Benefit Administration at **1-800-827-1000** or by going to **www.vba.va.gov**.



In addition to the support and care coordination by the Women Veteran's Program Manager, the Women Veteran's Healthcare Program at VA Butler Healthcare consists of:

PRIMARY CARE SERVICES

General healthcare needs are provided through the Veteran's Primary Care Team and consists of:

- Primary Care
- Rehabilitation and Prosthetics
- Osteoporosis Screenings & Treatment
- Wellness & Healthy Living
- Nutrition & Weight Management
- Smoking Cessation

GYNECOLOGY SERVICES

VA Butler Healthcare has a dedicated women's health team providing general gynecology services. These services may be provided through a fee basis referral program. A consult is required from the Veteran's PCP for a referral to an outside provider. Services include:

- Annual Exam
- Cervical Cancer Screening
- Prenatal Care
- Cone biopsy
- IUD Insertions
- Mammograms
- Maternity Care
- Birth Control
- Menopause Evaluation & Treatment
- Infertility Evaluation & Treatment

COUNSELING SERVICES

Mental Health services are provided through the VA's Center for Behavioral Health in a confidential and safe out-patient setting for issues such as:

- Stress
- Depression
- Violence & Abuse
- Military Sexual Trauma
- Parenting & Caregiver Issues

VA Hires Outpatient Clinic Leadership

VA Butler Healthcare hired Dr. William Nowotny as Assistant Chief of Staff and promoted James Torok as the Health Systems Coordinator for VA Outpatient Clinics. With approximately half of the 18,000 Veterans treated by VA Butler at its five Outpatient Clinics—in Ford City, Foxburg, Cranberry Township, New Castle and Hermitage—Dr. Nowotny and Mr. Torok will directly oversee the quality of service and healthcare for Veterans cared for in those locations.

Dr. Nowotny, a ten-year navy Veteran and resident of Mount Jackson, Pennsylvania, has been with the Veteran Healthcare Administration for three years. Prior to arriving at VA Butler Healthcare he was a primary care physician at the James E. Van Zandt Altoona VA Medical Center.

James Torok, a native of Erie, Pennsylvania, has been with VA Butler Healthcare for two years. Previously, Mr. Torok worked as the Social Worker for all of the outpatient clinics and has extensive experience meeting the unique needs of Veterans.

All of VA Butler Healthcare's outpatient clinics provide primary care, behavior health services, smoking cessation counseling, routine laboratory services, physical exams, weight management, and more.

The clinics offer these services for the convenience to the Veteran.

Veterans interested in enrolling for healthcare services should call the registration office at (800)-362-8262. Veterans, already enrolled at the VA Butler Healthcare Center, who wish to receive services at one of the five outpatient clinics, should contact their Primary Care Provider.

Community Based Outpatient Clinics

Armstrong County VA Outpatient Clinic

Klingensmith Building
313 Ford City, Suite 2B
Ford City, PA 16226
(724) 763-4090

Relocated

Clarion County VA Outpatient Clinic

AC Valley Medical Center
855 Route 58, Suite 1
Parker, PA 16049
(724) 659-5601

Cranberry Township VA Outpatient Clinic

Freedom Square
1183 Freedom Road, Suite A101
Cranberry Township, PA 16066
(724) 741-3131

New

Lawrence County VA Outpatient Clinic

Ridgewood Professional Centre
1750 New Butler Road
New Castle, PA 16101
(724) 598-6080

Michael A. Marzano VA Outpatient Clinic

295 North Kerrwood Dr.,
Suite 110
Hermitage, PA 16148
(724) 346-1569



Dr. William Nowotny
Assistant Chief of Staff



James Torok
Health Systems Coordinator

Employees with 20 or more years of service

25 Years

Donna Walter
MCCF Office of the Director

Vauna Proper
Facilities Management / Engineering

Theresa Smith
Patient Care Services

Kenneth Kalberer
Office of the Director

Valerie Hansen
Behavioral Health / Domiciliary Services

30 Years

Danny Olcus
Environmental Management Services

Jeffrey Heiger
Facilities Management

35 Years

Sheila Donelson
Human Resources

John Waddell
Environmental Management Services

(The employees listed achieved these milestones at the end of the 2nd quarter of Fiscal Year 2010.)

VA Butler Healthcare is now on Twitter and Facebook!

We are excited about being on Twitter and Facebook. It is a new way of communicating with others—Veterans, volunteers, and the public—about VA Butler Healthcare. We would like you to be our friend. Check us out at:

twitter

<http://www.twitter.com/VAButlerPA>



<http://www.facebook.com/VAButlerPA>

