



# *A Year in Review*

2013 Annual Report





# OUR VISION

It is my privilege to welcome you to VA Healthcare – VISN 4's 2013 annual report. I am honored to serve our Nation's heroes and the outstanding staff across VISN 4 as your interim director during the recruitment period for a new network director.

As you'll see in this annual report, 2013 was filled with defining moments and epic changes throughout our Network. We have achieved impressive milestones during the year, and made substantial progress on our never-ending quest to provide exceptional health care for Veterans throughout our region.

VISN 4 is making a profound impact on the lives of Veterans every day through the vast spectrum of programs and services we offer to improve and maintain their health and well-being. This report provides just a sampling of new and noteworthy programs from which Veterans and their families throughout the Network are benefiting.

We are working hard in VISN 4 to deliver the right care for the right Veteran at the right time – every single time. To me, and to the rest of our Network's more than 13,000 employees, the math is simple. 319,134 Veterans served divided by 10 medical

centers and 43 outpatient clinics equals one personalized, proactive care plan for a Servicemember who has offered his or her life to defend the freedoms all Americans enjoy.

Finally, let me thank our Veteran patients and their families for choosing VISN 4 to be their health care provider. In the coming year, we look forward to providing you world-class health care through engaged, collaborative teams in an integrated environment that supports learning, discovery, and continuous improvement.

**Thank you all for your continued support.**

**Sincerely,**

**Gary W. Devansky**  
*Interim Network Director*

A red rectangular box containing a white, handwritten signature that reads "Gary W. Devansky".





**VA** HEALTH CARE | Defining **EXCELLENCE** in the 21st Century

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# Operating Statistics

Fiscal Year 2013

## Total Budget for 2013

# \$2,467,263,000

Medical Care Collections Fund

## \$117,679,000

Services

## \$442,088,000

Salary and Benefits

## \$1,227,811,000

Lands and Structures

## \$140,981,000

Consolidated Mail-Out Pharmacy

## \$130,414,000

Equipment

## \$89,224,000

Drugs and Medicines

## \$98,506,000

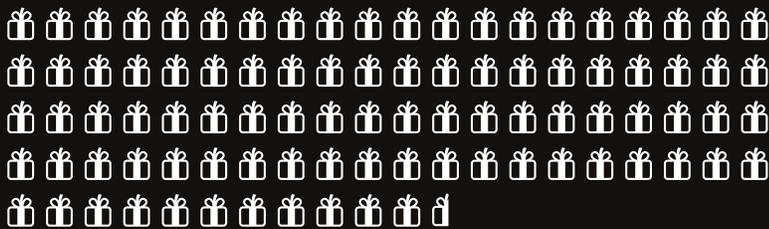
Miscellaneous

## \$338,869,000

## Total Value of Gifts and Donations Received

= 50,000

# \$4,583,089.63



Outpatient Visits

## 3,487,061



Inpatient Admissions

## 38,030



Veterans Served

## 319,134



Women Veterans Served

## 29,046

## Total Operating Beds

# 2,322



Domiciliary

## 477

Medicine

## 338

Psychiatry

## 216

Rehabilitation

## 10

Surgery

## 124

Community Living Center

## 1,115



Prescriptions Filled

## 6.72m



Flu Shots Administered

## 191,466



Operating Rooms

## 35



Outreach Events

## 775



Surgeries Performed

## 20,784



Emergency Dept./ Urgent Care Visits

## 96,226

## Total Employees

= 200

# 13,415



5,730 Volunteers

5,057 Veterans

292 Research Staff

2,558 Nurses

690 FT Physicians

4,435 Trainees



# Research

## Coatesville VAMC

**\$406,837**

FY13 Funding

Projects

**19**

Investigators

**15**

## Clarksburg VAMC

**\$603,155**

FY13 Funding

Projects

**6**

Investigators

**11**

## Philadelphia VAMC

**\$11,484,351**

FY13 Funding

Projects

**262**

Investigators

**113**

## VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System

**\$34,822,504**

FY13 Funding

Projects

**344**

Investigators

**139**

## Wilkes-Barre VAMC

Projects

**8**

Investigators

**10**



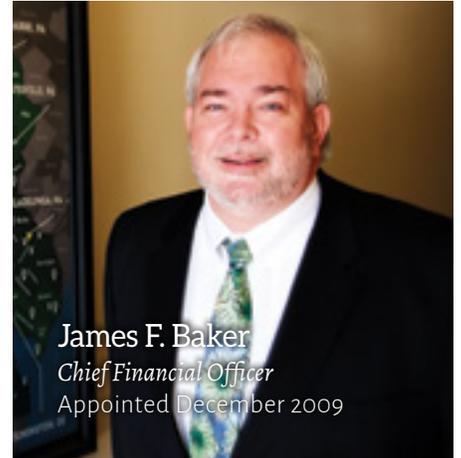
**Gary W. Devansky**  
*Interim Network Director*  
Appointed November 2013



**Carla Sivek**  
*Deputy Network Director*  
Appointed July 2009



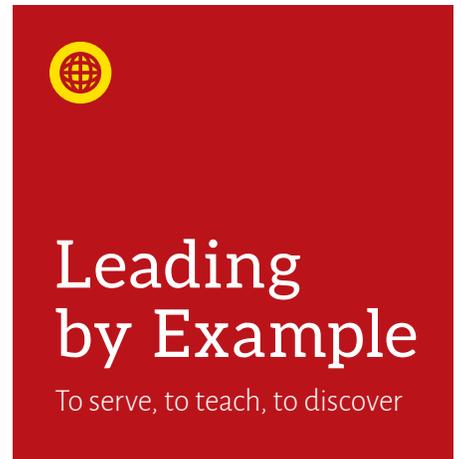
**David S. Macpherson,**  
**MD, MPH**  
*Chief Medical Officer*  
Appointed June 2007



**James F. Baker**  
*Chief Financial Officer*  
Appointed December 2009



**Barbara Forsha, MSN, RN, ET**  
*Quality Management Officer*  
Appointed February 2008



**Leading  
by Example**

To serve, to teach, to discover



**David E. Cowgill**  
*Communications Manager*  
Appointed January 2007



**Kimberly Butler, MPH**  
*Executive Assistant*  
Appointed September 2012

2013

# Highlights

Fiscal Year 2013

# 36,905

Veterans who used a VISN 4 facility for the first time

# \$18,000,000+

VISN 4 Voluntary Service's total resource impact

1

The Department of Veterans Affairs and the Paralyzed Veterans of America will present the 34th National Veterans Wheelchair Games in Philadelphia from August 12 through August 17, 2014. In a culturally-diverse city rich in history, Veterans who are wheelchair athletes will have the opportunity to make history themselves.

“The medical center and the entire city of Philadelphia are gearing up for the event,” says Bethany Purdue, local organizing committee coordinator. “Our community will embrace these Veterans from across the Nation, and will appreciate their competitive spirit.”

Learn more at:

[www.va.gov/opa/speceven/wcg](http://www.va.gov/opa/speceven/wcg)

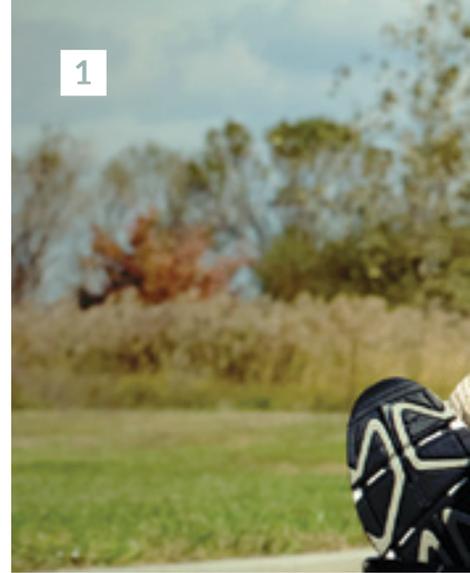
2

VISN 4 collaborates closely with the Veterans Benefits Administration and the Department of Defense to help reduce the backlog of disability claims awaiting VA decisions. We focus on completing compensation and pension examinations for older claims. In 2013, we completed examinations for 9,302 old disability claims in addition to our average monthly workload of 3,400 claims. On average, we were able to complete examinations within 25 days, well within VA's target of 30 days.

3

Three VISN 4 facilities were named top performers on Key Quality Measures by The Joint Commission, the leading accreditor of health care organizations in America. The Altoona and Clarksburg VA Medical Centers were recognized for outstanding care for pneumonia patients. The Wilmington VA Medical Center was recognized by The Joint Commission for exceptional surgical care — the second time the hospital has been recognized for this aspect of its care.

1





*“We’re excited to bring the 34th Games to Philly.”*

**Daniel Hendee**  
Philadelphia VA Director



4

If we add the total value of all donations and estimate an hourly salary\* for volunteers, VISN 4 Voluntary Service’s total resource impact adds up to more than \$18 million this year.

Here, Philadelphia VA Volunteer Skye Miller escorts two canine “volunteers” from the Pals for Life program. The non-profit organization visits the Philadelphia VA Community Living Center twice a month.

*\*We use the independent sector’s estimated value of volunteer time to calculate salary, which was \$22.14 per hour this year.*

5

Wilmington VA Medical Center activated a new mobile clinic to provide enhanced access to primary care for Veterans who live in rural areas, similar to the mobile clinic the Clarksburg VA Medical Center already operates.



Employee Education Budget:

**\$2,000,000+**

VISN 4 spent more than \$2 million in 2013 on employee education to ensure that we continue to provide world-class patient care.

# Health Partners



James E. Van Zandt  
VA Medical Center



PHILADELPHIA VA MEDICAL CENTER  
*Serving those who served.*



Wilmington  
VA Medical Center





Highlights from

# Around the Network

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On the following pages, we'll show you the outstanding statistics (including just one key accomplishment) achieved by each of our individual facilities during the 2013 fiscal year.

James E. Van Zandt VA Medical Center (Altoona)

VA Butler Healthcare

Louis A. Johnson VA Healthcare System (Clarksburg)

Coatesville VA Medical Center

Erie VA Medical Center

Lebanon VA Medical Center

Philadelphia VA Medical Center

VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System

Wilkes-Barre VA Medical Center

Wilmington VA Medical Center



**1**

**James E. Van Zandt VA Medical Center (Altoona)**  
 2907 Pleasant Valley Boulevard  
 Altoona, PA 16602  
 1-877-626-2500  
[www.altoona.va.gov](http://www.altoona.va.gov)  
[www.facebook.com/VAAaltoona](https://www.facebook.com/VAAaltoona)

**Employees:** 657  
**Operating Beds:** 68  
**Outpatient Visits:** 213,442  
**Veterans Served:** 24,521  
**\$119 million**  
 FY13 Budget

The Altoona VA increased home-based primary care staff to provide comprehensive care for Veterans with complex medical, social, and behavioral conditions in their home. This program helps rural Veterans receive personalized care for complex and chronic conditions.

**2**

**VA Butler Healthcare**  
 325 New Castle Road  
 Butler, PA 16001  
 1-800-362-8262  
[www.butler.va.gov](http://www.butler.va.gov)  
[www.facebook.com/VAButlerPA](https://www.facebook.com/VAButlerPA)

**Employees:** 596  
**Operating Beds:** 163  
**Outpatient Visits:** 167,456  
**Veterans Served:** 18,860  
**\$85 million**  
 FY13 Budget

VA Butler Healthcare celebrated the one-year anniversary of its Veterans Justice Outreach partnership with Butler County's Veterans Treatment Courts. Three Veterans have graduated from the program, and another 19 are currently enrolled. An additional partnership with Mercer County Courts is in the works for 2014.

**3**

**Louis A. Johnson VA Healthcare System (Clarksburg)**  
 1 Medical Center Drive  
 Clarksburg, WV 26301  
 1-800-733-0512  
[www.clarksburg.va.gov](http://www.clarksburg.va.gov)  
[www.facebook.com/VAClarksburg](https://www.facebook.com/VAClarksburg)

**Employees:** 897  
**Operating Beds:** 99  
**Outpatient Visits:** 268,692  
**Veterans Served:** 22,047  
**\$146 million**  
 FY13 Budget

In 2013, the VA medical center in Clarksburg proudly unveiled two new displays to honor Veterans. The Medal of Honor Wall recognizes area Medal of Honor recipients from North Central West Virginia. The Wall of Honor recognizes many area Veterans and hospital employees who are Veterans by displaying photographs from their military service.



3



4



5

4

### Coatesville VA Medical Center

1400 Blackhorse Hill Road  
Coatesville, PA 19320  
1-800-290-6172

[www.coatesville.va.gov](http://www.coatesville.va.gov)  
[www.facebook.com/CoatesvilleVAMC](https://www.facebook.com/CoatesvilleVAMC)

**Employees:** 1,335  
**Operating Beds:** 452  
**Outpatient Visits:** 200,404  
**Veterans Served:** 18,729

**\$190 million**

*FY13 Budget*

The Veterans Health Administration selected the Coatesville VA as one of eight pilot sites nationwide to develop a team-based outpatient mental health model of care called the Behavioral Health Interdisciplinary Program. The program has improved access to outpatient mental health care by establishing six interdisciplinary teams, implementing extended hours of care, and increasing available care through the use of telehealth technologies.

5

### Erie VA Medical Center

135 East 38th Street Boulevard  
Erie, PA 16504  
1-800-274-8387

[www.erie.va.gov](http://www.erie.va.gov)  
[www.facebook.com/VAMCErie](https://www.facebook.com/VAMCErie)

**Employees:** 664  
**Operating Beds:** 60  
**Outpatient Visits:** 282,174  
**Veterans Served:** 22,474

**\$116 million**

*FY13 Budget*

Erie VA is reaching more patients outside of VA walls by increasing its use of home-based primary care and telehealth programs. Additional staff in these programs enabled the facility to provide better care to more Veterans in 2013. More than two percent of all patients in primary care teams were enrolled to receive home telehealth services.

5

Erie Veterans  
Using Home-Based  
Primary Care:

**469**

Erie Veterans Using  
Home Telehealth:

**646**



### Lebanon VA Medical Center

1700 South Lincoln Avenue  
 Lebanon, PA 17042  
 1-800-409-8771  
[www.lebanon.va.gov](http://www.lebanon.va.gov)  
[www.facebook.com/VALebanon](https://www.facebook.com/VALebanon)

**Employees:** 1,491  
**Operating Beds:** 191  
**Outpatient Visits:** 470,464  
**Veterans Served:** 43,890

**\$261 million**

*FY13 Budget*

The Lebanon VA is helping get Veterans back to work. In 2013, facility staff hosted an employment opportunities workshop for approximately 30 local college representatives and placement officers to review the benefits of federal employment, and to explain how to use USA Jobs to find vacancies. In addition, Lebanon partnered with the YWCA of Greater Harrisburg to host a job fair at the VA.



### Philadelphia VA Medical Center

3900 Woodland Avenue  
 Philadelphia, PA 19104  
 1-800-949-1001  
[www.philadelphia.va.gov](http://www.philadelphia.va.gov)  
[www.facebook.com/PhiladelphiaVAMC](https://www.facebook.com/PhiladelphiaVAMC)

**Employees:** 2,392  
**Operating Beds:** 423  
**Outpatient Visits:** 543,174  
**Veterans Served:** 58,503

**\$503 million**

*FY13 Budget*

In 2013, the Philadelphia VAMC implemented an Interdisciplinary Medical Perioperative Assessment Consultation and Treatment (IMPACT) clinic to facilitate comprehensive medical assessments for Veterans scheduled for surgery. The clinic provides a centralized, multidisciplinary approach to help Veterans achieve their highest level of health before planned surgeries. The goal is to improve the outcomes of Veterans during and immediately after surgical procedures.



### VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System

University Drive  
 Pittsburgh, PA 15240  
 1-866-482-7488  
[www.pittsburgh.va.gov](http://www.pittsburgh.va.gov)  
[www.facebook.com/VAPHS](https://www.facebook.com/VAPHS)

**Employees:** 3,313  
**Operating Beds:** 582  
**Outpatient Visits:** 674,776  
**Veterans Served:** 67,082

**\$609 million**

*FY13 Budget*

VA Pittsburgh's \$32 million research office building opened in 2013, co-locating most of VAPHS's research functions. The state-of-the-art, collaborative environment, located next to the University of Pittsburgh, will enable the facility to offer Veterans expanded programs and innovative therapies.



8



9



10

9

### Wilkes-Barre VA Medical Center

1111 East End Boulevard  
 Wilkes-Barre, PA 18711  
 1-877-928-2621  
[www.wilkes-barre.va.gov](http://www.wilkes-barre.va.gov)  
[www.facebook.com/VAWilkesBarre](https://www.facebook.com/VAWilkesBarre)

**Employees:** 1,237  
**Operating Beds:** 173  
**Outpatient Visits:** 396,727  
**Veterans Served:** 39,168

**\$240 million**  
 FY13 Budget

Working with the national VA Office of Patient-Centered Care, Wilkes-Barre VAMC worked with leadership, conducted staff information sessions and an organizational assessment, engaged service leadership, and trained a team of employees to champion a cultural transformation toward personalized, proactive, patient-centered care. Improvements this year include a service-level patient advocate program, a courtesy shuttle program, and many new opportunities to hear feedback from Veterans.

10

### Wilmington VA Medical Center

1601 Kirkwood Highway  
 Wilmington, DE 19805  
 1-800-461-8262  
[www.wilmington.va.gov](http://www.wilmington.va.gov)  
[www.facebook.com/WilmingtonVAMC](https://www.facebook.com/WilmingtonVAMC)

**Employees:** 937  
**Operating Beds:** 120  
**Outpatient Visits:** 268,005  
**Veterans Served:** 27,200

**\$184 million**  
 FY13 Budget

Staff at the Wilmington VA used a new healthy teaching kitchen to teach Veterans how to prepare healthy, nutritional, simple, and cost-effective meals at home. With the assistance of a registered dietitian, Veterans learned how to easily modify recipes to decrease sodium, fat, and carbohydrate content, while increasing fiber.

10

Healthy Teaching Kitchens VISN-Wide

8



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Learn more about the stories  
on the following pages at:

[www.visn4.va.gov](http://www.visn4.va.gov)

2013: A Year in Review

2013

A



# Closer Look

# A New Model of Care

Patient Aligned Care Teams help provide personalized, proactive care

Patient Aligned Care Teams (PACT) provide VISN 4 Veterans with a team of health care professionals who partner with them to keep their health status as good as it can be. As part of VHA's personalized, proactive approach to providing health care, PACT teams listen to Veterans about their health care concerns, let them know their options, and help them and their families make their own decisions about their care.

Teams typically include a primary care provider, a clinical associate, a registered nurse care manager, a clerk, the patient, and his or her caregiver. With the support of other health care professionals, they provide an entire community of care for VISN 4 patients.

*The Network has consistently been best in VA in ensuring Veterans see the same health care provider every time they visit their local VA facility.*

In 2013, this occurred 82 percent of the time. And, also in 2013, VISN 4 increased the percentage of times it has contacted Veterans within two days of their hospital discharge by 11 percent.

One of the tools the Network uses to improve the performance of its PACT teams is a virtual collaborative, established in 2012. Twice a month, every member of every primary care PACT team gathers throughout the Network to talk about performance improvement. One session a month is dedicated to topics directly related to the operation of PACT teams; the second discusses clinical issues. Clinical topics in 2013 included chronic opioid therapy; difficult-to-control hypertension; suicide prevention, and kidney disease.

VISN 4 now has more than 400 primary care PACT teams. Many of the teams are among the Nation's top performers. In Fiscal Year 2013, for example, more than a third (36 percent) of the Network's teams were recognized with either silver or gold awards by VA for their performance in implementing PACT.

"What PACT really says to Veterans is that they can come and see us whenever they want," explains Dr. David Macpherson, VISN 4's Chief Medical Officer. "It also says we'll talk to you on the phone a lot more, or via MyHealtheVet's secure messaging feature. And if you're really sick, we'll be checking on you a lot more."



VISN 4 PAC Teams:

# 409

VISN 4 PAC Team Members:

# 1000+





Beginning in January 2013, each primary care PACT throughout the VISN picked a project to work on to improve their service to Veterans.

“They were either focused towards increasing patient satisfaction with their care, or decreasing inpatient utilization of the medical centers,” explains Jennifer E. M. Skoko, management and program analyst for Macpherson’s office.

At the end of the program, in June, three teams from each of VISN 4’s 10 medical centers were chosen to present their projects to the entire group. The teams had begun implementing their projects following the presentation to Veterans.

Because the effort was so successful, a second round of projects is in the works. This round began in October 2013 and will continue through June 2014. Once again, Veterans will be asked for their feedback.



VA offers three types of telehealth technologies, and VISN 4 is among the leaders in the number of Veterans using each of them.

As of the end of November 2013, the Network had more than 67,000 Veterans participating in some form of virtual care, more than 22% of its patient population. In addition, the Network is:

- ▶ *First in the number of Store and-Forward Telehealth encounters. Store-and-forward telehealth is the acquisition and storage of clinical information such as data, images, sound, and video.*
- ▶ *Fifth in the number of Home Telehealth encounters. Home telehealth makes it possible for clinicians to monitor patients in their homes using telephone lines and mobile phones.*
- ▶ *Sixth in the number of Clinical Video Telehealth encounters. Clinical video telehealth connects Veterans with distant providers in real time using video teleconferencing.*



Veterans Using Secure Messaging through MyHealthVet

**53,982**

Messages Exchanged:

**220,000**

[www.myhealth.va.gov](http://www.myhealth.va.gov)



# No Place Like Home

Telehealth, Secure Messaging, E-Consults all bring VISN 4 care closer to Veterans

Virtual care enables more accessible and convenient health care for Veterans through the use of modern technology. It also reduces the time Veterans need to spend in the hospital, and increases access to services without requiring long drives for patients.

“Telehealth is now a really big part of what we do in VISN 4,” explains Jim Torok, VISN 4’s telehealth program manager.

Specially-trained readers at three VISN sites are now able to review dermatology images from anywhere within the Network along with certain locations in VISN 6 and interpret them within 72 hours.

VISN 4 has also begun using IP stethoscopes, which allow clinicians to pick up a patient’s heartbeat and breath sounds over remote distances by use of a peripheral device. And the Network opened its first tele-audiology clinic in Lebanon (another will open in Wilmington in 2014).

Torok pointed to agreements VA has established with two colleges that are part of the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education: Slippery Rock University and Edinboro University. “We’ll be providing remote health care services at those locations to Veterans who attend those universities,” he explains.

Finally, the Network has created a new wheelchair assessment clinic, enabling Veterans to receive the assessments VA requires before issuing them a new wheelchair without having to travel far from their homes.

“We want to make sure we’re offering the services Veterans need,” explains Torok. “We also want to continue increasing the number of non-traditional locations, like colleges and patients’ homes, at which we can now offer care. And we want to make sure the services we offer that are already popular continue to grow and develop.” The program will also increase its use of equipment Veterans already have, such as smart phones, tablets, and other devices, to provide care.

Telehealth is just one of the ways in which



VISN 4 uses technology to expand access and provide patient-centered care.

In 2013, VISN 4 considerably expanded the availability of Secure Messaging, which allows Veterans to communicate electronically with their health care teams on issues relating to appointments, medications, lab results, and routine questions about their health status.

Last year, Veterans could use Secure Messaging only to communicate with their primary care teams. Now, Secure Messaging has been expanded to allow electronic communication with VISN 4 mental health, rehabilitation and prosthetics, and dental providers.

More expansion is planned. “In 2014, we are looking to expand Secure Messaging into some of the administrative areas of our facilities, such as patient advocates, eligibility, fee-basis care, and other sections,” explains Lisa Kendziora, VISN 4 MyHealthVet Coordinator.

The Network is also expanding its services and volume on electronic consultations, or E-Consults. In this program, primary care providers review patient records with specialists — keeping Veterans from having to travel to see those specialists in face-to-face visits.

“We just want to make it easier for all our patients to communicate with their health care teams and become active in their health care,” concludes Kendziora.

# Opening Doors to Dreams

VISN 4 makes progress towards ending homelessness among Veterans

Secretary Eric K. Shinseki has committed the Department of Veterans Affairs to ending Veteran homelessness by the end of 2015.

In Fiscal Year 2013, VISN 4 served 14 percent more homeless Veterans than in the previous fiscal year, and a “point in time” count indicated there were 1,735 currently homeless Veterans throughout the Network — 10.5 percent fewer than in Fiscal Year 2012.

*No one who has served our country in uniform should ever go without a safe and stable place to call home.*

“We’ve gotten a tremendous amount of new resources, funding, and programs to work with,” said William (Bill) Cress, deputy network homeless coordinator.

The Department of Housing and Urban Development - VA Supportive Housing program is a joint effort between HUD and VA to move Veterans and their families out of homelessness and into permanent housing. HUD provides housing vouchers that allow Veterans to rent privately-owned housing, and VA offers eligible homeless Veterans clinical and supportive services through VISN 4 and other health care systems throughout the United States.

In 2013, 1,695 Veterans were housed and supported under this program by VISN 4, 91 percent of the number of vouchers the Network was authorized to offer. At the close of the fiscal year, the Network was authorized an additional 225 vouchers.

VA’s Health Care for Homeless Veterans program reduces homelessness by

conducting outreach to the most vulnerable Veterans who are not currently receiving services, and engaging them in treatment and rehabilitative programs. In VISN 4, the program worked with 16 community-based programs that offered 154 treatment beds for homeless Veterans with serious mental health diagnoses.

And through VA’s Supportive Services for Veterans Families program, VA awards grants to provide non-profit organizations and consumer cooperatives that can provide services to very low income Veterans and their families, including assistance with furniture, transportation, health care, and child care. At the beginning of Fiscal Year 2013, VISN 4 managed seven contracts with providers under this new program — and by the beginning of Fiscal Year 2014 that number had tripled to 22.



## With Justice for All

One innovative program to eliminate Veteran homelessness is the Veterans Justice Outreach (VJO) program. This unique program aims to get former Servicemembers the treatment they need as an alternative to incarceration.

Working together with local courts, VISN 4 connects Veterans with resources to help them combat the problems at the root of their legal troubles, such as behavioral health, substance abuse, or other reintegration issues.

Each VISN 4 medical center has a staff member dedicated to working with justice-involved homelessness. Recently, VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System completed its fourth year of working with the Pennsylvania Veterans Court system. VA Pittsburgh marked the occasion by holding a graduation ceremony for 20 Veterans, including their first female graduate — their largest class ever.



“

*“In 2014, we’ll be working with all the new resources we have, and incorporating them into our work.”*

**William Cress**

Deputy Network Homeless Coordinator



## HUD-VASH

Veterans Housed

**1,695**

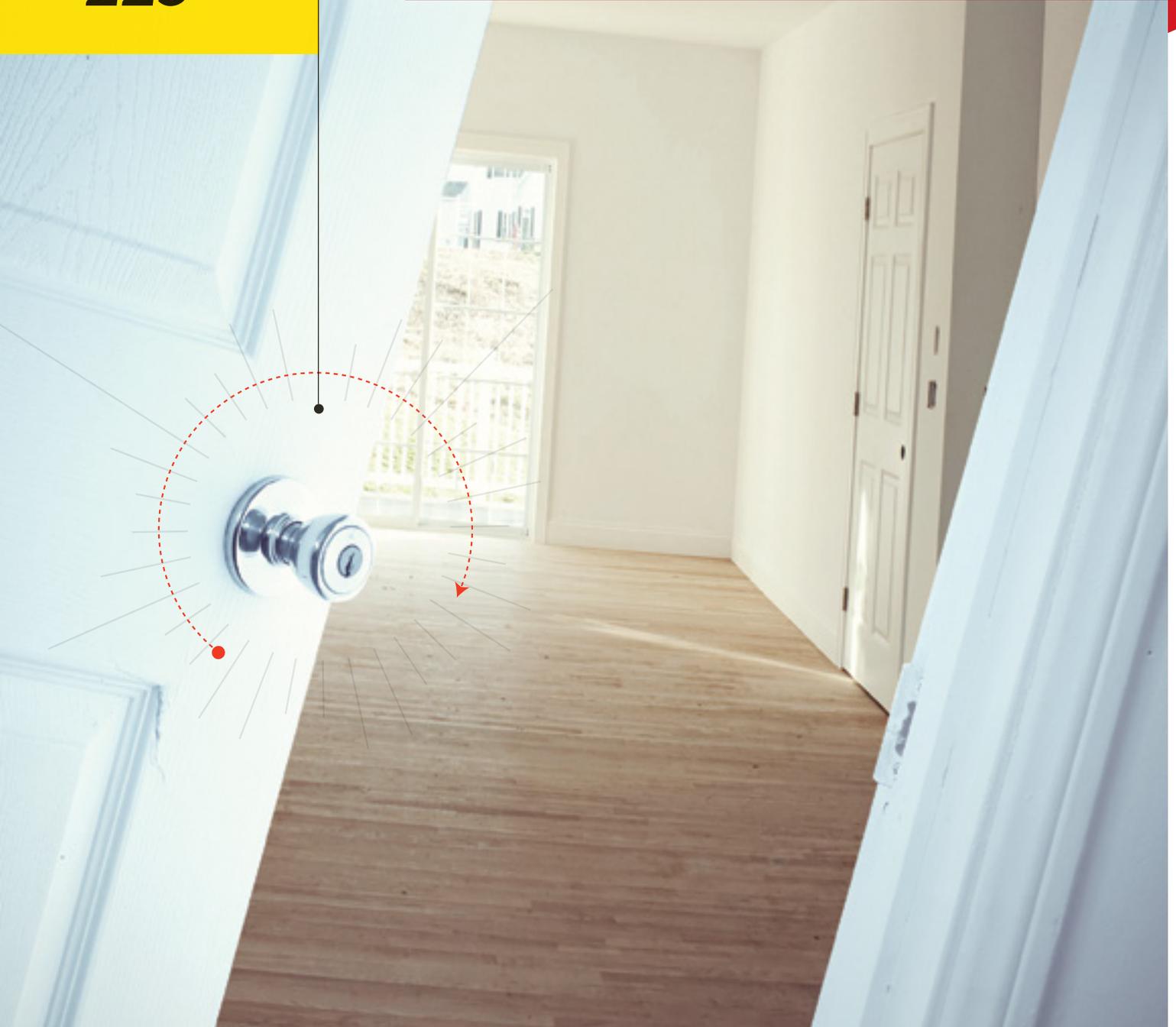
Additional Vouchers  
Received

**225**



## 100 Days of Homes

Philadelphia VA Medical Center participated in the 100K Homes Campaign, a national movement of agencies working together to permanently house homeless Veterans. Working with the City of Philadelphia's Housing Authority and community organizations, facility staff participated in an intensive, 100-day campaign, which led to housing 161 total Veterans, 75 of whom were chronically homeless. Before this, the medical center's housing placement rate averaged just 30 Veterans per month, demonstrating that united efforts made a difference. The team committed to another 100-day campaign, with a new goal to house 189 Veterans in 100 days.





# Suicide Prevention

**Veterans  
Crisis Line**



1-800-273-8255  
PRESS 1

An important aspect of VA mental health care is providing appropriate follow-up to mental health patients within seven days of their discharge from an inpatient program. In 2013, 87 percent of Veterans met that metric, exceeding the Network's 75 percent goal. "That's important," explains Angela Keen, "because the period immediately following discharge from an inpatient psychiatry unit is a period of elevated risk for suicide."

Another suicide prevention initiative unique to VISN 4 is the Network's gun lock initiative, part of the Network's gun safety initiative. In VISN 4, firearms are utilized in approximately 60 percent of completed suicides. The Network recently sent out 20,000 letters to selected VISN 4 Veterans, offering them free gun locks for their legally-owned firearms. Many have already responded positively.

Firearms are a particularly lethal means for suicide. "If you can just buy five minutes, as gun locks do, maybe something will occur during that time that makes a Veteran think differently," Keen clarifies.



Mental Health  
Professionals Hired

**350**

Mental Health Patients  
Provided with a  
Treatment Coordinator

**90%**

# Healthy Minds, Healthy Bodies

VISN 4's mental health programs help Veterans with mental illness reach their full potential

VISN 4 offers a range of treatments and services to improve the mental health of Veterans. All our medical centers and outpatient clinics provide mental health services, and readjustment counseling centers (Vet Centers) throughout the VISN offer additional support to Veterans and their families.

The Network's mental health programs support recovery, with the goal of enabling Veterans with mental health problems to live meaningful lives in their communities and achieve their goals.

According to Angela Keen, Ph.D, VISN 4's mental health liaison, in Fiscal Year 2013, VISN 4 emphasized improved access to mental health care and targeting a reduction in completed Veteran suicides.

"Our expectation is that all Veterans who receive care for mental health issues will be seen within 14 days of their desired appointment date," she explains.

To ensure the standard is met, VISN 4 engaged an "unprecedented number" of new mental health staff, says Keen. "We hired more than 350 mental health professionals throughout the Network, and we exceeded our hiring goal by May 30."

This year VISN 4 worked with VA Pittsburgh to establish a "telemental health hub" in a Pittsburgh suburb. "We reallocated some positions we couldn't fill in areas where it's difficult to find mental health professionals to Pittsburgh," Keen tells us. "They will provide mental health services remotely to VISN 4 locations needing additional mental health resources."

VISN 4 was also one of four networks to pilot a new interdisciplinary team concept for

outpatient care for mental health patients within VA. The program creates teams of mental health providers who provide outpatient care for groups of Veterans, similar to VA's Patient Aligned Care (PAC) Teams. In 2013, the teams were piloted at the Butler, Coatesville, and Lebanon medical centers, and are being rolled out nationwide in 2014.

For Fiscal Year 2014, the Network has already begun hiring peer support specialists to assist in providing mental health care throughout the Network. Peer support specialists are men and women with mental health conditions or co-occurring conditions who have been trained and certified to help others with these conditions, and to help them identify and achieve specific life and recovery goals.

In addition, VISN 4 is working on making mental health care increasingly available in the primary care environment. When Veterans' mental health issues can be successfully managed in primary care through successfully integrating mental health providers with PAC teams and simultaneously utilizing care management practices, Veterans with less complex mental health care needs don't have to make appointments in mental health clinics. This is a more efficient way of providing care and also assures access to mental health specialty care for Veterans with more complex symptoms.



*"We're doing a lot of different things to improve access to care."*

**Dr. Angela Keen**

VISN 4 Mental Health Liason



Laying Out a

# Foundation for the Future

# \$21,300,000

*Spent on new construction throughout VISN 4*



## Building Better Care

# \$144,000,000

*Spent on maintenance and upgrades (more than any of the 20 other VISNs and approximately 10% of VA's national maintenance and upgrade total)*



## Acquiring the Latest Technology

# \$89,200,000

*Spent on new equipment to provide the most modern care*







# THE LAST WORD

VISN 4's 2013 Annual Report has documented some of the important advances and significant accomplishments our Network has made this year in providing health care for the Veterans we are privileged to serve.

**In 2014**, we intend to expand on our ability to provide Veterans with world-class health care, no matter where they live within our area of responsibility.

In particular, we will continue to emphasize the concept of access: the idea that Veterans should not have to wait to receive our care — and that we should not only meet, but exceed, their expectations for timely care.

**In 2014, we will make sure Veterans are seen when they want to be seen.** Once, our standard was to make sure Veterans received appointments within thirty days of the date they wanted to be seen; now our standard is to provide an appointment within fourteen days from the date the clerk starts to look for new appointments.

**We will continue to grow the telehealth component of our care**, by thinking of new ways to provide care that is more convenient using this method. Today, in each of our outpatient clinics, you will find a person whose responsibility it is to maintain the facility's telehealth equipment — and you will find at least one room, maybe more, filled with such equipment, in which a Veteran is talking with a specialist physician at a remote location, or a Veteran is talking to staff from his home.

**Our PACT teams will increase access to care**, by talking to Veterans by phone about their health, and by email, using the

secure messaging function of My HealtheVet.

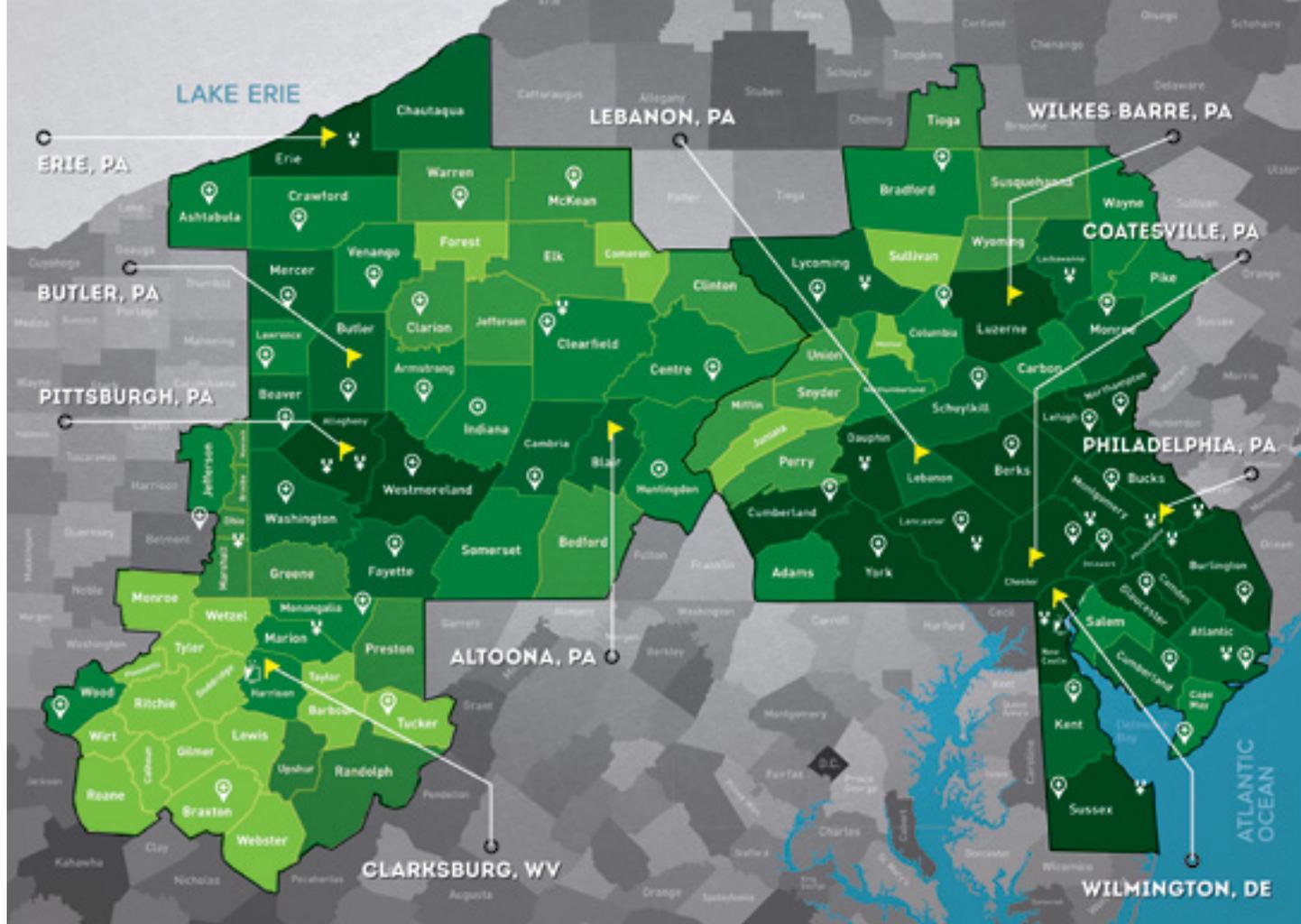
**We will increase our ability to provide non-institutional care**, providing Veterans at risk of hospitalization with more care at home, such as from home health aides, to keep them from going into a nursing home or an assisted living facility. That's another example of how we are increasing access; by providing more services at home than were previously available.

Finally, **we will recommit ourselves to providing transparency, openness, and honesty** in our dealings with Veterans. VA's core values of Integrity, Commitment, Advocacy, Respect, and Honesty — I CARE — define who we are: our culture, our character, and our service. Together, VISN 4's more than 13,000 employees will maintain and reaffirm the trust and confidence Veterans have, or should have, in their health care providers.

We look forward to serving you.

**David S. Macpherson, MD, MPH**  
*Chief Medical Officer*  
VA Healthcare - VISN 4





**James E. Van Zandt VA Medical Center (Altoona)**

- DuBois CBOC
- Johnstown CBOC
- State College CBOC
- Huntington County CBOC (planned)
- Indiana County CBOC (planned)
- DuBois Vet Center

**VA Butler Healthcare**

- Armstrong County CBOC
- Clarion County CBOC
- Cranberry Township CBOC
- Lawrence County CBOC
- Michael A. Marzano VA Outpatient Clinic (Mercer County CBOC)

**Louis A. Johnson VA Medical Center (Clarksburg)**

- Mobile Clinic
- Braxton County CBOC
- Monongalia County CBOC
- Tucker County CBOC
- Wood County CBOC
- Morgantown Vet Center

**Coatesville VA Medical Center**

- Spring City CBOC
- Springfield CBOC

**Erie VA Medical Center**

- Ashtabula County CBOC
- Crawford County CBOC
- McKean County CBOC
- Venango County CBOC
- Warren County CBOC
- Erie Vet Center

**Lebanon VA Medical Center**

- Berks CBOC
- Camp Hill CBOC
- Lancaster CBOC
- Pottsville/Frackville CBOC
- York CBOC
- Harrisburg Vet Center
- Lancaster Vet Center

**Philadelphia VA Medical Center**

- Camden Annex
- Gloucester County CBOC
- Joint Base McGuire-Dix CBOC
- Victor J. Saracini CBOC (Horsham)
- Bucks County Vet Center
- Montgomery County Vet Center
- Philadelphia Vet Center
- Philadelphia Vet Center NE

**VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System**

- Beaver County CBOC

- Belmont County CBOC
- Fayette County CBOC
- Washington County CBOC
- Westmoreland County CBOC
- McKeesport Vet Center
- Pittsburgh Vet Center
- Wheeling Vet Center

**Wilkes-Barre VA Medical Center**

- Allentown CBOC
- Berwick CBOC
- Northampton County CBOC
- Sayre CBOC
- Tobyhanna CBOC
- Williamsport CBOC
- Scranton Vet Center
- Williamsport Vet Center

**Wilmington VA Medical Center**

- Mobile Clinic
- Atlantic County CBOC
- Cape May County CBOC
- Cumberland County CBOC
- Kent County CBOC
- Sussex County CBOC
- Sussex County Vet Center
- Ventnor Vet Center
- Wilmington Vet Center



VA Medical Centers

**10**



Community Based Outpatient Clinics (CBOC)

**43**



Planned CBOCs

**2**



Mobile Clinics

**2**



Vet Centers

**17**

2013

*Annual Report*



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[www.visn4.va.gov](http://www.visn4.va.gov)

