It's a Beautiful Day in Butler PA

Butler VA 2019 Annual Report

VA

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Veterans Health Administration

Butler VA Health Care System

Leadership Team

From Left to Right: Dr. Jo-Anne Suffoletto, Chief of Staff; Kim Ripper, Interim Associate Director for Patient Care Services; Rebecca Wolfe, Associate Director for Operations and Sharon Coyle, Interim Director.

A Letter From The Director

A Successful 2019 –

Mr. Fred Rogers shared this about success: ***"There are three ways to ultimate success: The first way is to be kind. The second way is to be kind. The third way is to be kind."***

The Butler VA Health Care System's 2019 Annual Report highlights many achievements from our year—from successfully implementing the MISSION Act and new Patient Experience (VA PX) initiatives to expanding Whole Health and Connected Care programs.

I encourage you to read through this year's Annual Report and discover all the ways the Butler VA Health Care System is achieving success for our Veterans, not just through statistics and facts, but through the stories of kindness many of our Veterans and their Families have shared with us over this past year.

Thank you to everyone for your support this year, and we look forward to serving and seeing you at the Butler VA in 2020.

Sharon Coyle

Interim Director

Welcome Neighbor!

Veterans are finding an improved, welcoming experience when they go in for care at the Butler VA thanks to the VA Patient Experience (VA PX) initiatives launched by the Veteran Experience Office (VEO) this year.

The Butler VA has implemented several VA PX programs to ensure every employee is trained and focused on providing Veterans not only with the care they need but also with care that is delivered in a manner that is exceptional, consistent, and considerate, some of which include:

WE CARE Rounding –

The Butler VA Leadership Team make "rounds," speaking directly with staff and visitors about the care and services they received. WECARE Rounding enables the employee and Veteran to have a voice and makes Leadership aware of weaknesses and strengths in all departments. It demonstrates commitment to hearing, and listening to, employees and Veterans for improvements that are needed.

Red Coat Ambassadors –

These volunteer ambassadors welcome Veterans and their Families to the Butler VA with a friendly greeting and direct them to their destination. There are currently 18 Red Coat Ambassadors and three Master Ambassadors.

Own The Moment –

This customer experience workshop encourages VA staff to connect with, understand, and help guide Veterans through the moments that matter on their VA journey. The Butler VA has maintained a 95% completion rate for Own The moment Training.

"I Choose VA" Employee Badges –

Standardized VA staff badges that include helpful and interesting information such as individual connections to VA, branch of service, and hometown. These badges serve as another way for staff to connect to Veterans, their Families, and Caregivers. As of July 2019, the Butler VA reached 100% completion!

"10-4" Initiative –

Implemented during Patient Experience Week in April 2019, the 10-4 initiative encourages you to make eye contact and smile when you are within 10 feet of someone, and when you are within 4 feet, offer a friendly greeting. Veteran feedback reflects satisfaction with the welcoming atmosphere at the Butler VA and that "everyone speaks to you when you are here."

New Veteran Orientation Tour –

The New Veteran Orientation Tour offers personalized and customized tours for Veterans including emotional components such as those focused on in Own the Moment Training. An informational folder and bag is provided to each Veteran with key information regarding the facility and services offered at the facility. Additionally, the tour guide becomes a liaison for the Veteran until the Veteran feels more comfortable navigating the system. The tour guide is present for the first appointment, greets the Veteran, and maintains a relationship with the Veteran for the first six months to build and sustain trust and loyalty.

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In Our Neighborhood –

Pride Month –

In recognition of Pride Month in June, the Butler VA and VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System teamed up to participate in Pittsburgh's 2019 Pride Fest, including the Equality March in downtown Pittsburgh. The Butler VA's LGBT Veteran Care Coordinator also hosted the Butler VA's first LGBT health education event in June to improve employee training and awareness.

Photo courtesy of Slippery Rock University.

VITAL with SRU –

The Butler VA partnered with Slippery Rock University (SRU), Clarion University, and Butler County Community College in 2019 to better serve student Veterans through a program called Veterans Integration to Academic Leadership, or VITAL. With VITAL, Butler VA staff make regular campus visits to better serve student Veterans and refer them to VA services.

VIST Field Trip –

Veterans in the Butler VA VIST Support Group travelled to the American Defenders of the Bataan and Corregidor Education and Research Center in Wellsburg, WV, the largest collection of artifacts in the world related to the fall of Bataan and Corregidor. There is a section honoring Abie Abraham (whom our facility is named after), and Abie's wife, Christine, accompanied the group on the trip.

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Veterans Day Parade –

Butler VA Leadership and staff along with the Veteran X Recovery Group participated in this year's Butler County Veterans Day Parade to celebrate National Veterans and Military Families Month. Special activities, events, and stories honoring Veterans and their Families took place all month long, including the annual ceremony for Veteran residents in the Sergeant Joseph George Kusick Community Living Center.

Butler County Stand Down –

Over 100 Veterans registered at the 4th annual Butler County Stand Down event. The Butler VA partnered with the local Butler community to provide homeless Veterans an opportunity to access community resources and receive essential day to day items that many often take for granted. The Butler VA also partnered with Lawrence County for its 9th annual Stand Down event this year.

Toys for Tots –

For the fourth year in a row, Veterans at the Sergeant Joseph George Kusick Community Living Center collected toys to donate to the annual U.S. Marine Corps Reserve Toys for Tots Program. Representatives from the Bantam Marine Corp League and Berkshire Hathaway visited with Veteran residents to pick up this year's donation.

Motivated –

Enhancing Access and Expanding Health Care Options

U.S. Army Veteran Larry Ziegler

Larry is one of several Veterans piloting a new program in the Annie Mobile Application (Annie) at the Butler VA to help with lower back pain. The program was developed at Butler, and the goal is to introduce it nationwide. Larry uses Annie in conjunction with Aqua Therapy at the main facility.

"The Annie App motivates me. I get messages early in the morning and it motivates me to do the exercises they want me to do at home."

Connected Care Led the Nation

The Butler VA's Connected Care Department— Telehealth, My HealtheVet, Secure Messaging, and VA Mobile Apps — expanded the reach of VA health care in 2019 beyond the traditional face-to-face visits, allowing VA health teams to engage with Veterans via virtual visits, enhance access, and overcome challenges to care.

The Butler VA led VISN 4 and the nation for overall Telehealth utilization (14,890 encounters completed via Telehealth) this year! With 5,325 Veterans using My HealtheVet's Secure Messaging, the Butler VA also had higher percentage of active senders than National and VISN 4! Additionally, the Butler VA experienced a 78% increase from last fiscal year for unique patients served via e-consult.

This year we also implemented the Annie VA Mobile App in several program lines to support Veteran self-care and held the first annual Connected Care Fair for Veterans, their Families, and the community with live demonstrations, vendors, giveaways, guest speakers, and more.

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"We get so wrapped up in numbers in our society. The most important thing is that we are able to be one-to-one, you and I with each other at the moment. If we can be present to the moment with the person that we happen to be with, that's what's important."

– Mr. Fred Rogers

MISSION Act Launched

The VA launched its new and improved Veterans Community Care Program on June 6, 2019, implementing portions of the VA Maintaining Internal Systems and Strengthening Integrated Outside Networks Act of 2018 (MISSION Act). The MISSION Act strengthens the nationwide VA Health Care System by empowering Veterans with more health care options.

The Butler VA successfully implemented Title I of the MISSION ACT in 2019, expanding eligibility and access for Veterans with a 70% increase in the amount of care referred to community providers. This has allowed Veterans to receive care closer to home and expanded their options for receiving care. Additionally, the Community Care Program successfully processed 17,356 consults and authorizations for care provided by community providers in FY 2019.

New Services through the Western Market Initiative

Since 2017, the Butler VA has been working to enhance specialty services for Veterans both virtual and on-site as part of the Western Market Initiative. More than 30 clinicians are involved in providing support to the Western Market collaboration in Pittsburgh, Butler, Erie and Altoona. Clinical support staff from these facilities are trained at the Pittsburgh campus by the specialty care teams, ensuring consistent clinical practice and improved communication. As a result of this initiative, the Butler VA began offering these new services to Veterans in 2019:

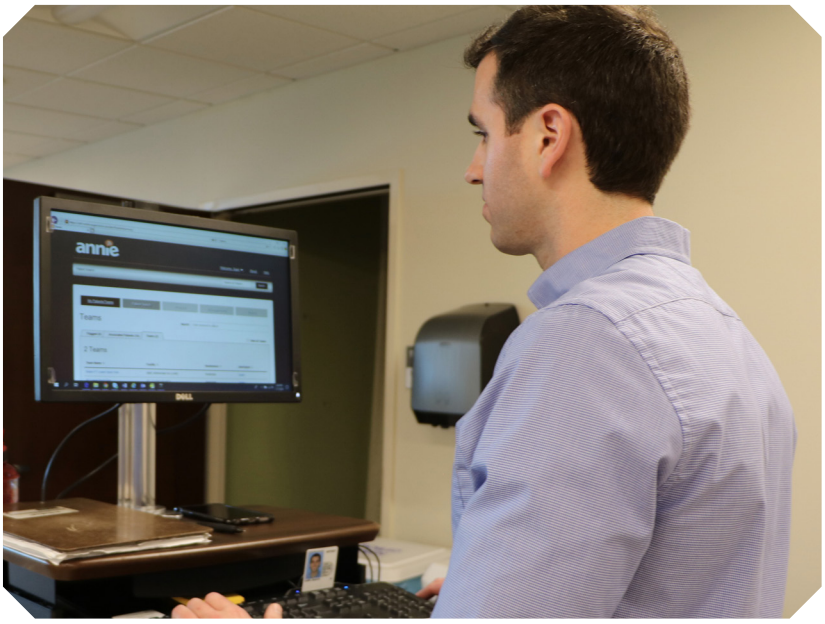
- **Cardiac Rehab**
- **General Pulmonology**
- **Orthopedics**
- **Advanced Wound**
- **Tele CKD (Chronic Kidney Disease)**
- **Tele ENT**
- **Tele GI**
- **Tele Hep (Hepatology)**
- **Tele IMPACT**
- **Tele Kidney**
- **Tele Liver**
- **Tele Neuro (Headache)**
- **Tele Ortho**
- **Tele Pain**
- **Tele Palliative Care**
- **Tele Pharmacy (transplant meds)**
- **Tele Plastic Surgery**
- **Tele Primary Care Hub**
- **Tele Renal**
- **Tele Rheumatology**
- **Tele Survivorship**
- **Tele Whole Health (Chi Gong)**

Women's Health Prioritized

In 2019, the Veterans Experience Committee acknowledged Women's Health as a priority, and as such, the first Women Veteran Input Committee (WVIC) was established. Driven by women Veterans, the committee meets quarterly and several actions from meetings are already being worked on.

To better support women Veterans' long-term health and well-being, including those in rural communities, VA launched a new training program to increase providers' and nurses' knowledge of women's health topics.This program— the Women's Health Mini-Residency for Primary Care Rural Providers and Nurses— launched nationally in June 2018 to staff at rural VA clinical sites. The Butler VA Health Care System hosted this training in May, the first and only facility in VISN 4 to do so.

This year also saw the addition of four women's health providers and two women-Veteran focused events, the annual Women's Winter Wellness Event and a special Women's Walk for Homeless Veterans (as part of the VA2K held in May).



It's You I Like –

Whole Health

U.S. Army Veteran Ben Knight

Ben's experience with VA's Whole Health Program allowed him to share his experience and expertise with others in 2019. He was a guest speaker at the Mental Health Summit talking about Whole Health. He also completed the Pennsylvania State University (Penn State) Extension Master Gardener Program and taught gardening workshops to Veterans at the Butler VA this summer.

"The VA's Whole Health program really resonates with me and my journey. I didn't do well transitioning from the Army to civilian life because I was reluctant to change things about myself. It wasn't until I became aware of self-defeating habits and became willing to change my thoughts and actions was I able to become a better version of myself."

Ben Knight

Whole Health is VA's cutting-edge approach to care that supports your health and well-being. Whole Health centers around what matters to YOU, not what is the matter with you. In 2019, existing Whole Health programs continued to expand, and new programs were added.

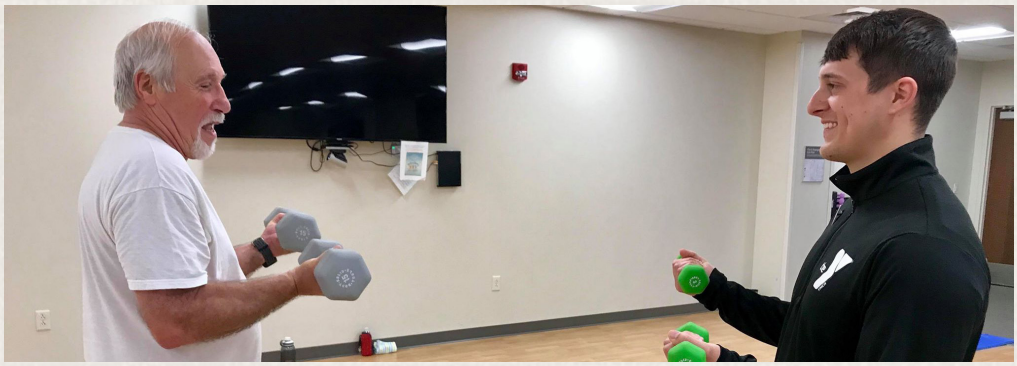
During FY 2019, the Butler VA started offering a 6-week Taking Charge of My Life and Health course at the Domiciliary. This peer-led, group-based program is designed to assist Veterans in exploring their life mission, aspiration, and purpose; learning the practice of mindful awareness; goal setting, skill-building, and self-management of their health and health care; and providing support in a group setting through the process of change. Due to its success, demand, and staffing changes, we were able to begin offering this curriculum at the Abie Abraham VA Clinic in early FY 2020 as well.

Also new for the year, we expanded the Butler VA's Tai Chi program by offering a drop-in class on Thursdays to compliment the 10-week curriculum, hosted five free gardening workshops for Veterans, added a Whole Health Wellness Program Annie plan for employees (a first in the nation!), and introduced Tele-Whole Health.

The Butler VA was also selected as one of two facilities within VISN4 to participate in the Whole Health Learning Collaborative Two: Driving Cultural Transformation (LC2). Butler is goal-oriented on further integrating Whole Health into the various clinical arenas within our system during this 18-month process.

> *"I hope that you'll remember*
> *Even when you're feeling blue*
> *That it's you I like*
> *It's you yourself*
> *It's you, it's you I like."*
>
> – Mr. Fred Rogers

Health & Wellness 2019 Stats



8 Graduates
Guitars For Vets

12 Events Held
Music is Medicine

38 Classes Held
Basic Mindful Yoga & iRest Inspired Meditation Classes

48 Classes Held
Meditation

136 Classes Held
Martial Arts Class

190 Hours Provided
Personal Training

197 Classes Held
Fitness Classes

7,690 Total Attendances
Wellness Center

Worthwhile

Mental Health Recovery

U.S. Navy Veteran Carl Saviano

"The dark times seemed to just get worse after getting better for a while; I was at the end of the road. I remember laying on my couch, and I had a Veterans Crisis Line coaster on my living room table. Without even thinking, I gave the line a call. The long road to recovery began at the very moment I talked to Pete [the Butler VA's Suicide Prevention Coordinator]. He understood where I was at, and ***his positivity gave me hope again that life is worth living and to give myself a chance to live a life worth living again."***

> *"The world needs a sense of worth, and it will achieve it only by its people feeling that they are worthwhile."*
>
> – Mr. Fred Rogers

■ In an effort to enhance mental health care for Veterans and their Family members, the Butler VA Health Care System hosted its annual Mental Health Summit during Mental Health Month in May with 94 participants, across Veterans, Employees, Family Members, Caregivers and Community Partners. The focus of this year's summit was Whole Health and Suicide Prevention, with a special exercise on Mindfulness.

We also hosted our 10th Annual Recovery Recognition Event which honored over 20 Veterans for their gains in mental health recovery and the Butler VA's Center for Behavioral Health (CBH) Recovery Team and AmeriCorps (Suit Yourself) partnered to put on a recovery fashion show to educate Veterans on how to dress for formal events, interviews, work, and casual situations.

New for 2019, we obtained 45 iPads for staff to utilize with Veterans for Measurement Based Care, and initiated Warrior to Soul Mate (W2SM) Workshops. The iPads use Behavioral Health Lab software to show outcomes over time. W2SM is a transformative, interactive and highly engaging workshop focused on fostering love, happiness, and fulfillment in romantic relationships. The research-based principles provide the couple with a richer understanding of the attitudes, emotional dynamics and behaviors that nurture and sustain healthy relationships. One of the participants shared this about her experience at the first workshop held: ***"I came just because he (Veteran) signed up, and to please him. I received much more from the workshop than I thought I would."***

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RECOVERY
FASHION SHOW

RECOVERY
RECOGNITION EVENT

Helpful & Kind –

Homeless Program and Veterans Justice Outreach

U. S. Army and Vietnam Veteran David Griffith, "Griff"

Griff struggled with drinking and drugs almost his entire life, which also led to jail time and estrangement from family. Thanks to the Veterans Justice Outreach (VJO) program, he was provided the opportunity to come to the Butler VA's Domiciliary (Dom) rather than do additional jail time.

"While in the Dom, I decided it was time I listen to someone. There was comradery, other Veterans, and all the people there were very helpful, kind, and talked to me like I was somebody for a change – not an addict (like I was). Being an addict all my life, I lied to a lot of people. At the Dom, I learned to tell the truth – get honest with all the people involved in my recovery, with God, and with myself. You often hear negative news about the government and VA, but the Butler VA is an amazing, amazing facility and the people here are outstanding! I have the life I have today thanks to all of the people here – from the CWT workers to the doctors!"

David Griffith

According to the annual Homeless Assessment Report by U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Veteran homelessness in PA dropped by 13% in 2019. The Pennsylvania Western Region of Continuum of Care (Western PA CoC) was able to declare "*that we have built a system that can quickly identify and house any Veteran experiencing homelessness within the region of the continuum of care.*" Within the 20-county region of the Western PA COC, the Butler VA continues to be an active partner in this process with a focus on serving it's 5-county catchment area of Armstrong, Butler, Clarion, Lawrence and Mercer Counties.

The Butler VA has access to 30 transitional housing beds for Veterans through various contracts. The Veteran Leadership Program's 10-bed bridge housing program is new for FY 2019, with the first Veteran housed in

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December 2018. VLP uses a scattered site model within the City of Butler by renting four different apartments in which Veterans stay while they search for housing and overcome barriers to housing.

Butler VA's Veterans Justice Outreach (VJO) program successfully hosted a Discharge Upgrade Clinic this year in partnership with The Veterans Consortium with 35 Veterans. VJO staff also participated in facilitating part of the training for the Crisis Intervention Trainings for First Responders on Veteran-related issues in Mercer and Butler counties, and new for this year, Clarion County!

Also new for 2019 is the Armstrong County Veterans Treatment Court (VTC). The Armstrong County VTC launched in August 2019, the third VTC the Butler VA partners with. There are currently 7 participants in this new VTC with more planned. Successful graduations were held in the Butler and Mercer VTC's in FY 2019, with a total of 15 graduates. Additionally, another Moral Reconation Therapy group in Armstrong County started this year to help meet the needs of Armstrong County Veterans Court participants.

> *"All of us, at some time or other, need help. Whether we're giving or receiving help, each one of us has something valuable to bring to this world. That's one of the things that connects us as neighbors—in our own way, each one of us is a giver and a receiver."*
>
> *– Mr. Fred Rogers*

The 'Helpers'

Caregiver Support and Voluntary Service

U.S. Army & Vietnam Veteran, and Butler VA Volunteer Curtis "Dave" Rearic

At the urging of his wife, Barb, Dave decided to check out the VA and has been coming here for care for three years, one of those years as a volunteer.

"I have PTSD and talking with other Veterans really helps me. Coming here was the best thing I ever did. It has changed my life for the better. They [the VA] helped me out considerably, so I decided I wanted to give a little back to my fellow Veterans."

Dave Rearic

"Look for the helpers. You will always find people who are helping."

– Mrs. Rogers to Fred

Giving Back

In 2019, the Butler VA's Voluntary Services Program had 194 active volunteers who served 24,225.25 hours. Many groups, organizations, and individuals in the Butler community donate to Butler VA, in fact, $152,060.56 total donations were received in FY 2019. Others give their time and talent regularly to our Veterans.

At the beginning of FY 2019, the DAV/ Volunteer Transportation Program at the Butler VA received its first wheelchair accessible van. Since then, the program has transported 81 Veterans in wheelchairs who may not otherwise have been able to access their VA health care. The wheelchair van was made possible through generous donors within the community. Special thanks to the DAV Chapter 64 and the American Legion Posts 778 and 117 who made significant contributions to the purchase of this vehicle.

Help for Family Caregivers

The Caregiver Support Program served 19 Family Caregivers in the Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers and over 400 in the General Caregiver Support Services Program. A full day Self-Care Program was held in the Spring, and a special workshop for Caregivers caring for those with Dementia was held in the fall. Monthly support groups for all Caregivers were held throughout the year at the main facility as well as the Mercer County VA Clinic. Under the MISSION Act, VA will use a phased approach to expand the program of comprehensive assistance for family caregivers to eligible Veterans from all eras beginning in 2020.

It's Such A Good Feeling

Facility Awards, Recognitions, & Accreditations

Cornerstone Recognition FY19 – Gold Award

Presented by the VA National Center for Patient Safety

2 Successful Accreditation Surveys

- *Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF) survey - 3-year Accreditation for Behavioral Health and Employment and Community Services*
- *College of American Pathologists (CAP) - 2-year Accreditation of the Clinical Laboratory*

4-Star Rating for the Sergeant Joseph George Kusick Community Living Center on VA's Strategic Analytics for Improvement and Learning (SAIL) Report.

Outstanding Facility Performance (100%)

Butler also achieved excellence in quality and performance related metrics in 2019, some of which include:

- **SAIL Score – 1st quintile**
- **#1 in overall % of Telehealth Utilization**
- **#1 in Care In The Community (CITC)**
- **#2 in Ambulatory Care Sensitive Conditions**
- **#3 for pending consults >2 days**

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2019 Statistics

Employees:
723

Employees Who Are Veterans:
216

Volunteers:
194

Veterans Served:
26,720

Operating Budget:
$111,151,547

Volunteer Hours:
24,225.25

Veteran Outpatient Visits:
214,541

Visits Completed Via Telehealth:
14,891

Operating Beds:
126

About Us –

The Butler VA Health Care System, located in Butler County, Pennsylvania has been attending to Veteran's total care since 1947. We are the health care choice for over 25,000 Veterans throughout Western Pennsylvania and parts of Ohio and are a member of VA Healthcare VISN 4 under the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. Butler VA provides comprehensive Veteran care including primary, specialty, and mental health care — as well as management of chronic conditions and social support services to our nation's Veterans. We proudly serve America's Veterans at our main campus on North Duffy Road, our facilities on New Castle Road, as well as at our five Primary Care VA Outpatient Clinics in Armstrong, Southern Butler County (Cranberry Township), Clarion, Lawrence and Mercer Counties.

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