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VA Butler HealthCare’s Summer Highlights

1. VA Butler kicked off summer with its Sun Safety & Cancer Prevention Event in June. VA Butler employees shared educational information on sun safety, and provided tools to help prevent skin cancer.

2. A Mental Health Summit was held in August at VA Butler Healthcare. This annual event is crucial for enhancing access to mental health services and constantly improving mental health care for our Veterans and their families.

3. The Quilts of Valor Foundation presented two quilts to Veterans at VA Butler Healthcare this summer. Their mission is to cover all combat service members and Veterans touched by war with comforting and healing Quilts of Valor.

4. VA Butler’s VIST Coordinator traveled with eight blind Veterans and their family members to the VA Cleveland Blind Rehabilitation Center on August 12. Veteran alumni and prospective attendees participated in VA Cleveland’s fifth anniversary reunion.

5. VA Butler’s Health Promotion and Disease Prevention Program hosted two summer farmers markets in July and August, with a third planned for September. Brenckle’s Farms and Greenhouses provided locally grown, farm fresh produce.

6. Army Veteran JoAnne Marcus hit the target and dunked VA Butler Director David Cord during the annual Summer Community Living Center Carnival.

7. VA Butler’s Diabetes Support Group held its annual summer picnic with all diabetic-sensitive foods! Veterans of every age and theatre of war attended and brought a covered dish to share.

8. Marine Corps Veteran Daryl Lee enjoyed the annual picnic sponsored by the Cranberry Elks Lodge. The picnic included food, music, and entertainment, including a clown!

9. Army Veteran JoAnne Marcus hit the target and dunked VA Butler Director David Cord during the annual Summer Community Living Center Carnival.

Sanju provided henna tattoos for attendees at the first Multi-Cultural Day Event at VA Butler held in July. Other event highlights included Tae Kwon Do demonstrations, a Nutrition Kitchen demonstration, a cultural dance performance, and a Veteran speaker discussing the Cherokee Tribe.
Dear Veterans, fellow employees, volunteers and friends of VA Butler Healthcare,

This summer was a season of achievements here at VA Butler. We continue to excel in same-day access for Veterans. We are ahead of schedule on building the new Health Care Center (HCC); and we worked every day to Make Lives Better through phenomenal summer events such as the annual CLC Summer Carnival, the Mental Health Creative Arts Event, the first Multi-Cultural Day Event, the Welcome Home Event, the Mental Health Summit, and so many others. As we move into the fall and winter seasons, our number one priority will remain the same: providing our Veterans with the highest quality care. Thank you Veterans, and thank you to everyone who serves our Veterans.

— Dave

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Mental Health Creative Arts
Army Veteran Samuel Brothers Jr. shared his artwork for the fourth annual Mental Health Creative Arts Event at VA Butler this summer. After the event, he donated his piece titled “Lefty” to VA. The piece will be displayed at the new Health Care Center when it opens next year.

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Congrats Grad!
With VA and volunteer support, Navy Veteran Andrew Womeldorf III completed his college degree, and was able to attend his graduation ceremony at Penn State! Volunteers at VA Butler enjoy many benefits, none greater though than the opportunity to give back to Veterans like Womeldorf.

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A New Outlet for Recreation Therapy
Thanks to local Boy Scout Colton Walker, Veterans residing at VA Butler’s Domiciliary have a new source for recreational therapy in the form of a brand new greenhouse. Walker completed this service project as part of his requirements to obtain his Eagle Scout rank.

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Health Tech, Tips & Tastes
What’s new and interesting in VA’s health technology? Find out! Also, enjoy a health tip and tasty summer recipe.

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Who’s Who – Christopher Tomayko page 13

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VA Butler's new Health Care Center (HCC) will not open for Veterans until next fall, but the new facility already has a piece of Veteran artwork planned for display! Army Veteran Samuel “Sam” Brothers Jr. recently shared his artwork for the fourth annual Mental Health Creative Arts Event at VA Butler Healthcare. After the event, he donated his piece titled “Lefty” to VA. The piece will be displayed for all at the new facility when it opens.

“I wanted to do something for the event, and that’s just what I came up with! It was a spur of the moment thing. I’ve made a few pieces before, but nothing I’ve ever kept,” shared Brothers.

He shared several pieces at the event, but “Lefty” will be the piece on display at the new HCC. The piece (and several of his pieces) were made from scrap materials—bolts, springs, etc. “Lefty” resembles Brothers' own hand, and it's holding an American flag. Brothers does not claim to be an “artist,” but some of the primitive-type crafts he has seen on television were part of his inspiration for the piece.

Brothers has come to VA Butler Healthcare for treatment for about two years, but this was his first time taking part in the Mental Health Creative Arts Event. He has been involved with VA's MOVE! Group as well as a therapy group through VA Butler's Center for Behavioral Health.

“I suffer from depression. The therapy group has been very helpful. I was suicidal before I got with the group. It has made a huge difference in my life,” said Brothers.

Brothers did not talk for years; his wife was his way of communicating until she passed away. “I could work with someone for a week and not even know their name. I didn’t talk,” he admitted.

“Thanks to the VA group, I’ve come a long, long way. I’ve learned a lot of social skills from the group, and that’s been the most helpful.”

Though it’s still almost a year away, Brothers shared
that he will again likely put something together for next year’s Creative Arts Event. Veterans, family members, and other visitors to the VA will be able to see “Lefty” on display next year when the new HCC opens.

In addition to Brothers’ art, there were many other great pieces of artwork shared at this year’s event. After reviewing and voting by all attendees, the winners for this year were:

**First Place**—Veterans at VA Butler’s Community Living Center *(with a total of eight entries)*
- John Bilanich—copper tooling
- George Johnson—ceramics
- George Kruise—woodworking
- Daryl Lee—copper tooling
- Bill Martin—woodworking
- Jack Houk—drawings
- Morris Schoekopf—wooden airplanes
- Sullivan Cherichetti—ceramics
- Nina Schnell—woodworking/jewelry box

**Second Place**—Christopher Price – portraits

**Third Place**—Marian Campbell – quilt

Congrats to all!

VA Butler hosts this annual event to help Veterans work toward mental health recovery. To learn more about VA recovery services in mental health, visit [www.mentalhealth.va.gov/mentalhealthrecovery.asp](http://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/mentalhealthrecovery.asp).
Congratulations Grad!

VA and Volunteer Support Helps Veteran Attend College Graduation

“Thanks to American Legion 778 and the American Legion Riders of Butler County, I was able to attend my graduation ceremony on May 6, 2016.”
Andrew (Drew) Womeldorf III, served in the U.S. Navy from 1989-1993, including deployments to the Persian Gulf and Bosnia. In 1996, he started having vision problems, and two years later he was diagnosed with Multiple Sclerosis (MS).

“I was living in an apartment, going to school at Penn State DuBois, and my medical condition started to deteriorate to the point that I needed more care than I was able to get,” shared Womeldorf. “Through my VA social worker, I was able to get admitted to VA Butler in January of 2016.”

Prior to being admitted at VA Butler’s Community Living Center (CLC), Womeldorf worked toward completing his Associates Degree in Arts, Letters and Sciences at Pennsylvania State University (Penn State). With only one class remaining, he was able to complete it online while residing at VA with the support of one of VA Butler’s youth volunteers, Anchor Loesch.

Each summer, VA Butler Healthcare’s Voluntary Services Office runs a Summer Youth Volunteer Program. The program provides youth the opportunity to develop and enhance necessary life and work skills such as commitment, responsibility, teamwork and leadership. Youth volunteers at VA Butler enjoy many benefits, none greater though than the opportunity to give back to Veterans and care for them when they need us most.

Youth volunteer Loesch, who also is in Butler County’s Jr. ROTC program, worked with Womeldorf to help him get his classwork submitted successfully, and ultimately complete his degree at Penn State.

The next challenge? Attending the graduation ceremony. “When it came time for graduation, the only way I could attend the ceremony was if I could go by Wheelchair Van,” said Womeldorf. “Thanks to American Legion 778 and the American Legion Riders of Butler County, I was able to attend my graduation ceremony on May 6, 2016.”

In addition to supporting Womeldorf’s graduation achievement, American Legion 778 and the American Legion Riders of Butler County recently donated more than $7,000 toward a new Wheelchair Van for Veterans in VA Butler’s CLC. VA Butler thanks them for their continued support of our Veterans and VA programs.

Now a college graduate, Womeldorf is grateful for the support he received from VA and volunteers. VA Butler depends on the goodwill of our volunteers to help us provide the best care possible. Volunteers, both individuals and groups, make our patients stays more enjoyable and fulfilling.

To volunteer or donate, call VA Butler’s Voluntary Services Coordinator at 724.285.2575. You also can learn more at www.butler.va.gov/giving.
Therapeutic recreation uses treatment, education and recreation services to help people with illnesses, disabilities and other conditions to develop and use their leisure in ways that enhance their health, functional abilities, independence and quality of life according to the American Therapeutic Recreation Association. For America’s Veterans, therapeutic recreation promotes health and wellness along with reducing or eliminating activity limitations and restrictions caused by an illness or disabling condition.

Thanks to local Boy Scout Colton Walker, Veterans residing at VA Butler’s Domiciliary have a new source for recreational therapy in the form of a brand new greenhouse.

It’s been about a year in the making since Walker first started working on this service project as part of his requirements to obtain his Eagle Scout rank.

“I knew I wanted to do something for Veterans. We do a flag retirement ceremony at VA Butler every year, but I wanted to do something more for them – they’ve done so much for us serving our country,” said Walker.

Walker, with the help of family, friends, and even strangers, raised money in order to get all the supplies for the greenhouse. “People who had no relation to us, but saw the project was going to benefit Veterans helped. I was very happy to see that,” he said.

After a year of hard work, the greenhouse is now complete! Walker’s favorite part of the project was interacting with some of the Veterans who will be benefiting from it.

“I just loved being able to talk to the Veterans who came up and inquired about the project – what we were building, when it’d be done, etc.,” he shared. “I also did not realize it at the time, but now I know how gardening really can be a creative outlet. I hope it really helps the Veterans at Butler.”

Walker’s future plans consist of college and joining an ROTC program. He hopes to go into the service himself after he graduates. He also has two younger brothers in the Boy Scouts. It is his hope that when they have Eagle Scout service projects in the coming years that they add on to the greenhouse in some way, or else give back to Veterans at VA Butler another way.

Chris Tomayko, a recreation therapist for Veterans at VA Butler’s Domiciliary, worked closely with Walker and his father on the project. He was excited to see the final project come together; and even more excited for what it means to our Veterans.

“The greenhouse will play an integral part in the recovery of our Veterans. It promotes the development of creative expression, social interaction, and will promote the use of their free time in a positive manner,” said Tomayko. “It will serve as an integral part of our Domiciliary recreation therapy program.”

VA Butler’s Domiciliary is a residential facility on VA Butler’s main campus for eligible Veterans who may be dealing with issues such as homelessness, mental health, substance abuse and unemployment. The Domiciliary provides a residential, rehabilitative, therapeutic community with a goal of successfully reintegrating Veterans back into the community. Residents participate in a full range of rehabilitation services including physical, behavioral, spiritual, psychosocial, addiction counseling, vocational, dietary, occupational therapy and intervention.
New Chat Feature for Women Veterans

VA’s Women Veterans Call Center (WVCC) is expanding its outreach to women Veterans with a new online, one-to-one chat function. The new service enables women Veterans to go online and anonymously chat via real-time text messaging with a trained WVCC representative. The new feature provides women Veterans with another avenue to ask general questions about benefits, eligibility and services specifically for women Veterans.

WVCC chat is available by visiting the Women Veterans Health Care webpage at www.womenshealth.va.gov and clicking the “Chat with the Women Veterans Call Center” icon. As the Chat Function is anonymous, please do not use personally identifiable information such as social security numbers. WVCC Chat is available Monday through Friday 8 AM - 10 PM ET, and on Saturdays from 8 AM - 6:30 PM ET. All the representatives at the Women Veterans Call Center are women, and many are Veterans themselves. In addition to linking women Veterans to information, the Women Veterans Call Center makes direct referrals to Women Veteran Program Managers (WVPM) located at every VA medical center. The Women Veteran Program Manager helps the woman Veteran coordinate services.

In July, 20 VA Butler Health-care employees participated in a two-day training called Military Culture-101, or Mil-X. These select staff members will soon be training all staff at VA Butler on military culture.

The goal of this new training is to ensure all staff at VA Butler (and VA’s nationwide) truly understand the commitment and sacrifice of our nation’s heroes and their families. Mil-X is an engagement that will teach staff another way to effectively connect to patients via an understanding and appreciation of their military culture.

VA wants every interaction with Veterans to offer the best possible experience by building a culture that values our patients and their life’s experiences. The Mil-X training focuses on the “spark” that changes conversations from, “Last name– last four,” to interactions that truly embody the dignity and respect our Veterans deserve.
New Health Care Center Progress

Construction continues to progress on VA Butler’s new Health Care Center (HCC)! Window installation, site paving and curbing, and drywall installation have begun at the site. In addition, interior framing on all levels and the utility wall rough-ins on all levels continue. The brick veneer is expected to be completed in late August.

The new HCC remains ahead of schedule, set to be completed by summer 2017 and officially opening for Veterans in fall 2017! Veterans and the community can stay up-to-date on construction progress, by visiting the HCC webpage at www.butler.va.gov/news/building.asp or attending regularly scheduled HCC Town Hall Meetings.

A New Dental Resource for Veterans in Butler County

Not eligible for VA dental care? The Community Health Clinic of Butler County may be able to help! If you meet the eligibility requirements and income guidelines, you may qualify for free dental care.

Eligibility requirements:
- Between the ages of 19-64
- A Butler County resident
- No private or government insurance
- Not eligible for dental care through VA (Application Approval Required)

Learn more by calling 724.841.0980, ext. 117, or visiting www.butlerhealthclinic.org.

Eligibility for VA dental benefits is based on specific guidelines and differs significantly from eligibility requirements for medical care. To learn more about VA dental care, eligibility status and enrollment, call 724.477.5011.

Veteran “X”

Have you heard about the Veteran “X” group at VA Butler? The group serves as the treatment team for a fictitious Veteran “X” who has a number of social barriers that are similar to those faced by the group’s participants. While helping Veteran “X” to solve his issues, participants gain valuable skills and information to resolve their own issues. Learn more and join now! Call 724.996.8892 or 724.285.2293.
What is Veteran HOPE? or, more appropriately, Who is Veteran “HOPE”?  

We are the women who have served our country.  
We have been to war and fought the battles that needed fought.  
We have been trained extensively on the use of M-16s and other weapons in defense of our country and our way of life, for ourselves and our fellow citizens.  
We have worked together as a team to maintain complex missile systems, perform life-saving first aid, and ensure that our military brothers and sisters had the tools needed to complete their missions.  
We learned to support each other in times of a wide range of challenging situations, including but not limited to combat.  
Then, we came home expecting to return to “normal” living, a little less stress, and perhaps a more disciplined way of looking at things. Sometimes we think we should be able to handle anything, and everything, on our own.  
Maybe we don’t need that teamwork, those support systems, that emotional first aid.  
Or do we?  
Veteran “Hope” is a representative female veteran that is utilized in a Veteran-focused, veteran-run format.  
We help each other through the challenges all veterans face. As women, however, we know there are challenges specific to us and our lives. Family, career, and medical needs, as well as any trauma-related or substance use issues that we may have.  
Whether you are in need right now, or experience difficulties in the future, Veteran Hope can help you find the answers you need. If not, perhaps there is another veteran who needs your help.  
After all, isn’t that who we are?  

The mission statement listed to the left for VA Butler’s Veteran HOPE program was written and compiled by Army Veteran Laurie J. Kubli after she’d participated in several of the groups. “My experience with Veteran HOPE has been very positive. It has provided me an opportunity to help other female Veterans that was not possible previously,” shared Laurie. “I enjoy the camaraderie this group provides, and I look forward to helping it grow into a force for our community.”  
Veteran HOPE groups meet weekly on Tuesday nights from 6-8pm in Building One, room 215WS. Veterans are invited to join at any time. For more information about the Veteran HOPE program, women Veterans may talk to their VA Butler provider or call 724.285.2756.

Veterans Serving Veterans  
VA operates one of the largest health care systems in the U.S. VA employs highly trained professionals who are dedicated to providing quality health care to Veterans, and many are Veterans themselves! Currently, more than 30 percent of VA Butler Healthcare’s employees are Veterans.  
“I chose to work for the VA as a way of giving back to our nation’s patriots, and for the comradery with Veterans like myself. I enjoy hearing personal military stories of sacrifice and service to our country.”

Hey Veterans! Share your stories with us in Vet Chat. Email Amanda.Kurtz2@va.gov. We’d love to hear from you!
Health Quiz:

Healthy Men

Men’s Health Week is celebrated annually each June to raise awareness of preventable health problems in men. This year it was June 13-19, 2016. Men, make sure you are getting regular check-ups and paying attention to your body. Take this quiz to get started, and talk to your VA health care team.

1. At what age should you begin having your cholesterol checked regularly?
   a. 55  b. 35  c. 50  d. 65

2. How often should you have your blood pressure checked?
   a. Every five years  b. Once a month  c. Every two years  d. Every ten years

3. At what age should you start being screened for colorectal cancer?
   a. 50  b. 40  c. 60  d. 21

4. The most important things you can do to stay healthy are?
   a. Exercise, eat a healthy diet, drink alcohol only in moderation, and stay at a healthy weight
   b. Avoid tobacco
   c. Get recommended screening tests and take preventive medicines if you need them
   d. All of the above

5. Signs of depression include:
   a. Feeling “down,” sad, or hopeless for two weeks
   b. Having little interest in or taking no pleasure from doing things you normally like to do
   c. An urge to square dance
   d. A and B

6. If you are a man between the ages of 65 and 75 and have ever smoked more than 100 cigarettes, which condition should you be screened for?
   a. Abdominal aortic aneurysm  b. Smoking  c. Prostate cancer  d. All of the above

7. Which vaccine should you have after turning 65?
   a. Chicken pox  b. Pneumonia  c. Measles  d. Mumps

8. How many minutes of moderate physical activity—at a minimum—should you aim for most days of the week?
   a. 5  b. 10  c. 20  d. 30

Quiz Results

Who’s Who?

CHRIS TOMAYKO, CTRS
Recreation Therapist

Recreational Therapy

July 3-9, 2016, was National Therapeutic Recreation Week—a week dedicated to enhancing public awareness of therapeutic recreation programs and services and to expanding recreation and leisure opportunities for individuals with disabilities.

Thousands of Veterans receive recreational therapy across VA. The benefits of recreation therapy for Veterans include improving physical well-being and social functioning. It also can help Veterans develop new leisure skills, enhance creative expression, and breakdown barriers for cultural expression.

The role of a recreation therapist in the Veterans Health Administration is to work in conjunction with interdisciplinary team members, Veterans, families and friends to assist in a continuum of care from admission to discharge.

Christopher Tomayko is a Recreation Therapist for Veterans at VA Butler’s Domiciliary. To learn more about recreational therapy visit: www.rehab.va.gov/rectherapy.
HEALTH TECH – TECHNOLOGY IN THE WAR ON CANCER

Veterans of war experience disproportionately high rates of cancer diagnosis and mortality and as America’s largest integrated health system, VA serves 3.5 percent of the nation’s cancer patients – the largest group of cancer patients in the country.

In June, VA and IBM Watson Health (NYSE: IBM) announced a public-private partnership to help doctors expand and scale access to precision medicine over the next two years for 10,000 American Veterans with cancer.

IBM’s Watson for Genomics technology is expected to help the oncology program by providing information to help physicians identify precision treatment options for almost 30 times more patients than could be previously served.

Watson is the first commercially available cognitive computing capability representing a new era in computing. The system, delivered through the cloud, analyzes high volumes of data, understands complex questions posed in natural language, and proposes evidence-based answers. Watson continuously learns, gaining in value and knowledge over time, from previous interactions.

The partnership with IBM is expected to greatly speed up the ability of VA doctors to help identify precision treatment options for Veterans. Scientists and pathologists will sequence DNA for cancer patients, and then feed de-identified genetic alteration files into Watson. Watson will generate a report for physicians that identify the likely cancer-causing mutations and possible treatment options to target those specific mutations through a comprehensive review of existing medical literature – a data-intensive process that has been time-consuming and difficult to scale in the past.

As a tool to help doctors evaluate treatment options for their patients, Watson for Genomics produces a list of potential therapies ranked by levels of evidence with links to associated research and clinical trials for physicians to consider. This information could help inform VA’s healthcare professionals and Veterans of promising new cancer treatments.

Cancer is an important area of inquiry for VA researchers. A recent VA study reported that around 40,000 cancer cases are reported to VA’s Central Cancer Registry annually. The five most frequently diagnosed cancers among VA cancer patients were prostate, lung and bronchial, colorectal, urinary and bladder cancers, and skin melanomas. This list is similar to that for American men as a whole.

The very first centrally funded VA research laboratory was the department’s tumor research unit, set up in Hines, Ill., in 1932. The unit did some of the first studies on the link between smoking and lung cancer, an issue VA researchers have continued to look at over the years.

Today, VA researchers conduct laboratory experiments aimed at discovering the molecular and genetic mechanisms involved in cancer; studies looking at the causes of disease; clinical trials to evaluate new or existing treatments; and studies focused on improving end-of-life care.

Source: www.research.va.gov
Health Tastes Pita Pizzas

Ingredients
1 C Super Quick Chunky Tomato Sauce
1 C Grilled boneless, skinless chicken breast, diced (about 2 small breasts)
1 C broccoli, rinsed, chopped, and cooked
2 Tbsp grated parmesan cheese
1 Tbsp fresh basil, rinsed, dried, and chopped (or 1 tsp dried)
4 (6-inch) whole-wheat pitas

Directions
Preheat oven or toaster oven to 450 °F. For each pizza, spread 1 cup tomato sauce on a pita and top with 1 cup chicken, 1 cup broccoli, 2 tablespoon parmesan cheese, and 1 tablespoon chopped basil. Place pitas on a nonstick baking sheet and bake for about 5–8 minutes until golden brown and chicken is heated through. Serve immediately.

Source: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

Calories: 275 ★ Total Fat: 5g ★ Carbohydrates: 41g ★ Protein: 20g

Crossword
Keep Your Brain Active

Keep your brain active every day. Read, write, work crossword or other puzzles! You also can attend lectures and plays, enroll in courses at your local adult education center or community college, play games, garden, or try memory exercises.

ACROSS
1. Snake (5)
4. Saying (5)
7. Villainous (9)
8. Way out (4)
9. Bee house (6)
12. Maelstrom (6)
13. Desiccated (4)
16. Allowed (9)
18. Trench (5)
19. Indigent (5)

DOWN
1. Obscure (5)
2. Wicker basket (7)
3. Prevalent (4)
4. Precipitous (6)
5. Fuss (3)
6. Composition (5)
10. Abbreviate (7)
11. Gusto (6)
12. Lacking taste (5)
14. Journal (5)
15. Stupefy (4)
17. Furrow (3)

HEALTH TIP—HYDRATE!

Drink plenty of water before, during and after physical activity to avoid dehydration. For low-calorie flavor, add slices of your favorite fruits to a pitcher of water and refrigerate for two hours.
VA Butler Healthcare, located in Butler County, Pennsylvania has been attending to Veteran’s total care since 1947. We are the health care choice for over 18,000 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. VA Butler provides comprehensive Veteran care including primary, specialty and mental health care – as well as management of chronic conditions and social support services for our nation’s finest, America’s Veterans.