LIGHTS, CAMERA, ACTION: Taking ACTION for our Veterans in 2014

2014 Annual Report
Action!

To our honored Veterans, dedicated employees, generous volunteers, and dear friends of VA Butler Healthcare,

I am excited to share with you VA Butler Healthcare's 2014 Annual Report – Lights, Camera, Action: Taking Action for Veterans in 2014. THANK YOU to everyone who has helped make this year a success. We pride ourselves on providing quality health care that is personalized, proactive, and patient-driven to our Veterans.

Our Veterans are the true heroes, the leads, the VIPs in every way – and this year we served over 19,000! We also completed the new Community Living Center, initiated a more efficient experience for appointments through Centralized Check-In (CCI), increased healthy lifestyle changes, improved access through virtual care, decreased Veteran homelessness, and so much more! I hope you enjoy reading about our year in the coming pages.

As we enter 2015, our focus will be on VA’s blueprint for Excellence that is guided by two key elements: improve access to health care and provide an exceptional patient experience, every time. At VA Butler Healthcare, our utmost goal is to honor our Veterans’ service by providing them the exceptional health care they have earned – and to always continue Making Lives Better.

John A. Gennaro, FACHE, MBA, MHSA
Director, VA Butler Healthcare

“We take action for our Veterans every day – from new programs and services, like the new Veteran X recovery group, to new buildings, like the new Community Living Center. In 2015, we promise to continue taking action for our Veterans and their families.”

John Gennaro
Director

“With the new Centralized Check-In process in 2014, VA Butler saw reduced wait times, provided faster visits, and improved scheduling for all Veterans. As we move into the New Year, we will continue providing efficient, accessible, and quality health care.”

Michael Kruczek
Acting Chief of Staff

“Over 100 quality ideas were submitted from our hardworking employees this year, and as a result, we saw greater satisfaction from Veterans, and cost/time savings for the facility! Moving forward, we’ll continue to implement great ideas into actions for our Veterans.”

Rebecca Hubscher
Associate Director

“Completing the final 30 beds of our new CLC to provide a truly home-like environment has helped make lives better for our Veterans and their families in 2014. In 2015, we’ll continue aiming to make the home into the preferred place of care, whenever possible.”

Sharon Parson
Nurse Executive
Spotlight on 2014

- Completed the final 30 beds of the new Community Living Center
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- Participated in three Stand Down Events in Armstrong, Lawrence, and Mercer counties helping 140 Veterans
  - Page 11

- Hosted the first Butterfly Release Ceremony over Memorial Day Weekend to honor 40 Veterans who passed away over the last year
  - Page 8

- Enrolled 1,590 new Returning Service Members at VA Butler Healthcare – Welcome Home!
  - Page 12

- Surpassed the national goal for the All Employee Survey (AES) with a participation rate of 72.9% (2nd highest in VISN 4!)
  - Page 15

- Initiated a new Centralized Check-In (CCI) process that decreased total patient time at the facility (from check-in to check-out) to only 67 minutes! This represents a 33% decrease in the time patients have to spend in our facility to receive care
  - Page 4

- Lost 4,512 total pounds through VA's MOVE! programs
  - Page 9

- Started a new Telehealth program – Tele-Enrollment, a new method of Enrollment and Registration for Veterans who are located close to our Community-Based Outpatient Clinics
  - Page 6

- Converted the ordering process for the Prosthetics Department resulting in more stock items and same day access for Veterans!
  - Page 7

- Submitted 158 Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) ideas
  - Page 17

- Implemented three new mental health groups for Veterans, including Veteran "X", a peer-led Mental Health and Substance Abuse Recovery Model program
  - Page 10

- Increased VA staff dedicated to our women Veterans to include an Outreach Specialist, Veteran Advocacy and Veterans Benefits Administration Representative, and a Readjustment Counseling Services Representative
  - Page 13

- Volunteered 37,987 hours of service and gave $179,622.31 in donations
  - Page 14

- Served 19,332 Veterans in 2014!
  - Page 18
VIP Access
Appointments, PACT, and Community-Based Outpatient Clinics

At VA Butler Healthcare, we are constantly striving to Make Lives Better for our Veterans. One of the ways we did this in 2014 was through a new Centralized Check-In (CCI) process initiated in January. Prior to this change, all patients with multiple appointments at the main facility also had multiple check-in processes. The average patient is here for two to three appointments in one day – this meant at least two kiosk check-ins, two check-ins with a Medical Support Assistant (MSA), and two check-outs with an MSA. Now, no matter how many appointments a Veteran has in one day, it is only one kiosk check-in and one MSA check-out. Thanks to CCI, VA Butler has reduced wait times, provided faster visits, and improved scheduling:

- A record 96% of Veterans show up early for their appointments! On average, Veterans are arriving 48 minutes early for their appointments – a full seven minutes earlier than before
- Total patient time at the facility (from check-in to check-out) is now only 67 minutes. This is down from 76 minutes in January 2014, and 100 minutes prior to the change. This represents a 33% decrease in the time Veterans have to spend in our facility to receive care.
- On average, Veterans are starting their appointment (intake) one minute after their scheduled appointment time – and, Veterans arriving early are, on average, taken back four minutes early!

VA Butler’s five Community-Based Outpatient Clinics in Armstrong, Clarion, Cranberry Township, Lawrence, and Mercer counties had 31,918 visits from Veterans in FY14! (see graphic below). Additionally, a new long-term lease was awarded for the Michael A. Marzano VA Outpatient Clinic (Mercer County) for five years (with five additional option years) and a new handicap accessible exit ramp was installed at the Lawrence outpatient clinic.

| VA COMMUNITY-BASED OUTPATIENT CLINIC VISITS |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Armstrong County               | Clarion County                | Cranberry Twp.                | Lawrence County               | Mercer County                 | TOTAL                        |
| FY 13  3,366                   | FY 13  2,543                   | FY 13  5,413                   | FY 13  6,452                   | FY 13  10,994                 | FY 13  28,768                 |
| FY 14  4,141                   | FY 14  3,507                   | FY 14  5,483                   | FY 14  6,396                   | FY 14  12,391                 | FY 14  31,918                 |
VA Butler’s Dental Team ranked #1 in 2014! According to the National VA Dentistry Survey of Dental Care Experiences of Patients in 2014, VA Butler ranked the best in the nation among VA Hospitals for overall dental care (for the third year in a row!) In every survey measure, VA Butler scored well above the national average. VA Butler even increased to 94.9% of our patients ranking us a 9 or 10 on a 10 point scale (up from 93% in 2013).

We also exceeded all Patient-Aligned Care Team FY14 Goals which included:

- Provided same-day access with Primary Care Provider or their Primary Care Nurse
  
  **Target:** 70%  
  **Results:** 95.5%

- Ensured Veterans saw their own Primary Care Provider at least three out of four visits

  **Target:** 77%  
  **Results:** 95.6%

- Contacted Veterans within two days of transition from an inpatient hospital

  **Target:** 75%  
  **Results:** 81.2%

Army Veteran Bob Anderson retired in 2010, and was “dragged” down to the VA by a good friend who was adamant about getting him VA benefits.

“I didn’t think I’d be eligible for VA. You could have knocked me over with a feather when I found out I was eligible! I am amazed at what I would have lost out on if I had not gone to the VA. I recommend the VA to all!”

**Bob Anderson, Army Veteran**

The VA has helped give me my life back since I went blind. If it wasn’t for them, I’d probably be sitting in a corner somewhere feeling sorry for myself. We’re very fortunate to have what we have here in Butler.”

**John Neudorfer, Navy Veteran**

U.S. Navy Veteran John Neudorfer has had quite the bumpy road, from a heart attack at age 29 and a heart transplant 7 years ago, to losing his eyesight completely. John attends VA Butler’s monthly Visual Impairment Services Team (VIST) support group.

**Army Veteran Bob Anderson**

**Navy Veteran John Neudorfer**
Virtual Care

Telehealth, My HealtheVet, and Social Media

**Telehealth**

2,966 Veterans used Telehealth (a 28% increase since FY13) this year! VA Butler saw a total 9,451 Veteran encounters for all Telehealth programs in 2014, a 10% increase since 2013. New telehealth programs for this year included:

- **A Slippery Rock University (SRU) Clinical Video Telehealth program for Veterans** – an official Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was developed with SRU to provide telehealth services in Behavioral Health, Psychotherapy, and Psychiatric Medicine to Veteran students.

- **Tele-Endocrinology Clinic** – the first one was conducted between VA Butler Healthcare (at the Mercer County Community-Based Outpatient Clinic) and VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System.

- **Tele-Enrollment** – This new program consists of using Clinical Video Telehealth (CVT) to connect via video conference with an Enrollment and Registration VA staff member located at the main VA Butler Healthcare facility.

**My HealtheVet**

15,370 (83%) Veterans are registered My HealtheVet users at VA Butler Healthcare as of 2014. In addition, 12,289 (66%) have upgraded to a Premium My HealtheVet account by completing In-Person Authentication (IPA) at their scheduled appointment. In addition, we achieved **all** My HealtheVet/Secure Messaging National Goals for FY14:

- Ensure Secure Messaging is implemented within Dental, Rehabilitation/Prosthetics, and Mental Health by the end of FY14. VA Butler **completed early**!

- Ensure Secure Messaging is implemented within one administrative area/team by the end of FY14. Again, VA Butler **met this goal early**. This year, the third administrative area/team was implemented!

- Meet or exceed Virtual Care metric that 30% of unique VA patients are engaged in Virtual Care (Secure Messaging: 25%; Telehealth – 16%) by end of FY14. VA Butler Healthcare **exceeds** the Virtual Care metric with **29% of Veterans using Secure Messaging**.

**Social Media**

Over 1,000 fans and followers like, comment, and retweet on VA Butler’s Facebook page and Twitter feed. With weekly posts and tweets, photos, Health & Wellness Notes, and event notifications, VA Butler's social media sites are providing another avenue for Veterans, family, and the community to interact with VA Butler Healthcare.

**U.S. Navy Veteran Jim Sankey** has used My HealtheVet for years, and uses the Secure Messaging feature to communicate frequently with his team. With My HealtheVet’s Secure Messaging, Veterans can communicate with their health care team without having to wait on the phone or fight traffic to get to the facility.

"I like that I can talk directly to my health care team. I can send a message, get a reply, and know they got what I sent. Before Secure Messaging, I phoned in, and it was a pain. After Secure Messaging, I had very few problems, and they get back to me quickly. I use it [My HealtheVet] for so much it’s unbelievable!"

Jim Sankey, Navy Veteran
My HealtheVet/Secure Messaging User
VA Butler is committed to delivering the highest quality of care, and the most convenient. VA Butler’s Prosthetics Department converted their ordering process in 2014 from the PIP (Prosthetic Inventory Package) to the GIP (Generic Inventory Package) resulting in more stock items and same day access for Veterans! With the new system, when a VA Provider puts in the order, a Veteran may come directly to the Rehab Department as a walk-in and either receive the item, be measured for the item, or once the item is established (if not readily available) the item can be ordered and mailed straight to their home. In addition, the Physical Therapy Department at the Michael A. Marzano VA Outpatient Clinic (Mercer County), now open three days a week, saw 779 Veteran appointments – saving them the drive to the main Butler facility for therapy.

11,158 Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation (PM&R) Outpatient Therapy Veteran appointments were completed in FY14 and 35,993 prosthetic devices, equipment or repairs were purchased for 6,399 Veterans during FY14.

What else happened this year? The new inpatient Rehabilitation Unit opened in June 2014 upon final completion of the new Community Living Center, and a new Physiatrist, Dr. Margaret Moon came on board to serve our Veterans.

PM&R Therapists also provided valuable clinical training for 24 therapy students from training programs around the country in 2014. One student, Major Craig Watkins graduates this May from Slippery Rock University’s Doctor of Physical Therapy Department. After graduation, Craig will deploy with the U.S. Air Force, but hopes to soon after join the VA as a full-time employee serving other Veterans.

“As a Veteran, I have valued my experience as a student-trainee here at VA Butler Healthcare from day one. I have been looking forward to working with the Veteran population since I started my journey to become a Physical Therapist. Thanks to the extremely supportive instructors and staff members, I feel that I have been given the best experience possible to further my experience and education.”

Craig Watkins
Air Force Veteran and Doctoral Intern for VA Butler’s Physical Therapy Department

Raymond Tarr was drafted in 1969 and served as a tank crewman in Vietnam. While serving in Cambodia, his unit was ambushed, and Raymond was left with holes in his left arm, left leg, back, forehead, and colon and he lost an eye. From Walter Reed National Military Medical Center, Raymond was discharged to VA Butler Healthcare in 1971. When he first came home from the war, Raymond received therapy three days a week at VA Butler.

“I got stronger. I could see it and feel it. This facility took a severely wounded soldier, and made him strong again. It's taken care of me over the years, and continues to do so. They gave me the best that this country can do. Veterans, the VA is there, go! The VA wants to help you, and there are a lot of guys and girls just like you there.”

Raymond Tarr, Army Veteran
Army Veteran Mark Nowakowski stayed at VA Butler’s Community Living Center in 2014 in the inpatient hospice care program. He passed away in June 2014, but his service and sacrifice to our country will never be forgotten.

“I hope you understand the impact you had not just helping our Dad to get the best care, but also giving our Mom and family members peace of mind that he was comfortable and in a beautiful facility with fellow Veterans.”

Mark Nowakowski Jr., son of Army Veteran

There’s No Place Like Home
Community Living Center and Hospice Care

While it may be true, there's no place like home – VA Butler’s new Community Living Center (CLC) is designed to make Veterans feel more at home by providing them with a community setting, as well as private rooms and baths.

In addition to opening the final 30 beds in the CLC this year, VA Butler also made significant gains in the care provided to Veterans in the Hospice Care Program in the CLC. In the Bereaved Family Survey in FY14, which measures excellence of care provided to Veterans at the end of life, VA Butler ranked number one in the nation. The Survey is administered to families of Veterans who have died in a VA facility by the PROMISE Center at the Philadelphia VA Center for Health Equity Research and Promotion.

VA Butler Healthcare’s Hospice Care Program also hosted its first Butterfly Release Ceremony this year over Memorial Day weekend to honor 40 Veterans who passed away. In addition to remembering these Veterans alongside their families and friends through the release of live butterflies, a poem written by a Hospice & Palliative Care Nurse (as told by her patients) was read, scripture was shared by VA Butler’s Chaplain, and a VA Butler volunteer played Wind Beneath My Wings.

Other new programs for this year, included staff support rounds, comfort companions, a flag ceremony for when a Veteran passes, and a tree ceremony (staff, Veterans and family members meet at the memorial tree on the unit every month to remember our fallen heroes. A brass plaque with the Veteran’s name is placed on the tree).
The Fit Life
Health and Wellness

232 fitness classes, 14 ‘Nutrition Kitchen’ demonstrations, and 4,512 total pounds lost through VA’s MOVE! programs are just some of the highlights from 2014 health and wellness programs at VA Butler Healthcare.

227 Veterans participated in the MOVE! Group Program in FY14 with a total loss 2,156 pounds. Telehealth technology supported the MOVE! Group classes in the five Community-Based Outpatient Clinics through Clinical Video Telehealth (CVT) to allow Veterans access to expert MOVE! Clinicians right in their local outpatient clinics. MOVE! Group programs generated 914 CVT encounters! The TeleMOVE! Program, aligned with Home Telehealth (HT) using a messaging device from the comfort of home and supported by a Care Coordinator dietitian, saw 244 Veterans with 2,356 pounds lost this year!

Health and wellness was a priority at major events throughout 2014. VA Butler’s Health Promotion and Disease Prevention Program hosted and participated in 16 health and wellness-focused events and outreach activities, highlights include:

• Healthy Living Recognition Event – 25 Veterans recognized!
• Pink Out for Breast Cancer Awareness
• National Eating Healthy Day
• Great American Smoke Out Event – 90% of Tobacco Cessation Support Group participants remain tobacco-free!
• Healthy Living Food Drive – 619 items collected!
• Weight Loss Challenge
• Health, Wealth, Wellness, and More Expo
• Diabetes Alert Day Event
• Farmers Markets (three total)
• Summer Health & Wellness Event, including a grilling demonstration by VA Butler’s Director!

U.S. Air Force Veteran Victoria Vranjes joined the Be Active and MOVE! pilot program at VA Butler Healthcare, and has been participating ever since. After undergoing major surgery and being in a body brace in the hospital for 13 months, Victoria had no strength or stamina, was hunched over, could barely walk, and had gained 75 pounds. Through exercise, motivation, VA’s MOVE! program, and now BAM!, Victoria is walking more upright, losing weight, and living healthier!

“Stepping in place, stretching, using resistance bands, and strengthening exercises – those are things I can do. Some of the guys do it a lot better than I do, but I keep working at it. You get a workout with BAM! To me, it’s as hard as rowing a rowing machine for three hours! With this program, once we start we go straight through with all of our exercises, and they keep switching it up. I am sweating from it. One of the things I really enjoy about the class – some of us are slower, some are faster – but you’re motivated when you see someone else doing it. It’s a camaraderie thing; we look out for each other.”

Victoria Vranjes, Air Force Veteran
Be Active and MOVE! (BAM!) Participant
(Now in its sixth round of programming at VA Butler, Be Active and MOVE! is a clinical video Telehealth program to help Veterans to be more physically active.)
A Focus on Recovery in 2014

More staff, new programs, and major events with a focus on recovery were a priority for VA Butler’s Center for Behavioral Health in 2014. New staff included an additional psychologist and nurse to support mental health efforts for Veterans. Three new groups, including Coping Skills, Cognitive Processing Therapy, and Veteran “X” also got started in 2014. Veteran “X” is a peer-led Mental Health and Substance Abuse Recovery Model program where Veteran participants serve as the treatment team for a fictitious Veteran “X,” giving them an active role in the treatment process.

Major events for Mental Health in 2014 included:

• **Recovery Recognition Day (5th annual)** – 19 local Veterans were recognized for overcoming mental health problems
• **Mental Health Summit** – 76 individuals between VA and the community worked together to enhance the mental health and well-being of our Veterans. Dr. Roger Brooke from the Duquesne University Military Psychology Clinic provided a keynote address
• **Mental Health Creative Arts Event** – Veterans displayed their artistic talents – paintings, drawings, sculptures, music, and more. Attendees voted for their favorite artist, and Veteran Don Steinbiser (and his wife, Sherry) won first place. Second place went to Veteran Ken Chenot, and third place to Veteran Chuck Jennings

VA Butler’s Domiciliary continued its female-only Veteran groups, and saw 15 female admissions in FY14. The Domiciliary also introduced the “Dominators,” VA Butler’s Domiciliary Band. The Dominators, a band created to show Veterans appropriate coping skills for recovery, includes band members Larry Miranda, Rick Cartwright, Tony Adams, Brad Meredith, and Tony Frucio. While there are many aspects involved in a Veteran’s recovery, therapeutic recreation, such as playing music, is significant. The Dominators encourage Veterans to discover and participate in recreation with the skills they have – the band has even inspired some Veterans in the Domiciliary to start playing guitar!

Veterans Crisis Line
1-800-273-8255, Press 1

“The end of 2010 and the beginning of 2011 was the bleakest and darkest time in my life. I felt hopeless and prayed every night that I wouldn’t wake up in the morning. I could not imagine my life with alcohol or without it; I was truly at the jumping off point. During this time, I called the Veteran Crisis Line; to this day, I cannot tell you how many. I was so scared, so full of fear, and I felt so hopeless I just wanted to end it all...

The last time I remember calling the Veterans Crisis Line, I spoke with a lady and she gave me a glimmer of hope that maybe, just maybe, the VA could help, that maybe there was hope for me. Within three weeks, I was being treated for my addiction and depression at VA Butler’s Domiciliary.

Over three years later now, I sit in my mother’s house for a weekend visit writing my story about how I have recovered from a seemingly hopeless state of mind and body. Not only do I have over three years of continuous recovery but I have become an employee at the VA, rebuilt my relationships with my family, and have become a respectful and valuable member of my community.”

*Cary Adkins, Army Veteran*

The Crisis Line
Taking Action to End Veteran Homelessness
Homeless Program

Veteran homelessness is decreasing in and around Butler, Pennsylvania thanks to the award-winning Homeless Team at VA Butler Healthcare. 832 Veterans utilized VA Butler’s Homeless Program in 2014 (down from 1,275 last year!). VA Butler met/exceeded all VA National Performance Targets for homeless services to Veterans, and VA’s Office of Mental Health Oversight and Joint Commission site surveys identified VA Butler’s Homeless Program and Homeless Peer Support Services as best practices in 2014.

Community partnerships are key to the success of VA Butler’s Homeless Program, and in 2014 we –

• Partnered with Lawrence County Community Action and Soldier On to promote and provide supportive services for Veterans and families focusing on prevention of homelessness and housing homeless Veterans and families

• Teamed up with the Grape Vine Center to provide Life Skills training and support to homeless and at-risk Veterans

• Collaborated with Continuum of Care Coordinators from surrounding counties to participate in an annual Point-In-Time count of homeless individuals and ongoing outreach activities to identify and engage homeless Veterans in VA and community services

• Hosted the annual CHALENG Forum attended by over 100 VA staff, community partners/stakeholders, and Veterans

VA Butler’s Veterans Justice Outreach (VJO) served 279 Veterans this year, and collaborated in the initiation of the new Veterans Treatment Court (VTC) in Mercer County. Butler’s VTC celebrated its second anniversary this November, and has now graduated four Veterans with the next graduates expected in early 2015. Mercer VTC, which started this past June, currently has six Veterans in the program. Under development is Lawrence VTC, projected for 2016.

Events focused on eliminating Veteran homelessness in 2014 too, we –

• Hosted the third Hiring Our Heroes job fair at VA Butler Healthcare – 252 resumes accepted, 24 interviews conducted, and 7 firm offers made!

• Participated in three Veteran Stand Down events in Armstrong, Lawrence, and Mercer Counties through active collaboration with community partners and local military services – serving 140 Veterans

After becoming unable to work, her husband passing away, and ultimately losing her house, U.S. Army Veteran Kitty Reno found support through VA Butler’s homeless program by way of a HUD voucher. This past summer, she was able to give up her HUD Voucher to another Veteran, as she secured a new home for herself.

“Of course I’m glad to be done needing a HUD Voucher, but it really came through for me during a bad time in my life. I didn’t know what I was going to do. It made a difference. And, now I’m getting a house! I’ve made a big turn in my life. Everywhere I go – if I meet a homeless Veteran, I always talk about the VA and programs available. Veterans, don’t be afraid, or have too much pride to go to or call the VA and see what you’re eligible for! It doesn’t hurt to ask.”

Kitty Reno, Army Veteran
Previous homeless Veteran who volunteered at the 2014 Stand Down to help other homeless Veterans
Rolling Out the Red Carpet for Returning Service Members

Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF)/Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF)/Operation New Dawn (OND)

Marine Corps Veteran Eric Walker served as a Tank Crewman in the U.S. Marine Corps, deploying three times during his service. After leaving the service though, he struggled to adapt to civilian life and suffered from untreated PTSD symptoms and alcohol/substance abuse. In late 2012, Eric began treatment at VA Butler Healthcare for PTSD and alcohol/substance abuse. He completed 12 weeks of Cognitive Processing Therapy (CPT). In addition to CPT for his PTSD, Eric attended aftercare groups in the evening and substance abuse oriented groups. In May 2014, Eric became an employee at VA Butler Healthcare’s Domiciliary, helping other Veterans.

“CPT was the best treatment fit for the symptoms I had. Symptoms like avoidance, and the way I had been viewing myself since I left the Marine Corps. That stuff was really ingrained in my head. I had a therapist who really worked some wonders in my life. I found right away that I could trust her, so I decided to give it everything. I had to get better. To this day it is one of the most rewarding things that I have ever done for myself. The thing that stands out to me the most is the dedication of VA employees and how invested they are in what they do because they refused to give up on me. Today I am 100% invested in what I do, hoping I can help other Veterans trying to overcome the same struggles.”

Eric Walker, Marine Corps Veteran
Operation Iraqi Freedom
Tank Crewman from 1999-2006

The new OEF/OIF/OND Program Manager for 2014, Amy Stewart, together with OEF/OIF/OND team member Amy Kunst, are ready to provide health care and more to our newest Veterans returning from the armed forces. VA Butler served 3,257 OEF/OIF/OND Veterans in 2014, with 1,590 new for this year! We welcomed home returning service members at the annual Welcome Home Event in August at the 16th Annual Regatta at Lake Arthur and invited Veterans to the Heroes at Heinz Field Event in September with the Pittsburgh Steelers. Outreach efforts were also increased to include “Salute to Veterans” night at Slippery Rock University.

In 2014, the OEF/OIF/OND Team held a focus group including 10 OEF/OIF/OND Veterans and four VA staff members to provide the opportunity to discuss what is working well, and any areas for improvement.

What did Veterans have to say?

“Health care here is off the charts.”

“Things happen faster here. I don’t have to wait long for my appointments where it was two weeks out at other facilities.”

“I’ve had more done here in one year than in five years at another facility, like polytrauma.”

“Everyone here seems willing to jump through hoops.”
Women are the fastest growing group within the Veteran population. VA Butler served 1,145 female Veterans in 2014, 37 new to VA! To address the continuing needs of our women Veterans, VA Butler expanded both services and staff in 2014. Staff dedicated to our women Veterans now also includes an Outreach Specialist, Veteran Advocacy and Veterans Benefits Administration Representative, and a Readjustment Counseling Services Representative. HCG (pregnancy) testing was added to all outpatient clinics, in addition to the main facility, and Urodynamic Telehealth services increased. Female-only groups at the Domiciliary also remained a priority, and the group focuses on Coping Skills and Stress Management especially for women.

Throughout the year, VA Butler focused several major events on women Veterans, including the first annual Winter Women’s Wellness event, VA’s Go Red for Women Event, a community Women’s Health Expo, a Breast Cancer Awareness Walk, and the second annual Clothesline Project for Sexual Assault Awareness Month (that doubled in size this year!).

Army Veteran Jessie Truitt was raped by her station commander while on recruiting duty. The day after the rape, she decided to get out of the Army. She kept her rape a secret from everyone she knew and loved. Jessie received a wake-up call while volunteering with her daughter’s Girl Scout troop. A police officer came to talk to the girls about good and bad touch and told them to tell their parents, teacher, preacher, or another safe adult. One girl asked, ‘What if they are the one hurting you?’ Jessie spoke up and told the girl to tell her or anyone else they felt safe with. It was a slap in the face for Jessie. She thought, ‘How can I encourage her to tell if I didn’t?’ That very moment Jessie owned her story. The next day she told her husband and best friend. The following day Jessie called to get an appointment with VA Butler’s Center for Behavioral Health.

“It takes a long time to make the mental transition from victim to survivor, and even longer to become an advocate. I remember the embarrassment I felt because it was my fault. The more Veterans tell their story and own it, the less power the event has on them. After about three years of seeing my therapist, I’m finally feeling things again. There were lots of times when I asked myself if I thought therapy actually helped me. The answer is YES, drastically. There are many days that I want to get in the car and start a new life somewhere else. If it wasn’t for my VA therapist, I may have done that. No matter where you are in your journey, whether your wound is new or if it’s something you’ve struggled with for years, therapy can help.”

Jessie Truitt, Army Veteran
Clothesline Project Participant for Sexual Assault Awareness Month 2014
A Butler Healthcare would not have had the rewarding year it did without the support of hardworking caregivers and dedicated volunteers. 

420 Caregivers were enrolled in VA Butler’s Caregiver Support programs in 2014 – 33 Family Caregivers (Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers Program) and 387 General Caregivers (all eras). Our motto – You’re there to support your Veteran, and VA Butler is here to support you. This year, VA Butler offered PTSD Caregiver Support Groups, REACH VA Telephone Support Groups, Spouse Telephone Support Groups, and individual supportive counseling. We also hosted the annual Caregiver Luncheon during National Caregiver Month in November with over 40 in attendance.

VA Butler’s 354 Volunteers gave 37,987 hours of service and $179,622.31 in donations during FY14. The Voluntary Services program also started a new program in collaboration with the Veterans Justice Outreach (VJO) and Veterans Treatment Court (VTC) programs in 2014 to provide community service opportunities for Veterans. After being referred and accepted (based on an interview), Veterans complete volunteer orientation and give at least 100 hours of volunteer service. While the program is new, four Veterans have already participated with 226 hours of service!

VA Butler Healthcare celebrated National Volunteer Week April 6-12, 2014 to thank over 300 volunteers for their service of caring for Veterans. New this year, VA Butler held a special Making Lives Better Volunteer of the Year program to honor a male and female volunteer who exemplify the spirit of volunteering. Congratulations to winners Betty Slaugenhaupt and David Cavanaugh!

Betty Slaugenhaupt, Volunteer/Veteran Spouse and David Cavanaugh, Volunteer/Air Force Veteran

Winners of the first annual Making Lives Better Volunteer of the Year award program

Ms. Betty Slaugenhaupt has been a volunteer for 25 years and has accumulated 9,169 hours of service. She is the wife of an Army Air Corps Veteran and the sister of Veterans. Betty volunteers because she wants to give back to those who gave so much, like her husband and brothers. “It’s the least I can do,” said Betty.

Mr. David Cavanaugh, an Air Force Veteran, has been volunteering for 8 years and has accumulated 2,199 hours of service. Mr. Cavanaugh volunteers because he enjoys making the Veterans’ day – making them smile. “I get more from them than they do from me,” he said.
592 dedicated employees served Veterans at VA Butler Healthcare this year, 182 (or 31%) being Veterans themselves! Employees made big impacts this year – from surpassing the national goal for the All Employee Survey (AES) with a participation rate of 72.9% (2nd highest in VISN 4!) and raising $27,440.38 for the annual Combined Federal Campaign – to submitting 158 Continuous Quality Improvement project ideas and walking to eliminate Veteran homelessness in the 4th annual VA2K with over $3,000 in donated items and dollars.

34 employees took home Excellence in Government FEB Awards this year too, including gold award winner Jeanne Bilanich, and three silver award winners: Marne Bilanich, Ken Kalberer, and Amanda Kurtz. VA Butler’s Homeless Team also took home a silver award. 13 individuals, and two teams – VA Butler’s RPIW Workgroup and CQI Team – brought home bronze awards.

VA Butler employees also celebrated Customer Service Week October 6-10, 2014 by reaffirming and saying “Yes” to VA’s Mission and Core Values of Integrity, Commitment, Advocacy, Respect and Excellence. During the week, VA Butler hosted its first Mr. and Mrs. Congeniality Contest – winners Michael Engwer and Janice Nulph were recognized by coworkers, supervisors, and most importantly, by Veterans for their dedication to quality service and customer satisfaction each and every day.

“The VA helped me get the treatment I needed. I still have a far road ahead to recovery, but I’m confident I can make it, especially with the great team I’m working with at VA Butler Healthcare. It makes me proud that I served my country, and to know that the VA has my back when it comes to getting the help I need.”

Christopher Price, Air Force Veteran
Community Living Center (CLC)–Final 30 Beds

VA Butler Healthcare held a Ribbon Cutting Ceremony in June dedicating the completion of the final 30 constructed beds in its Community Living Center (CLC). VA Butler’s now complete, 60-bed Community Living Center (formerly known as a nursing home) provides short-stay and long-stay nursing home care to Veterans. The first 30 beds opened to Veterans in the fall of 2011. Construction of the 30 beds dedicated on June 11, 2014 began in the spring of 2012.

VA Butler’s Community Living Center houses 60 Veterans and encompasses 54,000 square feet. The new CLC includes two multipurpose rooms, a game room, computer room, glass-covered porch, family overnight room for relatives of hospice patients, and a spa room for therapeutic programs. The CLC’s Atrium provides natural light all year long for Veteran residents.

New CLC, HCC Progress, and EUL to Eliminate Homelessness

What do our Veterans think of the new CLC?

Army Veteran Carl (Vietnam Era): I really like it. I have my own room and bathroom. I also have a big closet for my clothes, and can wash my own clothes because we have a washer and dryer on the unit.

Army Veteran Fred (Korean Era): It’s as nice as can be. It’s very clean and our rooms have it all. The Recreation is excellent. Don’t hesitate to come here – the nursing staff is fabulous!

Health Care Center (HCC) – Moving Forward in 2015

On December 31, 2014, VA awarded a lease contract for a 168,000 net usable square foot Health Care Center (HCC) in Butler, Pennsylvania, to Cambridge Healthcare Solutions PA, LP (Cambridge), of Vienna, Virginia. The HCC will expand VA Butler Healthcare’s outpatient services to meet increasing Veteran demand and will include Primary Care, Specialty Care, Dental, Lab, Pathology, Radiology, Mental Health, and Ancillary and Diagnostic services.

The HCC will be a two-story building located on North Duffy Road, approximately 1.4 miles away from the Butler campus. Construction completion is anticipated to be 31 months from the award of the contract.

VA Butler Healthcare and Housing Authority of Butler County Proposed Enhanced Use Lease (EUL) – Working to Eliminate Veteran Homelessness

VA Butler continues to work with VA Central Office, Office of Construction and Facilities Management for an Enhanced-Use Lease (EUL) with the Housing Authority of Butler County for operation of an 18-unit permanent housing program for senior, homeless Veterans. The lease would allow for reuse of vacant building 3 and approximately two acres of land on the VA campus to house the program. The proposed project directly supports VA’s goal to eliminate Veteran homelessness by assisting homeless Veterans and Veterans at risk of homelessness to obtain safe, affordable, permanent housing.
In 2013, VA Butler Healthcare started its Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) initiative – a way to get all VA staff involved in fostering a culture of continuous improvement. Now, over two years later, over 100 Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) projects and Just Do It (JDI) actions have been successfully implemented. This year, 158 improvement ideas were submitted by VA staff!

- 17 (11%) Safety
- 29 (18%) Satisfaction
- 28 (18%) Access
- 50 (32%) Cost/Time Savings
- 34 (21%) Quick Fixes (miscellaneous)

Highlights from this year’s CQI results include:

- Increased clinic utilization in Behavioral Health and Specialty Clinics
- Revised clinic schedules to allow appointment lengths to be individualized to the type of appointment, thereby creating additional time for more slots to see patients
- Reduced cost of custom fit knee braces in VA Butler’s Rehabilitation Department by fitting them in-house over using an outside vendor (this cost savings will be an estimated $60,000 to $80,000 savings in a year). This has also decreased the turn-around time from fitting to delivery of the brace to the Veteran
- Implemented Tele-Enrollment for new Veteran enrollees at the Community-Based Outpatient Clinics, saving travel cost and time, and providing face to face interaction remotely
- Initiated Centralized Check-In (CCI) to provide an overall more efficient and positive experience for Veterans
- Developed a way-finding handout with a facility map to assist Veterans with navigating to their appointments

We held the first Continuous Quality Improvement Recognition Event in 2014, awarding a Gold, Silver, and Bronze award for two categories of projects, CQI and JDI. Congrats to the winners!

**Winning CQI Projects**

**GOLD**
Power Wheelchair in-house Repairs – Mike Donley

**SILVER**
Way Finding Tools & Maps for Veterans – Matt Wilson; Trish Macgregor; Valerie Pfeifer and Faith Barber

**BRONZE**
KIOSK Improvement Project – Ellen Smith and Dave Logue

**Winning JDI / Quick Fix Projects**

**GOLD**
Lab & Urine Drug Screening-On-site Testing – Richard Harris; Pat Engelspiepen and Karen Gliebe

**SILVER**
Custom Knee Brace Fittings In House-Rehab – Brandon Viehmann; Lori Richael; Kimberly Timmerman and Scott Belden

**BRONZE**
DOM Homeless Project – Melinda Hogue Rebecca Fast; Jaime Brewer; Rick Cartwright and Nicole Fenloc

VA Butler Healthcare also maintained and received eight Accreditations for 2014:

- Commission on the Accreditation of Rehab Facilities (CARF)
  1) Healthcare for Homeless Veterans (HCHV) Program, 2) Comprehensive Intensive Inpatient Rehabilitation (CIIRP) Program, 3) Domiciliary, 4) Compensated Work Therapy Transitional Residence (CWT/TR) Programs
- Joint Commission Accreditations:
  1) Ambulatory Care, 2) Behavioral Health, 3) Home Care, 4) Nursing Care Center
Directing a Successful 2014

Veterans Served 19,332
Employees 592
Volunteers 354
Volunteer Hours 37,987
Facility Accreditations 8
Operating Budget $101,107,312
Operating Beds 163
Outpatient Visits 174,466
Outreach Events 71
Twitter Followers 1,177
Facebook Fans 1,019
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 19,000 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.

The 2014 VA Butler Healthcare Annual Report is published for Veterans, employees, volunteers, and friends of VA Butler Healthcare.

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