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Network Director's Update

February 2012



National News: (Click on titles to read full press release)

[VA Launches Personalized Health Benefits Handbook](#) - Veterans enrolled in the health care system of the Department of Veterans Affairs have begun to receive personalized booklets that explain their health care benefits and contain other useful information. (2/22/12)

[Nine VA Staffers on "Federal 100"](#) - Nine employees of the Department of Veterans Affairs, including Deputy Secretary W. Scott Gould, are among the top 100 leaders in the IT industry, according to the "Federal 100" created by Federal Computer Week. (2/16/12)

[VA Participates in Settlement with Mortgage Banks](#) - The Department of Veterans Affairs announced its participation in the largest state-federal legal settlement in history that deals with problems within the mortgage industry. (2/16/12)

[Veterans Crisis Line Provides Confidential Help to Veterans and Families](#) - The Department of Veterans Affairs is expanding its efforts to prevent suicide through several new initiatives that increase the availability of services for Veterans, Servicemembers and their families. (2/15/12)

[Veterans Canteen Service Keeps Kitchen Waste Out of Landfills](#) - The Veterans Canteen Service (VCS) of the Department of Veterans Affairs is piloting two initiatives that should keep nearly 600,000 pounds of kitchen waste out of U.S. landfills in 2012. (2/14/12)

[VA Budget Request Tops \\$140 Billion for Veterans Programs](#) - With more than 1 million active-duty personnel scheduled to join the ranks of America's 22 million Veterans during the next five years, the President has proposed a \$140.3 billion budget for the Department of Veterans Affairs for the fiscal year beginning Oct. 1. (2/13/12)

[VA, State Association Sign Partnership Pact](#) - Building upon a 66-year partnership with the states, the Department of Veterans Affairs has signed a formal agreement with the National Association of State Directors of Veterans Affairs (NASDVA) to enhance their relationship. (2/13/12)

[New Online Enrollment Application Available for Servicemembers](#) - The Department of Veterans Affairs partnered with the First Army at Camp Shelby, Miss., to launch a streamlined version of its online application for VA health benefits (VA Form 1010EZ) for Servicemembers returning from deployment. VA will introduce it at demobilization sites nationwide by early spring 2012. (2/3/12)

[Over 500 Vets Hired at VA's Hiring Fair](#) - With the success of its recent "Hiring Fair" in Washington, which resulted in more than 500 tentative job offers for Veterans, the Department of Veterans Affairs is looking at ways to expand VA's traditional hire-a-vet program with major Veteran-focused career fairs throughout the country (2/2/12)

[VA, NFFE Reach Agreement on New Union Contract](#) - Officials of the Department of Veterans Affairs and the National Federation of Federal Employees (NFFE) have reached final agreement on a new national collective bargaining agreement, their first since 1997. (2/2/12)

[VA Caregivers Support Line Celebrates First Anniversary](#) - On Feb. 1, the Department of Veterans Affairs will mark the one-year anniversary of the toll-free National VA Caregiver Support Line, 1-855-260-3274. The support line's dedicated staff has helped more than 25,000 Veterans, family members and Caregivers connect to resources and receive access to services they have earned. (2/1/12)

VISN 19:

Appointment of new Network Director

We are pleased to announce that Secretary Shinseki has appointed Ralph T. Gigliotti as Rocky Mountain Network Director, effective March 11, 2012.

Mr. Ralph T. Gigliotti currently serves as Director of the VA Medical Center in Durham, North Carolina and was appointed to that position in 2005.



Prior to his selection as the Medical Center Director in Durham, NC, Mr. Gigliotti served as the Associate Director

of Eastern Colorado Healthcare System (ECHCS) located in Denver, CO. During his appointment there, Mr. Gigliotti was instrumental in laying the foundation of the new Denver VAMC Replacement Facility which is scheduled to open in 2015.

Mr. Gigliotti joined the VA in 1983 and served as Associate Director, VAMC Chillicothe, OH and in various other management positions within VA Health Administration management – all which have provided him with excellent knowledge of VA’s mission, organization, programs, and systems.

He is a native of Pennsylvania. He received a Bachelor of Arts degree in Economics from Wittenberg University and a Master’s of Health Service Administration from Central Michigan University. Mr. Gigliotti is a Fellow in the American College of Health Care Executives.

Eastern Colorado Health Care System



Denver, CO – Replacement Medical Center Facility

The Denver VAMC (parent Eastern Colorado Health Care System) provides monthly updates on the status of the Denver Replacement Hospital. Updates are distributed via e-mail monthly and can be found on www.denver.va.gov or on Facebook www.facebook.com/denverva.

Another resource for keeping up-to-date on the status of Project Eagle is to check out the Kiewit-Turner “Progress” webpage. This page will have images of the project as it moves forward. Be sure to check back often as they continue to update the page with the latest information. <http://www.denvervahospital.com/progress/>

Kiewit-Turner turns over fourth floor, progress at Veterans Affairs hospital continues

The fourth floor renovation of the Clinic Building South is substantially complete. The floor was turned over to the Department of Veterans Affairs Office of Construction and Facilities Management and the Department of Defense

Thursday morning. As of Feb. 9, 33,334 cubic yards of soil have been excavated from the Diagnostic and Treatment Facility site, the equivalent of 2,381 truckloads carrying 14 cubic yards of soil.

Support of excavation is in progress at both the Diagnostic and Treatment Center and at the underground Parking Visitor South (PVS). Installation of the dewatering system at the PVS is more than half complete.

More information can be found on the project’s website, www.denvervahospital.com.

VA Eastern Colorado Health Care System Opens New Homeless Veterans Resource Center

A U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs facility that brings services directly to homeless Veterans in the neighborhoods they walk was opened in Denver on Feb. 10. A Community Resource and Referral Center (CRRC), one of 12 planned by the VA and the first to open its doors, was dedicated in a neighborhood close to shelters and churches where homeless Veterans spend their days and nights.

The CRRC can offer a variety of services to Veterans who walk in, including transitional and permanent housing, medical and mental health services, and VA and non-VA benefits. The center is staffed by social workers and others, and includes showers and a place where Veterans can drop off their laundry for later pick-up.

Lynette Roff, director of the VA Eastern Colorado Health Care System, encouraged those attending the opening of the CRRC to fight homelessness on two fronts: by reaching out to homeless Veterans, and by working with those at risk to prevent them from becoming homeless.

The opening ceremonies were attended by more than 150 dignitaries, Veterans, and Federal and city officials, including Denver Mayor Michael Hancock.



Hancock praised VA's effort to bring the fight against homelessness to the city's neighborhoods, and noted that Denver's Road Home, the city's 10-year effort to end homelessness, was aligned with the VA in its effort to fight homelessness.

The 4,200-square-foot facility includes a reception area, four interview rooms, a break room, showers, laundry, a conference room and lots of employee cubicles. Some of the work space will be used by the VA's partners in the homeless effort: a VBA specialist will work there one day a week and representatives from other agencies may also send workers to the CRRC.



A key difference in the CRRC approach to homelessness is that it assists homeless Veterans in finding housing first, followed by assisting with other benefits, said Michelle Lapidow, director of Health Care for Homeless Veterans at the ECHCS. Getting homeless Veterans into housing stabilizes them and improves the chances of them responding to other forms of assistance, she said. "It keeps them in the community," Lapidow said.

As part of that approach, the CRRC staffing includes eight people who form an Assertive Community Treatment team. ACT is an evidenced-based approach to dealing with homelessness that has been embraced by the VA. ACT teams assertively go into the community, meeting Veterans in their homes or elsewhere to provide an array of services – from mental health treatment, substance abuse treatment, medication management & case management.

The CRRC is adjacent to the Bo Mathews Center for Excellence, which provides community services. Lapidow said the proximity and involvement of the Bo Mathews Center creates a solid nucleus of assistance to the community and to the homeless.

Grand Junction VAMC



The Grand Junction VA Medical Center continues to focus on reaching out to Veterans in its rural communities.

Four major events were held in February; a Health Fair in Moab, a Women Veterans Forum in Montrose Colorado, the publication of a Veterans "How to Access VA Health Care" guide produced by the Free Press newspaper and a Veterans Forum & Information Fair in Collbran Colorado. The Collbran event was well attended by current patients, and also attracted several Veterans who were not enrolled for VA care.

The Grand Junction VAMC also saw considerable support from the community with several organizations hosting special events at the medical center in honor of VA patients providing support with donations to several activities like the recreation therapy program. During Patient Recognition Week itself, the facility concluded its celebration with a special Barbeque for the Community Living Center patients.

A very special moment for the Medical Center was a \$1,000 donation from the Colorado Disabled American Veterans Auxiliary to purchase special furniture and decorative items for a new family waiting area currently under design.



Kathy Hanner with the DAV Aux, Dept. of Colorado presents a check for \$1,000.00 to Chance Everett of the GJVAMC Engineering department.

The donation will help the GJVAMC in building a new and updated family waiting room.

VA Montana Health Care System:



Veterans Court in Billings

The Veterans Court in Billings was recently featured in the Billings Gazette. District Court Judge Knisely along with eight other Billings treatment team members and VA Montana liaison Paul Harman attended national Veterans court training earlier this month.

Montana also has another Veteran court located in Missoula. The Missoula court started up last summer. Chavis Nicholls, a Veteran, is the court's treatment coordinator and is employed by Rimrock Foundation.



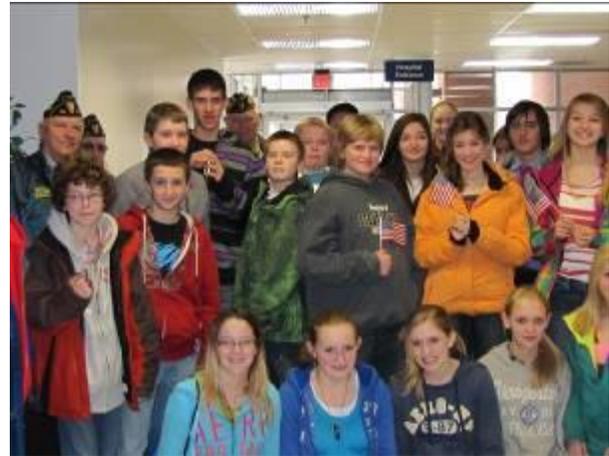
The training is a teamwork approach with staff from the county attorney's office, public defender, sheriff's office, police department, Montana Highway Patrol and Department of Correction's probation officers.

Veterans that are in trouble with the law often are homeless. They also typically do not seek services through the VA. Chavis Nicholls, the treatment coordinator will attempt to get the Veterans to access the care or programs they need through the VA.

The team also works with the Veterans to tackle the issues that have hindered their ability to lead a productive, healthy life. The team works on life skills, job skills and finding safe, affordable housing.

The offenders in this program must appear every Wednesday before Judge Knisely. Depending on what they have done or not done during the past week, the Veterans receive praise or sanctions. The method is very effective, much more than traditional justice. Only 5 percent of the offenders who graduated from the Billings Municipal Drug Treatment Court re-offended, compared to the re-offense rate in Yellowstone County at 67 percent according to a 2010 study.

Valentine's Day!



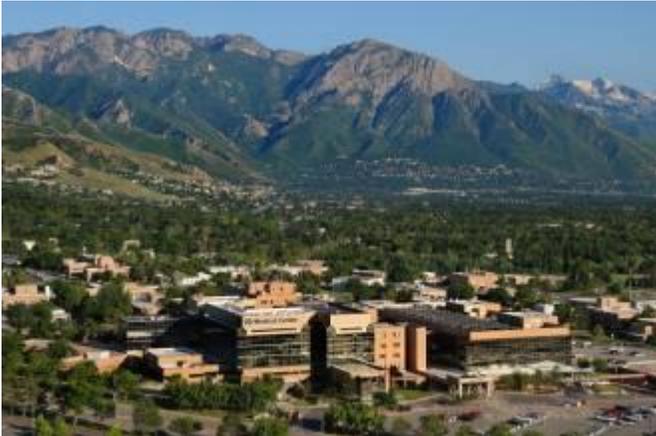
American Legion Post 94 sponsored the middle school students from Stevensville to bring handmade Valentines and thank our Veterans during National Salute to Veterans Week.

Twice each year, the Post pays for the bus and lunch for the students to come to the Medical Center at Fort Harrison, once during National Salute to Veterans Week and for Pearl Harbor Day. This is a special event for both the students and our Veterans! Voluntary Services provided cake that was served to the Veterans in the Outpatient waiting room.

VA Montana continues to work in collaboration with the state, local communities and private entities. A brief update on a three year, \$300,000 grant the State of Montana received in October 2010 to increase service to Montana's Veterans through Training, Team Building and Technology. The program is showing positive outcomes. Enrollment for Veteran's assistance has increase to more than 40 percent compared to nationwide statistics in the 30-35 percent range. 21,000 Veterans have been reached through a social media campaign for suicide prevention. Over 3,000 Vets have requested information and assistance.

VAMTHCS has been proud to be involved in training for Law Enforcement and emergency medical providers to recognize combat-related symptoms and, when appropriate, refer Veterans to VA for assistance instead of placement in the law enforcement system.

VASLCHCS



VA Salt Lake City: National Salute to Veteran Patients

The Governor of Utah, Miss Utah and Mrs. Melba Wahlen all have one thing in common. They love our Veterans!



National Salute week was a busy week, as mayors, authors, boys scouts and Veteran Service Organizations stormed the halls of the George E. Wahlen VA Medical Center. Our Veterans light up this time of year as Valentines are delivered and visitors pop in. Our Veterans stories are always amazing and this week always serves as a great reminder of their sacrifices for all of us.



Fisher House Opens Doors to First Families



January 9, 2012. CaSandra Herring checks in to be close to her husband as he prepares for heart transplant surgery. She has been with us ever since. Mrs. Herring is just one of several new families coming together during the most difficult of circumstances.

The Salt Lake City Fisher House serves a significant need in our highly rural intermountain west region. Our service area alone represents 125 thousand square miles to include Utah, Southeast Idaho and East Central Nevada; however we receive guests from all over the west.

Since welcoming our first families on January 9, 2012, we have already made so many close friends and have watched new families bond.

We comfort our Veteran families as their loved one endures chemotherapy or awaits brain surgery.

We are honored to offer a bit of respite during such trying times and our Fisher House staff experiences the hope and hurt right along with them.



Sheridan VAMC:



FROM THE HEART...

Everyone wants a hug or a kiss on Valentine's Day — so Sheridan Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution members Elizabeth Johnson and Marcia Gonda walked the halls of the Sheridan VAMC Tuesday, handing out chocolate hugs and kisses — and sometimes, even a real hug and kiss on the cheek.

FROM THE HEART



The Sheridan Press/Carie Haderle
From left, veteran Paris Leslie and Sheridan Chapter DAR members Elizabeth Johnson and Marcia Gonda laugh over Valentine's Day during National Salute to Veterans Patient Week at the Sheridan VAMC Tuesday.

Valentine's Day week is traditionally "National Salute to Veteran Patients Week," a week to honor the nation's hospitalized veterans. The Sheridan VAMC had volunteers from the Sheridan Chapter DAR on hand to deliver Valentines Tuesday, and 4H students will also visit.

The week is designed to increase community awareness of the VA's role in providing comprehensive medical care to the nation's veterans, and to encourage Americans to visit hospitalized veterans and work as VA volunteers. The annual week of events began in 1978, and today, more than a million cards and letters are sent to hospitalized

U.S. veterans during the week, according to the VA National Salute Effort.



The Sheridan Press/Carie Haderle

From left, veteran Charles Holtry selects chocolates from Sheridan Chapter DAR member Elizabeth Johnson at the Sheridan VAMC Tuesday.

Johnson said she does "little things here and there" at the VA throughout the year. "I've kind of lost track of how long I've been coming — maybe 10 years?" she laughed. "You know, it's helping serve refreshments on holidays and gatherings, visiting, that sort of thing. "One of our main directives (in the DAR) is to honor our veterans and help them in any way we can," Johnson said. "To deliver Valentines to the vets, I thought that was the perfect thing for us. I often look back at my own childhood and receiving Valentines and think about what it meant to me, and if we can bring a smile to a veteran's face, by giving them a Valentine —"Before she could finish her thought, Johnson stopped short to offer her basket of chocolates to a few men gathered in the Sheridan VAMC hallways.

Gonda, the Sheridan Chapter DAR registrar, said the group has about 50 members and is open to anyone who can trace a connection back to the Revolutionary War. Holding out her basket of chocolate to veteran Paris Leslie, Gonda offered chocolate kiss. Leslie smiled and said, "Oh, I'll take one, I guess."

"How about a real kiss on the cheek?" Gonda asked. "Okay!" Leslie said with a laugh as she leaned in.

Cheyenne VAMC:



Thanks to the MOVE! Program, Veterans winning the "Resolution-ary" war on weight management.

Metaphorically referred to as "The Battle of The Bulge," weight gain among American's is considered a health epidemic in parts of the county. Subsequently, weight management trends as a common New Year's resolutions in our society.

Nearly two months into the new year, Veterans enrolled in VA healthcare and who may be struggling with their weight are encouraged to sign up for a structured weight loss program called MOVE!

MOVE! is a national weight management program designed by the VA to assist veterans in weight loss, keep it off, make healthy food choices and improve overall health. Approximately 77% of the veterans the VA serves are categorized as overweight or obese. The link between being overweight or obese and increased risk factors for numerous health complications is clear. Diabetes, heart disease and hypertension are among the diseases that are often preventable, based on lifestyle choices.

Common tools in the MOVE! Program includes examples and discussion of healthy food choices from a VA Dietician as well participation in group exercises led by a VA Recreation Therapist.



For reasons driven by increasing the focus of preventative health and improving overall wellness, the VA National Center for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention began to pilot the MOVE! program in 2004. The program was fully implemented at the Cheyenne VAMC by 2006.

VA believes that supporting preventative health and improving overall wellness is important to maintain and enhance an individual's lifestyle. Emily Smith, Weight Management Program Coordinator at the Cheyenne VAMC says, "VA's MOVE! program is not just a diet program. Rather, we focus on establishing a healthy lifestyle that can be maintained over the long term." Smith adds that the MOVE! program helps overweight and obese veterans lose weight by providing a structured program that emphasizes education about nutrition, physical activity and behavior change.

Kristi Ruben, Cheyenne VAMC Recreation Therapist also provides information to Veterans during the eight week MOVE! program. Ruben says, "the idea is not to lecture, but to encourage and engage each Veteran in the program to take an active role in their lifestyle choices. We want the participants to learn about the benefits of physical activities and find ways to incorporate these activities or exercises into their daily lives." In 2011, 153 Veterans completed the Cheyenne VAMC's MOVE! Program. These Veterans succeeded in losing a combined, total weight loss of 805 pounds.

There are two ways to participate in the MOVE! program. Eight week series of group classes are taught in Cheyenne, Fort Collins, Greeley and Rawlins. Group classes offer an interdisciplinary approach with classes taught by professionals in the fields of nutrition, physical and recreation therapy as well as mental health. The second option is to participate in teleMOVE! from home with a home messaging device called a Health Buddy. With teleMOVE!, a registered dietitian will monitor your progress, set individualized goals with you and provide support over the phone.

For more information or to sign up with either the traditional class format or technological option, contact Emily Smith, M.S., R.D. at (970)590-1148.



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4100 East Mississippi Avenue, Suite 1100
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303-756-9279
visn19.va.gov

VISN Editor: Anita Urdiales
VAMTHCS: Terrie Casey
VAECHCS: Gary Clark
Cheyenne VAMC: Andy Ruben
Grand Junction VAMC: Paul Sweeney/Sadie Conklin
VASLCHCS: Jill Atwood
Sheridan VAMC: Jackie Van Mark