



# VISN 19 Network Director Update

May 2009

Glen W. Grippen



Secretary Shinseki

## **National News:**

[Gunn Sworn In As Veterans Affairs General Counsel](#) - Attorney Will A. Gunn, a retired Air Force colonel, took the oath of office yesterday as General Counsel of the Department of Veterans Affairs following his recent Senate confirmation. (5/27/09)

[Secretary Shinseki Announces \\$215 Million in Projects for Rural Veterans](#) - WASHINGTON - The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has provided \$215 million in competitive funding to improve services specifically designed for Veterans in rural and highly rural areas. (5/21/09)

[Duckworth Takes Charge of VA's Public Affairs and Outreach Programs](#) - Tammy Duckworth returned Wednesday to Walter Reed Army Medical Center, a key site in her long recovery from wounds suffered in Iraq, to take the oath of office as the chief spokesperson for the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). (5/20/09)

[VA Web Site Helps College Counselors Aid Veterans](#) - The Department of Veterans Affairs has launched a new Web site to strengthen the connection between college and university mental health professionals and the Veterans of the Iraq and Afghanistan conflicts now studying on their campuses. (5/27/09)

[Over 25,000 Post-9/11 GI Bill Applications Received in First Two Weeks](#) - Today, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced that VA has received more than 25,000 claims for education benefits during the first two weeks that Veterans and service members could apply online for the new Post-9/11 GI Bill. (5/15/09)

[Sepúlveda Sworn in as VA Assistant Secretary for Human Resources](#) - WASHINGTON -- John U. Sepúlveda, a former executive with the U.S. Office of Personnel Management, took the oath of office yesterday as the Assistant Secretary for Human Resources for the Department of Veterans Affairs. (5/21/09)

[President Obama's 2010 Spending Plan Initiates Transformation for VA Services](#) - Today, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced President Obama's 2010 budget for VA. The budget emphasizes a Veteran-centric commitment to expanded services with a 15.5 percent increase over 2009, the largest percentage increase for VA requested by a president in more than 30 years. (5/7/09)

[Riojas Sworn in as VA Assistant Secretary for Operations, Security and Preparedness](#) - Jose D. Riojas, a West Point graduate and former executive with the University of Texas at El Paso, took the oath of office yesterday as Assistant Secretary for Operations, Security and Preparedness within the Department of Veterans Affairs. (5/21/09)

[VA Recognized for Leadership in Federal Accountability](#) - The VA 2008 Performance and Accountability Report ranked second amongst the largest federal agencies according to a report issued by the Mercatus Center of George Mason University. (5/7/09)

[Baker Sworn in as VA Assistant Secretary for Information and Technology](#) - Roger Baker, a former chief executive officer in the information technology industry, took the oath of office yesterday as Assistant Secretary for Information and Technology within the Department of Veterans Affairs. (5/21/09)

[VA Accepting Applications for Post-9/11 GI Bill Benefits](#) - The Department of Veterans Affairs announced today that Veterans can begin submitting applications on-line for the Post-9/11 GI Bill. (5/1/09)

## **VISN 19:**

Exciting News! The VA Office of Rural Health announced approval of grant monies for VA rural health projects.



VISN 19 was awarded \$15,642,681 for four innovative rural health projects, designed to increase access to care to veterans across the Network through the increased use of telemedicine. These projects are anticipated to expand services to veterans living in rural and highly rural areas in the states of Colorado, Montana, Utah, and Wyoming, as well as portions of Nebraska, Kansas, Nevada, Idaho and North Dakota. The four approved projects are:

### **VISN 19 Primary Care for Rural Veterans: Telehealth Outreach Clinic Expansion Initiative: Funded for \$7,320,523**

This proposal would implement ten new Primary Care Telehealth Outreach Clinics (PCTOC) to serve an estimated 7,023 veterans in rural and highly rural counties in Colorado, Montana, Idaho, Utah, and Wyoming. The PCTOC makes extensive use of telehealth modalities, resulting in improved access for veterans in highly rural locations where it is not feasible or sustainable to locate a fully staffed clinic. VISN 19 will also develop a formal PCTOC Model and Operations Manual for dissemination to other VISNs and VA facilities across the country. Proposed locations for PCTOC clinics are communities in or near the following towns:

- Hamilton, MT Area
- NE Montana
- Rawlins, WY Area
- Salida, CO Area
- Moab, UT Area
- Glenwood Springs, CO Area
- Price, UT Area
- Idaho Falls, ID Area
- Evanston, WY Area
- Worland, WY Area

### **VISN 19 e-ICU Initiative : Funded for \$2,845,260**

This project proposes an “electronic ICU (*eICU*)” that will maintain access to critical care services in the three smaller facilities (Fort Harrison, MT; Grand Junction, CO; Cheyenne, WY) by combining existing technology with expanded critical care nursing services and medical specialists located in Denver and Salt Lake City

in a collaborative fashion across all five medical centers. The existing technology includes Clinical Information Systems (CIS) which have been funded for all five medical centers and a dedicated phone line for rapid consultation.

### **VISN 19 General Telehealth – Specialty Services: Funded for \$3,764,356**

This proposal would establish a VISN Telehealth Care Shared Resource System to provide expanded specialty care conferencing and consultation for care providers and veterans in rural areas across VISN 19. Program areas would include Endocrinology, Traumatic Brain Injury Cognitive Impairment Services, Pain Management, Dementia, PTSD, Dermatology, Rehabilitation & Wound Care, Pre/Post Surgery Care, Cardiology, and Tumor Board. The proposal will also explore expansion of services to rural Non-VA Telehealth Networks. Proposal would expand general telehealth specialty services to rural and highly rural veterans by using real-time video conferencing equipment and store and forward technology to increase specialty consultative services to all clinics across the Network.

### **Extended Education and Wellness Strategies for Veterans in Rural Communities: Funded for \$1,712,542**

Approximately 44% of the 700,000 veterans in VISN 19 live in rural areas that are long distances from specialty and educational services at the six VA Medical Centers. Using primarily telehealth modalities, this program will provide innovative education and wellness strategies to veterans in rural areas. The program will deliver intensive case management and education to veterans who have high-risk conditions.

## **ECHCS:**



**Denver Replacement Hospital Project:**

A supplemental agreement has been signed that will allow the Joint Venture Team to begin planning for the offsite utilities for the new facility. User group meetings for Phases A and B will be conducted the week of June 8<sup>th</sup> 2009. The space plan for all components has been sent to VA Central Office. The formal invitation to the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to be the keynote speaker at the groundbreaking ceremonies has been sent suggesting the week of August 16<sup>th</sup>, 2009.

Representatives from the Office of Construction and Facilities Management will be in Denver on June 8<sup>th</sup> and June 9<sup>th</sup> for conduct an Industrial Forum in Denver. This will allow time for companies/individuals who want to participate in the construction to find out more about the project.

**Colorado Springs**

Planning for a new CBOC in Colorado Springs continues. ECHCS working with VACO on space plans and procurement venue (lease vs. build-to-suit). This project continues to receive high Congressional, VSO and Veteran interest in a community with a large military population and several military basis including US Air Force Academy, Fort Carson, Peterson AFB, Schriever AFB, NORAD/NORTHCOM, and Cheyenne Mountain complex.

**Pueblo**

Currently the ECHCS leases space from Saint Mary Corwin/Centura Health in a shared medical building for the Pueblo CBOC. This lease will expire March 31, 2011. ECHCS is working with VA Central Office on space plans and a procurement venue (lease vs. build-to-suit). In the interim, ECHCS is pursuing a short-term contract/lease extension.

**VA Montana Health Care System:**

As the rural health care telehealth clinics have been approved, Montana is working on plans to establish medical care for Veterans in North East Montana and Hamilton Montana. The use of video conferencing equipment will play a large role in care at these locations. We continue to use video conferencing in our twelve clinics around the state making it easier for Veterans to access psychiatric professionals without having to leave their communities.

VA Montana Healthcare System continues to be excited about the opening of the new 25,000 square foot clinic in Billings this fall. Work continues with masonry and window installation. The roofing is 95% complete and sidewalk installation has started as well as fire sprinkler Installation. The stud framing is 75% complete, the heating and air conditioning and electrical are 35% complete and there is power in building.



**Sheridan VAMC:**



Sheridan VAMC Director Debra L. Hirschman and Patient Safety Manager, Lisa Garstad, flew to Washington DC to receive the 2008 VA National Center for Patient Safety Design Challenge Award. VISN 19 Network Director Glen Grippen also attended the event where Dr. James Begian and Joseph DeRosier of the National Center for Patient Safety presented the award.

The Sheridan VAMC designed and patented a suicide resistant door that can be used on acute psychiatric units. The design of the door eliminates anchor points that patient can use to harm themselves and uses Velcro as its hinge allowing the door to peel off the door jamb if any pressure is applied.

**VASLCHCS:**

Mr. Steve Young has been appointed as the Director of the Salt Lake City Health Care System. He comes to Utah from Florida where he served as the Deputy Network Director of the VA Sunshine Healthcare Network. He has served as chief operating officer for a health care delivery system consisting of eight hospitals, eight multi-specialty



outpatient clinics, 41 community-based clinics, eight nursing homes, and two domiciliaries throughout Florida, Puerto Rico and the U. S. Virgin Islands. From September 2008 to February 2009, he served as Acting Medical Center Director of the VA Medical Center, Northport, New York. In this role he had executive responsibility for a 356 bed medical center providing health care to over 33,000 veterans on Long Island, New York.

Mr. Young is a native of Iowa. He received a Bachelor's Degree in Social Work from the University of Iowa, and a Master's Degree in Public Services Management from DePaul University. He is board certified in health care leadership and a Fellow in the American College of Healthcare Executives and is a graduate of Leadership VA and VHA's Health Care Leadership Institute. He is married to Christine Young and they have two daughters.

to our veterans. We also had several staff members from our local congressional offices on hand as well.



**Grand Junction VAMC:**



The VASLCHCS Woman's clinic teamed up with the State Department of Veterans Affairs to hold the first ever Women Veterans Memorial Luncheon and Benefit Fair. It was a huge success. Over 150 female veterans attended to learn about their benefits and bond with other female veterans on a beautiful spring day. Information packets and enrollment forms were also in high demand. Our Woman's Program Manager stood alongside our OEF/OIF Program manager for hours offering guidance and assistance to our women warriors.

The Department of Veterans Affairs Mobile Vet Center is getting ready to depart Salt Lake City for the open road. The Veteran Center Mobile Outreach Van will provide outreach and readjustment counseling services to veterans and their families in rural areas throughout the state of Utah. The RV is part of a new VA initiative to improve access and quality of health care for veterans in geographically isolated areas. Our counselors and Vet Center team leader were interviewed by two local television stations as well as the local newspaper in an effort to get the word out

**60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary and Employee Recognition**

The Grand Junction VA Medical Center combined the celebration of its 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary with its Annual Employee Recognition picnic May 15, 2009. The celebration recognized not only the changes that had occurred over the last 60 years, but also the changes that were to come. The highlight of the event was the filling of a small time capsule filled with items, such as hearing aides, golf balls and a cell phone, contributed by patients and employees. A few employees added letters with "forever" stamps to be mailed when the capsule is opened on the medical center's 100<sup>th</sup> birthday. The ceremony was followed by a picnic lunch where nearly 550 people were served. Both events were attended by representatives from the local congressman's and senators' offices.

**Community Living Center Evolution**

The Community Living Center continues to lead in excellence of care and environment. Among the many changes the CLC has seen is the beginning of a Seismic Upgrade to ensure patients safety in the event of an earthquake, completion of a Hot Breakfast Buffet in the

CLC dining room (which will go into use when the seismic upgrade is complete), conversion to a total patient care nursing system where nurses are dedicated to specific patients on a one to five ratio and the implementation of a new nurse led Hospice and Palliative Care program dedicated improving not only end of life quality, but satisfaction as well.

**Minor Construction**

Minor Construction projects continue to proceed as planned. In addition to the seismic upgrades already mentioned, renovations of the third floor from office space to inpatient ward, in anticipation of the 30,000 square foot expansion, are continuing with few delays.

In addition, installation of a fifth camera and cardiac monitored bed in the ICU will soon be complete. Several other minor projects from electrical upgrades to parking lot resurfacing have been funded and will be implemented in a manner that minimizes impact on patient care.



**Cheyenne VAMC:**

Celebration of the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Cheyenne VA Medical Center was held on May 14, 2009. Wyoming Congress member and Senate members sent representatives to read letters of congratulations and present special tokens. Local VSOs also participated in the program.

The annual visit by the National Veterans Awareness Ride (NVAR) was on May 15, 2009. The NVAR group is a group of motorcyclists that stop at several VA facilities between Sacramento, CA and Washington, DC where they participate in the Rolling Thunder and Memorial weekend activities.

An interview with KGWN (CBS Affiliate), local channel 5, was given on May 12, 2009. The interview focused on the EPA/DOE "Energy Star Award" that was recently earned by the Medical Center.

**Cheyenne Project Updates:** The Surgical expansion project contract was awarded on May 28, 2009. The minor project for Ambulatory care is progressing on schedule. The mobile telehealth van is schedule to arrive mid July. Staffing is proceeding well with two nurses hired with a start date in early June. The new coordinator is on site and scheduling training with lab, cardiopulmonary and physical therapy.