



VISN 19 Network Director Update

September 2009

Glen W. Grippen



National News: *Click on article title to access webpage to read full article)*

[VA Staffs Office for Survivors of Vets, Service Members](#) -

To strengthen the programs of the Department of Veterans Affairs for the survivors of the nation's Veterans and military personnel, the Department has staffed an office to serve

as their advocate, with a charter that includes creating or modifying programs, benefits and services. (9/28/09)

[Secretary Shinseki Orders Emergency Checks to Students Awaiting Education Benefits](#) - Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki announced the Department of Veterans Affairs has authorized checks for up to \$3,000 to be given to students who have applied for educational benefits and who have not yet received their government payment. The checks will be distributed to eligible students at VA regional benefits offices across the country starting Oct. 2, 2009. (9/25/09)

[Participation in the New Post-9/11 GI Bill Continues to Grow](#) - The Department of Veterans Affairs announced today that it has provided certificates of eligibility to nearly 200,000 applicants for the new Post-9/11 GI Bill. Over 61,000 payments totaling over \$50 million to schools and students have been issued since the August 1, 2009, implementation of the new program. (9/23/09)

[VA's Health System Top Employer for AARP](#) - The health care network operated by the Department of Veterans Affairs has been named as one of the best employers this year for workers over 50 by the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP). (9/22/09)

[Secretary Shinseki Announces Progress on \\$1.4 Billion in Recovery Act Spending](#) - Secretary of Veterans

Affairs Eric K. Shinseki announced today the Department of Veterans Affairs' progress in executing

more than \$1.4 billion as the Department's share of spending under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA), more commonly known as the economic stimulus program. (9/21/09)

[Inspector General Completes Study of VA Endoscopic Programs](#) - The Department of Veterans Affairs' Office of Inspector General inspected every VA medical site with endoscopic equipment, independently verifying the success of a national program VA instituted to ensure safe and sterile procedures for reprocessing endoscopic equipment across the country. (9/18/09)

[VA Warns Veterans of Telephone Prescription Scam](#) - The Department of Veterans Affairs is warning Veterans not to give credit card numbers over the phone to callers claiming to update VA prescription information. (9/17/09)

[Secretary Shinseki Announces \\$1 Million for Aurora Site](#) - Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki has announced the award of a \$936,276 contract by the Department of Veterans Affairs to a Washington state company for demolition and site clearing of VA's new medical center in Aurora, Colo. (9/15/09)

[Secretary Shinseki Announces New Efforts to Explore Health Consequences of Service in Vietnam](#) - Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki announced today plans to begin additional research by the Department of Veterans Affairs to better understand the health consequences of service in Vietnam. (9/14/09)

[VA's Suicide Prevention Program Adds Chat Service](#) - The Suicide Prevention campaign of the Department of Veterans Affairs is expanding its outreach to all Veterans by piloting an online, one-to-one "chat service" for Veterans who prefer reaching out for assistance using the Internet. (8/31/09)

VISN 19:

Mr. Glen Grippen, VISN 19 Network Director, presented a Congressional Briefing on VISN 19 in Washington, D.C. on September 17, 2009. The briefing was attended by Congressional staff from Montana, Utah, Colorado, Nevada, and the Senate Veteran Affairs Committee.



Glen W. Grippen

VISN 19 Rural Health Projects Updates:

Primary Care Telehealth Outreach Clinics (PCTOCs)

Telehealth Equipment: A purchase list for all PCTOC telehealth was finalized by location and delivery of provider site equipment is in route to the facilities. Delivery of patient site equipment will start next week.

PCTOC Project Staffing: All facilities are moving on getting positions posted, and hired by the target date of September 30, 2009. To date:

- 9 positions - filled
- 3 positions - Cert Issued
- 51 positions - Require action yet
- 46 Positions - Posted

PCTOC Telehealth Training for new staff is being developed. Some resources are available on line. Telemedicine basics training, and specific Primary Care and Specialty care training on basics and specific peripherals are considered critical. Training will be ongoing using train the trainer concepts. First Train the trainer is scheduled for October 14-15, 2009.

PCTOC Space, Locations/Leases:

- Montana
 - Plentywood Hospital indicates interest, solicitation prepared
 - Hamilton - little interest from local medical community; trying to collaborate with volunteer Vet Center.
- Cheyenne
 - Rawlins, WY - Advertisement for lease went out 9/25/2009
- ECHCS
 - Salida, CO - Lease has been awarded. Address: Wentz Medical Office Building, Salida Hospital Campus, 920 Rush Drive, Salida, CO 81201. The building is under construction with a plan certificate of occupancy on/about December 1, 2009. ECHCS staff are in

process of ordering supplies, equipment and furniture. A storage facility in Pueblo is being arranged to store items until the building is completed.

- Grand Junction
 - Moab, UT- possible site found- GJ team to inspect on 10-5-2009
 - Glenwood Springs, CO - Still looking for space.
- SLC
 - Idaho Falls and Price - Solicitations are set to go out 10-1-2009.
- Sheridan
 - Evanston and Worland - Solicitations are set to go out 10-5-2009

General Telehealth - Specialty Consultations:

General Telehealth (GT)-TeleSpecialty Service Clinical Champions are being identified from ECHCS in Endocrinology, TeleTBI - Cognitive Impairment, TelePain, Tele-Dementia Services, Telemental Health - PTSD, Tele-Derm, Tele-Wound Care, Tele-Surgery, Tele-Cardiology, and Tele-Tumor Board. Service ECHCS is now finalizing a Specialty Scheduling System / consult management systems to manage both inter and intra facility consults and all the related activities for a telehealth visit: service agreements, clinic set-up/scheduling, consult templates, progress note templates, communication and follow-up.

Extended Education and Wellness -

This team has identified points of contact from each facility to implement an Oversight Committee. Criteria has been established for priority courses and targeted populations. We will start with Diabetes Mellitus, Tobacco Cessation, and Navigation with med management. Patient education staff has been hired. ECHCS is finalizing a Tele-Patient Ed Scheduling System / consult management systems to manage both inter and intra facility consults and all the related activities for a telehealth visit: service agreements, clinic set-up/scheduling, consult templates, progress note templates, communication and follow-up.

vICU Project: Name changed to (Virtual) vICU

The vICU Project held a Kick Off meeting in Grand Junction on Aug 4-5. The next steps are to develop measurable outcomes, visit rural stations and purchase Tandbergs (telehealth equipment) with deliveries in September. Status:

- Equipment ordered and on the way to the facility sites.
- 3 Site visits (Helena, Sheridan, Cheyenne) were completed by vICU nurses Sept 14-16 They provided vICU notebooks to each site

Cheyenne Mobile Tele-Primary Care – As of 09-28-2009, current enrollment is 158 veterans.

- Started Sterling, CO on 09-01-2009, Tuesday clinics. Well received by both patients and PCPs.
- Start Torrington, WY on 10-1-2009 and every Thursday thereafter.
- Start Laramie, WY on Nov 6, for an every Friday clinic.
- Start Wheatland, WY on December 2 for an every Wednesday Clinic.

Post Groundbreaking Luncheon

VISN 19 and ECHCS hosted a Post Groundbreaking Luncheon for those who were unable to attend the formal groundbreaking ceremony on August 22, 2009.

The luncheon included a wonderful spirit of camaraderie, pictures and the viewing of a video of the actual groundbreaking. Attendees are pictured below.



National Cemetery Update (as requested):

During the VISN 19/ECHCS Post Groundbreaking Luncheon, several questions were raised about the status of national cemeteries in Colorado. The Veterans Health Administration VA Rocky Mountain Network 19 office contacted the Department of Veterans Affairs National Cemetery Administration (VA NCA) in regard to these questions.

The National Cemetery Administration briefly shared information on two topics: 1) Additional land for Fort Logan: VA NCA has initiated preliminary discussions with the State of Colorado regarding additional land and are very early in the process of investigating its availability, cost and suitability for cemetery development. 2) Land for national cemetery in/near Colorado Springs: legislation on Colorado Springs has been introduced by Colorado legislators. Unable to obtain more specific information at the time of this publication.

As a point of contact for information, please contact Mr. Elton Wooten, Public Affairs Officer, Memorial Service Network 3 at 303-914-5709.

ECHCS



Denver, CO – Replacement Medical Center Facility:

Demolition and site clearing has begun on the Denver VAMC Replacement Facility! On September 15th, Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki announced the award of a \$936,276 contract by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to a Washington state company for demolition and site clearing of VA's new medical center in Aurora, Colorado.

"This contract brings VA's 21st century health care system closer to the Veterans of Colorado," said Secretary Shinseki. "The contract is proof of VA's commitment to Colorado's Veterans. It also

encourages the success of businesses owned by Veterans who were disabled during their military service.”

This is the first of several contracts that will provide a new state-of-the-art VA medical center consisting of inpatient hospital beds, a community living center, a spinal cord injury center and outpatient services. The total cost of the new facility is \$800 million, with completion projected in 2012.

GSA-JV of Bellevue, Washington, a service-disabled, Veteran-owned business, was awarded the contract, which calls for building demolition, site surfacing and hazardous materials abatement at the location of the former Fitzsimons Army Hospital. The General Contractor should be chosen in December or January.

ECHCS has developed a communication plan to keep everyone informed as to progress on the Denver Replacement Hospital. They are planning to send a short update regarding the new facility to VSO's every week. They will also post updates on the website - <http://www.denver.va.gov/>

VA Montana Health Care System:



The Billings Gazette highlighted a story on the opening of the new Billings CBOC Clinic on September 29, 2009.



DAVID GRUBBS/Gazette Staff

Patty Eisele of Miles City, property manager for the new Veterans Affairs clinic in the West End of Billings, checks in equipment Monday at the clinic. Tuesday, 9/29/09 was the opening day for the clinic.

Related Video



[New VA clinic prepares to open](#)

Billings Clinic Details

The new Veterans Affairs outpatient clinic in Billings opens today (9/29/09). The clinic is at 1775 Spring Creek Lane and can be reached by calling 877-468-8387 or 373-3500.

With this clinic opening, Montana's biggest veteran's clinic just got bigger. With 6,800 patients a year, the Veterans Affairs outpatient clinic in Billings does more business than any other VA clinic in the state.

Beginning 9/29/09, it will do most of that business in a spacious new building on the city's West End. The 25,000-square-foot medical center is 2½ times the size of the clinic's existing office on King Avenue West. Some services, including the laboratory and the pharmacy, will remain at the old site.

The new building has 35 examination and procedure rooms, almost triple the number as were in the old clinic, as well as private offices for physicians, five waiting areas and two conference rooms. It is the first Montana VA clinic to have its own CT scanner, and it will be the second clinic, after Missoula's, to offer colonoscopies. Colonoscopies are also available at the Fort Harrison VA Medical Center.

At least 15 new employees will be hired to staff the larger clinic, bringing the total work force to about 60 people. One of the new workers will be a driver to ferry patients between the two clinics. The \$8 million clinic sits off Gabel Road near the Shiloh Road interchange of Interstate 90. It could eventually double in size if a second phase of construction is approved by the government. The clinic is one of 12 VA clinics in Montana.

Acting Director Appointed to the VA Montana Healthcare System.



Mrs. Susan Fuehrer has been appointed as Acting Director of the Fort Harrison VA Medical Center. Previously, she served as the Associate Director of the Louis Stokes Cleveland VA Medical Center since January 22, 2006. Mrs. Fuehrer began her career with the Department of Veterans Affairs 25 years ago as a management intern at the Brockton/West Roxbury VAMC.

She has subsequently held numerous staff and line positions at the Louis Stokes Cleveland VAMC from May, 1986 to April, 2001. From April, 2001 to January, 2006 Ms. Fuehrer served as the Chief Information Officer for the Veterans Integrated Service Network for Ohio.

Mrs. Fuehrer is a 1986 graduate of the University of New Hampshire with a degree in Healthcare Administration and a 1990 graduate of the Case Western Reserve University with a Masters in Business Administration. She is member of the American College of Healthcare Executives and the College of Healthcare Information Management Executives.

Sheridan VAMC:



The new Gillette CBOC opened for patients on September 29, 2009. The new location is nearly three times the size of the former clinic. The original clinic was located in an industrial area of Gillette and rather difficult to locate.



Exterior of Gillette CBOC

The new clinic is located at 604 Express Drive just off 4J in Gillette. The Marna Kuehne Foundation built the clinic and leased it to the VA. Patients will enjoy a larger waiting room, a private area to discuss enrollment or billing issues with the clerk, more exam rooms, and expanded tele health opportunities. A grand opening and ribbon cutting ceremony is scheduled for October 29th at noon.

Patients will enjoy a larger waiting room, a private area to discuss enrollment or billing issues with the clerk, more exam rooms, and expanded tele health opportunities. A grand opening and ribbon cutting ceremony is scheduled for October 29th at noon.



Interior of Gillette CBOC

VASLCHCS:

Salt Lake VA Rappers take Vegas By Storm!

Appropriately adorned with VA “Bling” O. B. R. and the “SLiC” rappers made their debut performance in Las Vegas at the OEF/OIF Evolving Paradigms Conference. The performance brought over 3 thousand people to their feet, not because 4 professional women from the VASLCHCS decided to step out of their comfort zone, but because our front man, OIF veteran and rapper “Damien Holmes”, delivered a powerful message. The lyrics detail a returning veteran’s struggle transitioning back into normal life and the services the VA provides to help with those struggles. The VASLCHCS strongly believes this message needs to have a national stage is this form to truly reach out to and connect with the younger veterans.



Maria Fruin, Stacy Shaffer, Jill Atwood, Tanya miller and Damien Holmes aka Da Hitman

VASLCHCS Welcome Home a Huge Success

The OEF/OIF Team along with the Women’s Clinic, VA psychologists and enrollment experts talked to over 300 veterans at this year’s Welcome Home Event.



VASLCHCS teamed up with the Utah National Guard during the Governor’s review of the troops. Over 4,000 veterans were part of the review.



The Women’s Clinic outreached to women Veterans and offered face painting for the kids which also served as a great way to engage with the female veteran population.

Grand Junction VAMC:



The Grand Junction VA Medical Center received the following note and photo from a patient who benefitted from the Grand Junction VAMC's Pets for Vets program.

I am so very grateful for the Medical Center's Pets 4 Vets Program. Ivan needed a new home and I needed this great little companion. We were a match made in heaven... this Program brought us together.



Thanks everyone.

Donna Reed & Ivan

Hoefner and 82 other Veterans came into the GJVAMC Saturday afternoon flu clinic. One veteran said he probably wouldn't have been able to get into a regular clinic until much later in the month. The event was held because it allowed for easy traffic flow, and plenty of parking to wait for a few minutes after getting the shot.

Enrollment Clinic held in Blanding, UT

Outreach and Enrollment Clinics were held by the Grand Junction VA Medical Center at three locations in Southeast Utah to help Veterans, most of whom are Native Americans, in the region access four new VA contract clinics in the region. The three clinics were held Sept. 24, 25th in Monument Valley, Montezuma Creek and Blanding, Utah.

This region is geographically isolated and until the contract was put into place with the Utah Navajo Health System, Veterans living there had to drive between 125 and 210 miles on narrow highways and back roads to access the closest VA clinic in Durango, Colo. One location, Navajo Mountain, required Veterans to make an 80 mile "J" shaped drive from Utah into Arizona and then back into Utah before they could begin the main part of the drive. Several miles of this trip were on dirt roads.

In addition, to helping Veterans access VA provided Health Care, the staff that went also discovered that many veterans in the area had no idea they were eligible for other benefits. This included a former WWII POW in his early 90s. Although the majority of the Veterans living in the region are Native Americans, Navajo and Ute, the four clinics will provide care to any qualified veterans who want to be seen at one of them.



Victor C. Hoefner takes advantage of the Grand Junction VA Medical Center's drive through flu shot clinic Sept. 19.



Ward and Rosie Farley view the photo taken for Ward's new VA Patient Identification Card after registering for care through one of the new clinics.

Ward Farley enlisted at the age of 17 and didn't speak any English at the time, but knew how to sign his

name. He served just over three years as an infantryman and was medically discharged after being wounded. His discharge papers detail his duties as an infantryman down to "assemble and disassemble rifle." His combat experience was summed up in five words. "Also Participated in Combat Patrols."

The Farleys drove more than 70 miles to register. Ward had not used VA health care in more than 30 years because of the distance involved. The Farley's presented to the new Blue Mountain Hospital where one of the contract clinics is located. The hospital was built in Blanding Utah as a cooperative effort by several organizations. One of the facility's unique features is a ceremonial building that meets the requirements for religious and spiritual ceremonies held by both the Navajo and Ute spiritual leaders.

Cheyenne VAMC:



The Cheyenne VAMC has proposed plans to increase VA services in Rawlins, WY. Currently, bids for space are being solicited in Rawlins, WY for a new VA Telehealth Outreach Clinic. After the space is secured, Cheyenne VA will recruit, orient and train staff to the procedures and techniques to ensure successful Telehealth activities.

The Rawlins Primary Care Telehealth Outreach Clinic (PCTOC) will provide primary care services to veterans utilizing secure videoconferencing and peripherals which allow a provider to conduct a complete and thorough physical exam. Primary care will involve both medical and mental health care, and the clinic will be able to provide specialty care, specialty care referrals, laboratory procedures, teleretinal imaging, electrocardiograms, patient education, immunizations, and nursing procedures. The clinic will be staffed at the patient side by VA Registered Nurses and Clinical Telehealth Technicians; the VA providers will be located in Cheyenne, Greeley and Fort Collins.



We have shared recent updates on the Cheyenne VA Medical Center's Mobile Telehealth Clinic in the last few Network Director's Updates. Over the past month, all major TV stations in Wyoming, KWGN (CBS 5), K2 TV (ABC 2), KCWY (NBC 13), have broadcast news stories on the new VA clinic on wheels as well.

Cheyenne VAMC's Mobile Telehealth Clinic is proving to be an effective tool in both the ability to increase access to care, promoting the delivery of high quality VA healthcare as well as increasing awareness and enrollment of eligible Veterans into VHA care.

The Mobile Telehealth Clinic has made five provider visits to Sterling, CO between August 25 and September 29, 2009. Beginning Thursday, October 8, the mobile unit will also serve veterans in the Torrington, WY area on a weekly basis. Wheatland and Laramie will be added on over the next few months. If you know of Veterans who want to get an appointment through the Mobile Telehealth Clinic, have them contact us at 1-888-483-9127 ext. 3816.