

Veterans HEALTH MATTERS

AWARD WINNING Wellness Magazine for Veterans in Florida, South Georgia & the Caribbean

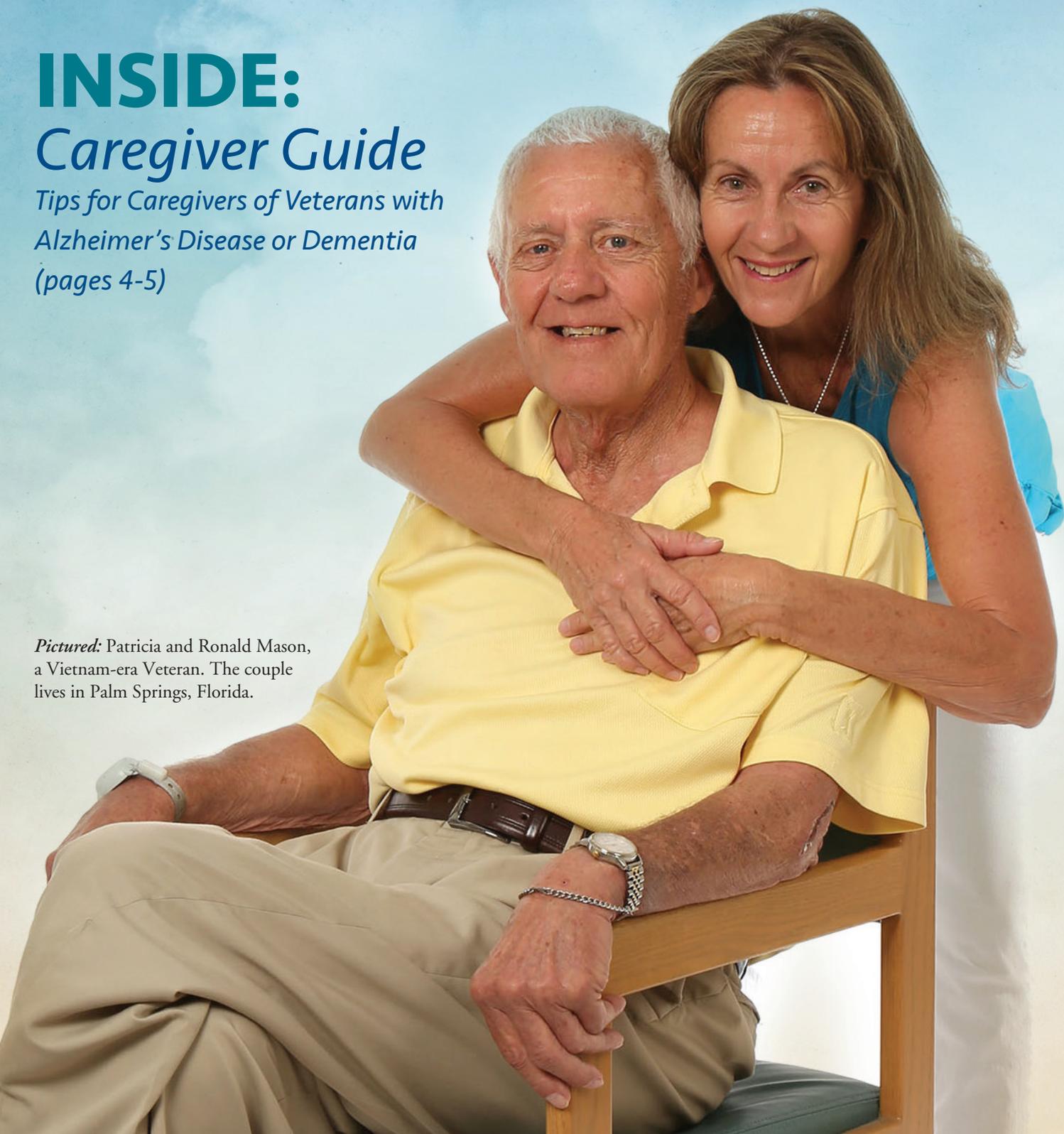
INSIDE:

Caregiver Guide

*Tips for Caregivers of Veterans with
Alzheimer's Disease or Dementia*

(pages 4-5)

Pictured: Patricia and Ronald Mason,
a Vietnam-era Veteran. The couple
lives in Palm Springs, Florida.



TO OUR READERS

Summer is here! When it is hot, dehydration can become a serious problem. To the right, learn how to detect early signs and prevent serious problems that can occur with dehydration.



Summer also means hurricane season. On page 3, learn ways to prepare to stay safe.

If you are a caregiver for a Veteran, you also need to take care of yourself. Find out how on page 4.

Exercising your brain is one great way to take care of yourself, no matter what stage of life you are in. Do that through learning new skills, eating healthy, and exercising. Read more on page 6.

Try the recipe on page 7 for a brain-healthy summer salad with dark leafy greens, berries, and walnuts. While there, play the word scramble for some brain exercise!

Be well!

Miguel LaPuz, M.D., MPA
Network Director, VISN 8

Be Proactive to PREVENT DEHYDRATION



The hot and humid days of summer increase the risk of dehydration, especially for the elderly. The risk is higher if you take water pills, sweat or do not have enough fluids.

If you feel thirsty, you might have already started becoming dehydrated. Watch for early signs, such as urinating less, dark or deep yellow urine, headaches and muscle cramps.

If you have any of these signs, drink fluids, such as a sports drink, and contact your VA Patient Aligned Care Team (PACT).



Most adults need about eight cups of fluids a day and more when the weather is hot.



If you do not like plain water, drink low-sugar beverages and dilute fruit juice with water.



Enjoy fresh fruits and vegetables to get water, too. Tomatoes have 94 percent water, watermelon has 92 percent, and cucumbers have 96 percent.



Add strawberries or lemon, lime or cucumber slices to flavor your water.

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Be Hurricane Prepared

Hurricane season is June 1 to Nov 30.

Never underestimate the value of being prepared! Check out the information below to learn more about hurricanes, hazards associated with hurricanes and what you can do to prepare.

Personal

Preparedness Checklist

Your personal preparedness checklist should include enough supplies for about two weeks.

Water – 18.5 gallons of water per person (half gallon for drinking and two gallons for bathing)

Food – ready-to-eat canned foods, shelf-stable snacks and beverages

Medicine – your prescription medications, a first aid kit that contains aspirin, non-aspirin pain reliever, antacid, antiseptic, scissors and insect repellent

Personal care items – toilet paper, towels, soap, shampoo, denture needs, eyeglasses, and sun protection

Other supplies – battery-operated radio, flashlight and batteries, non-electric can opener, portable cooler and ice, plastic trash bags, tarp or sheet of plastic, duct tape, pillows and blankets, bleach, paper napkins, and plates and cups

Pets – make a plan now for what to do with your pets if you need to evacuate

Hurricane Safety Tip

Identify one of your out-of-state friends as your family's single point-of-contact. Make sure everyone in your family has that person's phone number to call in case of an emergency.

Prescription Medications

- Keep a list of all medications in your personal preparedness kit.
- Keep a 15-day supply of medication and supplies on hand. Do not allow your supply to go below 15 days.
- For medications requiring refrigeration, make sure you have a small portable cooler or ice chest ready for easy transport.
- If you evacuate, bring prescription bottles – whether full or empty – of all medications that you are currently taking.
- If you have an urgent need for a prescription refill and your hospital or clinic is closed, contact the pharmacy at the VA facility where you are enrolled for care for directions on what to do. You can also go to that facility's website for information. For the most current information, visit the VISN 8 Pharmacy page at www.visn8.va.gov/VISN8/services/pharmacy.asp

Pharmacy Contact Information



Auto Refill



Speak to a Pharmacy Representative

Bay Pines VA Healthcare System

www.baypines.va.gov



727-398-6661

Toll free: 888-820-0230, press 1

Miami VA Healthcare System

www.miami.va.gov



305-575-3133 / Toll free: 888-276-1785, ext. 3133



305-575-3376 / Toll free: 888-276-1785, ext. 3376

North Florida/South Georgia Veterans Health System

www.northflorida.va.gov



352-374-6196 / Toll free: 800-349-9457

Orlando VA Medical Center

www.orlando.va.gov



407-646-4500 / Toll free: 877-646-4550

VA Caribbean Healthcare System

www.caribbean.va.gov



787-641-7582 ext. 25800 (English)

ext. 25881 (Spanish)

Toll free: 877-737-8820

James A. Haley Veterans' Hospital - Tampa

www.tampa.va.gov



813-972-2000, ext. 6767

Toll free: 888-716-7787, ext. 6767

West Palm Beach VA Medical Center

www.westpalmbeach.va.gov



561-422-6838 / Toll free: 866-383-9036

Follow-Up Care & Scheduled Appointments When Your VA Facility Is Closed

- *If the VA hospital or clinic is closed* and your VA appointment must be cancelled, contact the facility where you are enrolled for care to reschedule.
- *If you are evacuated.* For urgent care needs that require Continuing Care while you are evacuated, contact the facility where you are enrolled for care. If those phone lines are down and you are unable to contact them, you can also call Telcare, VISN 8's After Hours Medical Advice Line, at 877-741-3400 or call the VA's National Patient Hotline at 800-507-4571. Let them know you were evacuated and where you usually receive care. Telcare's operating hours are Monday to Friday, 4 p.m. to 8 a.m., and 24/7 on weekends/annual holidays and when activated during disasters or other emergency situations.

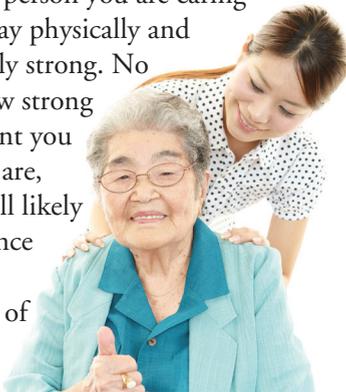
Caring for the CAREGIVER

Being a caregiver for someone with Alzheimer's disease or dementia can be a long, stressful, all consuming and very emotional journey. As the disease progresses, your responsibilities will likely become more challenging and it may seem, at times, like a thankless task, especially when your loved one loses his or her ability to show appreciation.

It can be a rewarding experience, as well. As there is presently no cure for Alzheimer's disease and just a few treatment options exist for its symptoms, it's your caregiving that can make the biggest difference in your loved one's quality of life!

You are not alone. According to the Alzheimer's Association, more than five million Americans are living with Alzheimer's. In 2015, more than 15 million caregivers provided an estimated 19.1 billion hours of unpaid care.

By focusing so much on your loved one's needs, it's easy to fall into the trap of neglecting your own well-being. But the best thing you can do for the person you are caring for is to stay physically and emotionally strong. No matter how strong and resilient you think you are, you are still likely to experience problems with signs of stress and burnout.



Caregiver support group members cheer on one of their fellow members who shared some good news. The group meets monthly at the West Palm Beach VA Medical Center.

Know The Signs of Stress & Burnout

Recognizing the signs of caregiver stress and burnout is the first step in dealing with the problem. Signs can take on a variety of forms, including but not limited to:

- Denial about the impact of the disease and the effects on your family
- Frustration
- Anger
- Guilt
- Loneliness
- Fatigue
- Physical Illness
- Depression
- Sleeplessness
- Lack of concentration
- Anxiety about the future



Take Action Now!

If you recognize the signs of stress and burnout, it's important to take action right away. The following are some suggestions for bringing you some relief courtesy of our community partner, Alzheimer's Community Care® in West Palm Beach, Florida:

- **Ask for Help!** It's okay to ask for help!!! Call the VA Caregiver Support Line toll-free at 855-260-3274. You can't be expected to do everything yourself!
- **Identify those family members or friends who may be able to supervise your loved one** or take him or her for a walk or perhaps pick up some groceries for you. It's all right to leave the person with someone else.
- **Learn to say "NO"** to things you don't want to do or can no longer take on, such as hosting holiday meals.

“The best thing you can do for the person you are caring for is to stay physically and emotionally strong.”

- **Accept that you are doing the best you can.** Understand that you do not need to be a “perfect caregiver.” Give yourself credit, not guilt.
- **Recognize what you can and cannot change.** You may not be able to change the behavior of your loved one, however, you can control the way in which you respond.
- **Set realistic goals for small accomplishments.**
- **Establish a daily routine.**
- **Keep in touch with friends and family.**
- **Join a support group** for caregivers of patients with Alzheimer’s disease or related disorders.
- **Set a time each week to do something for YOU!** Go to a movie, go shopping, go out to lunch with a friend, play tennis or play cards. Accept that you deserve breaks. Keep up with your hobbies and interests.
- **Try to get physical exercise:** Take a 20-30 minute walk a few times a week. Exercise at home.
- **Eat healthy foods.**
- **Keep up with your medical and dental checkups.**
- **Learn or update caregiving skills.** Becoming well-informed about the disease is helpful in coping with its related physical and emotional symptoms and managing it for the long-term.

- **Access additional services,** if appropriate. For instance, can your loved one attend Adult Day Care – even just one day per week? Look into respite care (short-term care where your loved one stays in a facility temporarily to give you time to rest, travel or attend to other things). Explore home health care services. Getting help with basic tasks like housekeeping, shopping, or other errands can help you provide more focused care for your loved one.
- **If you work outside the home, consider taking some time off.** The federal “Family and Medical Leave Act” may permit up to 12 weeks of unpaid leave per year to care for relatives. Consult your employer’s Human Resources department for details.

Caregivers of eligible Veterans of all eras may qualify for:

- Skilled nursing
- Home health aide
- Home Based Primary Care
- Medical equipment
- Home modification
- Vehicle modification
- Aid & Attendance
- Support groups
- Up to 30 days of respite care per year
- Education and training on caregiving



Each VA medical center has a VA Caregiver Support Program and VA Caregiver Coordinator. The program was developed to support Caregivers of Veterans to help ensure the best care for our Veterans. The program provides a wide range of services to Caregivers of eligible Veterans of all eras. Your local Caregiver Support Coordinator can coordinate training, connect you to resources within the VA and your local community, and provide you with support.

www.caregiver.va.gov

VA’s Caregiver Support Line

toll-free: 1-855-260-3274

Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m. – 11:00 p.m. ET
Saturday, 10:30 a.m. – 6:00 p.m. ET



BOOST YOUR BRAIN

We all know how important it is to exercise our bodies, but what about our minds? As a person gets older, memory loss and confusion can occur. Things like social interaction, physical activity, and learning new skills can help keep your brain sharp.

Learn New Skills

Have you always wanted to learn a new language? Perhaps you would like to learn how to play Sudoku, or give chess a try. No matter what it is, learning new skills is a great way to help your brain stay active and sharp. These types of activities can help form new neural connections in your brain. But you lose some of the benefit once you master a skill, so it is good to try new things all the time.



Exercise

Physical activity is important for lowering your risk of brain issues. The Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion suggests doing a combination of aerobic activity and strength training. Older adults should aim for 150 minutes of exercise each week. But any amount of activity is always better than none!



Stay Social

According to brainhealth.gov, you can slow down mental decline by staying in regular contact with people you care about. Pay close attention to people when they talk. Try to form a mental picture of what they are saying. Experts say this fires up multiple areas in your brain to help you make new memories.

Eat Well

Aside from maintaining a healthy weight and many other benefits, a healthy diet can keep your mind in good shape. Eat foods with omega-3 fatty acids, like salmon, walnuts and flaxseed. Omega-3 fatty acids help with memory and brain performance and can lower your risk for heart disease, cancer and arthritis.



Unscramble these “brain fitness” words

The following words are from page 6.

GEMOA _____

RYEMOM _____

LTHHEA _____

FSCUO _____

TIONSAAXDITN _____

EWN LKLIS _____

OLCAIS _____

SRXEIECE _____

PTIVNNEORE _____

SLLWNESE _____

Answers: OMEGA, MEMORY, HEALTH, FOCUS, ANTIOXIDANTS, NEW SKILL, SOCIAL, EXERCISE, PREVENTION, WELLNESS

FEATURED Recipe!

Summer Salad

Ingredients

- 3 cups dark, mixed greens, well washed and dried
- 1 cup seasonal fresh or thawed, frozen strawberry halves
- ½ cup fresh or thawed, frozen blueberries
- ¼ cup walnut halves or pieces
- 3 tablespoons vinaigrette salad dressing, low-fat
- ½ tsp black pepper (optional)

Directions

Place the salad greens, strawberries, blueberries and walnut pieces into a large bowl. Toss with the dressing and serve.



Nutritional Information: Serves 2. Per serving: 178 calories, 12 g total fat, 1 g saturated fat, 17.4 g carbohydrates, 8 g dietary fiber, 251 mg sodium, and 3.9 g protein

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St. Petersburg, FL 33716

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VISN8CommunicationOffice@va.gov

By Phone:

(727) 575-8072 — Susan Wentzell,
VISN 8 Office of Communication

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FIRST!**



“My grandson likes the Word Find. My daughter likes the recipes. And I love the informative, educational articles in Veterans Health Matters. Thank you!”



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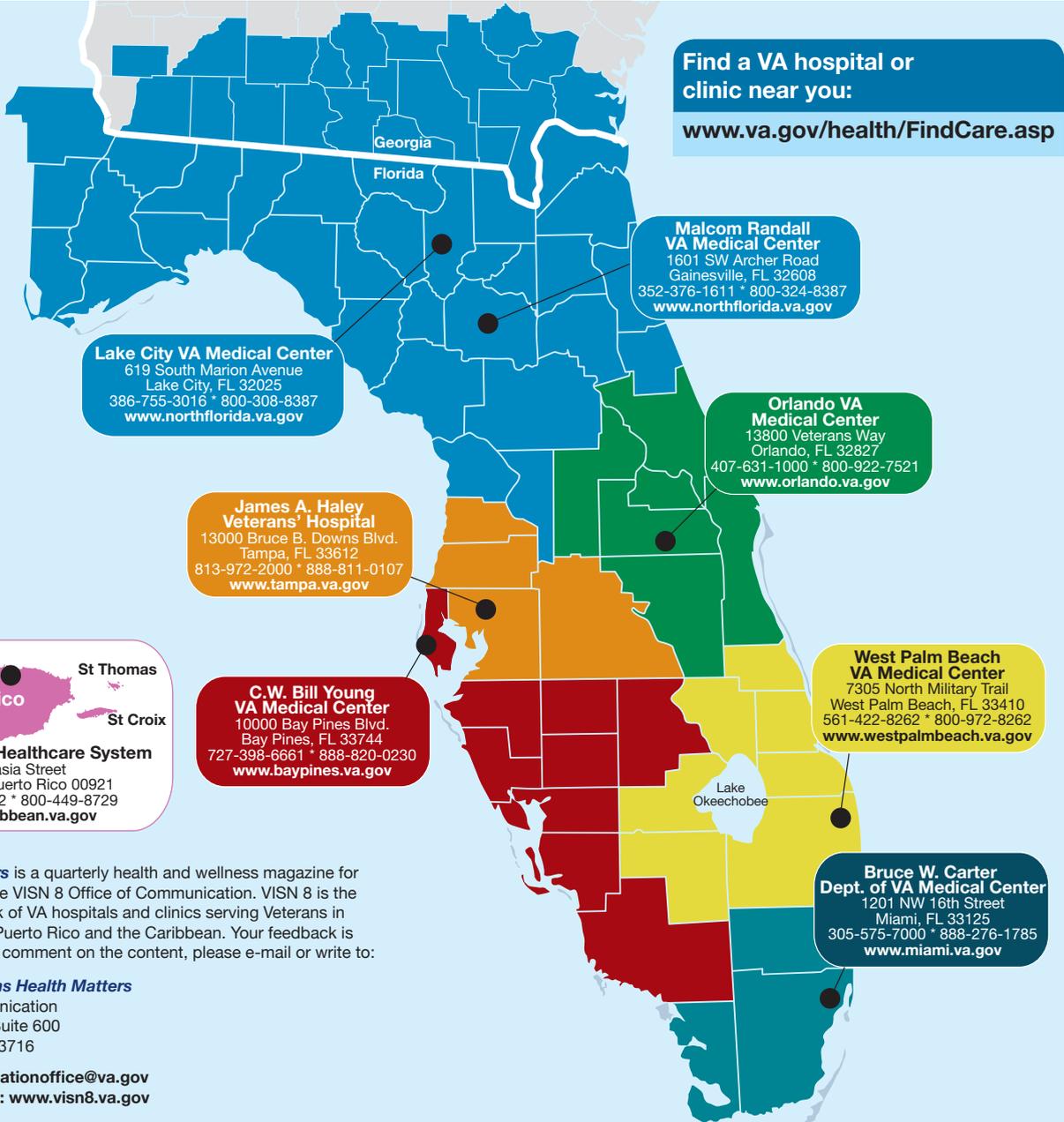
Telcare
After Hours Advice Line
877-741-3400

VA Sunshine Healthcare Network

www.visn8.va.gov



at all
Medical Centers



Veterans Health Matters is a quarterly health and wellness magazine for Veterans produced by the VISN 8 Office of Communication. VISN 8 is the country's largest network of VA hospitals and clinics serving Veterans in Florida, South Georgia, Puerto Rico and the Caribbean. Your feedback is welcome. If you'd like to comment on the content, please e-mail or write to:

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