



A Promise Kept

Exceptional VA Health Care

WITH MALICE TOWARD NONE WITH CHARITY FOR ALL WITH FIRMNESS IN THE RIGHT AS GOD GIVES US TO SEE THE RIGHT LET US STRIVE ON TO FINISH THE WORK WE ARE IN TO BIND UP THE NATION'S WOUNDS TO CARE FOR HIM WHO SHALL HAVE BORNE THE BATTLE AND FOR HIS WIDOW AND HIS ORPHAN- TO DO ALL WHICH MAY ACHIEVE AND CHERISH A JUST AND LASTING PEACE AMONG OURSELVES AND WITH ALL NATIONS

Keeping Our Promise

A Message from the VISN 8 Network Director



As you turn these pages, notice there's a consistent theme...Keeping The Promise. We take this Promise seriously with a commitment driven by three critical elements: **quality, patient satisfaction and cost effectiveness.**

Providing safe, high quality VA Health Care is a constant throughout VISN 8. Individually, several of our health care systems have again been nationally recognized with VA Carey performance excellence awards. Likewise, in the larger system of VA networks, VISN 8 facilities continue to meet and in some cases, surpass national health care quality measures particularly as it pertains to keeping our patients healthy—our #1 goal.

Of course, our health care is only as good as our patients think it is. And our Veterans consistently applaud the care they receive in VISN 8 hospitals and clinics. In VA surveys conducted this year, VISN 8 exceeded the national score for inpatient and outpatient overall satisfaction.

Outside the medical centers, we worked hard this year to increase Veterans' access to quality health care. We expanded, relocated, and opened new clinics in rural and underserved areas that make it easier for patients to get their care closer to home. We ramped up the nation's largest telehealth program, with even more services planned in 2011. Facilities and services for our Women Veterans were also expanded in many locations.

We established Outreach teams at our medical centers, connecting Veterans with the services and benefits they've earned. This year in our communities, more than 80,000 Veterans were newly enrolled for VA Health Care. And we fought homelessness aggressively, offering help to about 4,400 Veterans living without homes, the highest number of contacts in the nation.

Many construction projects were completed and more are being developed at our medical centers to include a new VA hospital in Orlando scheduled to open in 2012.

Yet, in these tough economic times, it's vital to make every dollar count. Innovative systems redesign initiatives across the Network have improved patient flow and coordination of care while reducing laboratory, operating room and pharmacy costs.

VISN 8 employees make this change happen and are the backbone of our Network. They are the highly skilled work force that provides such great care day in and out—and they are happy in their work. VISN 8 employee satisfaction survey scores in 2010 were among the highest of any VA Network in the country particularly for the quality of care they provide, their work environment, and their personal connection with the VA mission. Significantly, nearly a third of our workers are Veterans.

Looking back on this year, I am very proud of what we have collectively accomplished. However, there is still much more to do. We will continue to move forward with purpose and passion as we Keep Our Promise to be Veteran-centric, results-driven, and ever forward-looking.

Sincerely,

Nevin M. Weaver, FACHE
Network Director, VISN 8



VISN 8: The Nation's Largest Network of VA Hospitals and Clinics

Serving Veterans in Florida, South Georgia, Puerto Rico and the Caribbean

Best in the Nation - Keeping Patients Healthy *

The VA Sunshine Healthcare Network's seven healthcare systems include eight major medical centers and 55 outpatient clinics, serving a Veteran population of nearly 1.7 million in Florida, South Georgia, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. VISN 8's performance surpasses that of all commercial U.S. health plans as well as Medicare/Medicaid health plans in the following key areas.

- Cervical Cancer Screening
- Screening of blood sugar and cholesterol in diabetic patients
- Cholesterol screening in patients with ischemic heart disease

*Data reflects best, or tied for the best nationally in the bulleted categories



7.5 M

Outpatient Visits

523,825

Veterans Served

\$3.2 B

Budget

31.3%

VISN 8 Workforce Who are Veterans

\$657 M

Small Business Contracts

\$37.5 M

Research Funding

8,982

Residents & Allied Health Students Trained

\$280.4 M

Medical Care Cost Recovery

"Delivering world class health care where and how our Veterans want it—and putting them first in everything we do—that's our focus in VISN 8."

-Michela Zbogor, M.D., Chief Medical Officer, VISN 8



Reaching out to our Veterans

Aggressive Outreach = Better Access to Health Care

*"In 2010, Outreach teams were established at each of VISN 8's major medical centers. Aggressive efforts to connect Veterans with the services and benefits they have earned paid off in a big way. **This year, more than 80,000 Veterans were enrolled for VA Health Care who might not otherwise be receiving it.**"*

**- Betty Dameron
VISN 8 OEF/OIF Coordinator**

Outreach events and activities held in the communities surrounding VISN 8 facilities ranged from the traditional to the unique.

- VISN 8 held a Management Assistance Council (MAC) meeting and forum at the James A. Haley Veterans' Hospital in Tampa on December 7, 2010. Unlike more traditional, community-focused MACs, VISN 8's MAC is comprised of state leaders of Veteran Service organizations and Military Service organizations across Florida. **The goal: to help VISN leadership shape the programs and initiatives that provide exceptional VA healthcare to the 1.7 million Veteran population served by the VA Sunshine Healthcare Network.**

- An annual Operation Enduring Freedom/Operation Iraqi Freedom (OEF/OIF) Welcome Home celebration hosted by the eight major medical centers in Florida and Puerto Rico provided benefits information to returning Veterans who could enroll for VA Health Care on-the-spot. More than 1,200 Veterans and family members attended the Orlando VA's Welcome Home which included a job fair. Almost 40 Veterans were offered full-time employment that day; many others received job offers after follow-up interviews.

- The Tampa VA's Mobile Outreach Clinic brings VA Health Care, enrollment services and disaster response capability where they're needed most: **to our communities.** In 2010, the state-of-the-art mobile clinic assisted Veterans during 82 events in the Tampa Bay area including twice a month venues in Lake Wales, Fla.

- The Miami VA's Veterans Outreach Program provided transitional support to 150 soon-to-be released inmates during the Okeechobee Correctional Institution Inmates' Reentry Fair.

- A faith-based health fair held by the North Florida/South Georgia Veterans Health System at Mt. Moriah Baptist Church in Hastings, Fla., attracted about 200 Veterans who were delighted to have the VA come to them with information on benefits in a non-traditional environment. In Alachua County, Fla., about 800 Veterans attended a "Choices" Health Expo where they were surprised to learn about many of the new programs offered by the VA—especially the comprehensive care available to women Veterans.

- The Bay Pines VA hosted a "Lady Veterans Night Out" specifically for Returning OEF/OIF Women Veterans. Besides providing information about VA benefits and services especially for them, there were free "pampering" services including massages, acupuncture and make-overs. About 65 Women Veterans attended.

- Employment & Education Outreach. The VISN 8 Recruiter and medical center staff went to 44 events and made contact with more than 3,500 Veterans with information about VA jobs. Also, about 1,500 Veterans received information on their education benefits at 26 College outreach events attended by VISN 8 staff.



Tampa VA Mobile Outreach Clinic

Caring for Our Women Veterans

"Women are the fastest growing population of Veterans. And VISN 8 cares for more Women Veterans than any other VA network in the country. In 2010, nearly 30,000 Women Veterans received VA health care services in our hospitals and clinics. That number continues to grow annually."

Peggy Mikelonis, Women Veterans Program Manager, VISN 8

Each VA hospital in VISN 8 has a dedicated Women Veterans Program Manager whose sole focus is addressing the health care needs of Women Veterans. Women's services and facilities were enhanced and expanded this year. **Our ultimate goal: to provide timely, high-quality, comprehensive health care services to Women Veterans in an environment that makes our patients feel comfortable, safe and well-cared for.**

- The Miami VA and Tampa VA opened state of the art Women's Breast Imaging Centers in 2010. Both provide on-site digital mammography and breast ultrasounds. In Tampa, future plans include the capability to perform on-site stereotactic breast biopsies and breast MRIs. Enhancements are also being planned in the New Port Richey Outpatient clinic in New Port Richey, Fla.
- The Tampa VA relocated its Women's Center to a more spacious modular building on its hospital campus. This is an interim measure prior to future development of an off-site primary care facility. Likewise, the West Palm Beach VA relocated its Women's Clinic to a larger area within the medical center.
- The Women's Clinic at VA Caribbean in San Juan, P.R., has moved to a new care area with a spa-like atmosphere that makes the Women Veterans feel as special as they truly are.
- The Malcom Randall VA has begun expanding their current Women's Clinic to include a family waiting area and a check-in area that maximizes patient privacy.
- The Lake City VA was the first in VISN 8 to design a lactation room for new mothers.
- There are also future plans to enhance the location and maximize the space at the Women's Clinics at the Miami VA, Bay Pines VA and Orlando VA.



I love my VA Health Care

"The staff at the VA saved my life. They gave me the motivation I needed to live. They treat female Vets with dignity and respect and encourage you to strive to your maximum potential."



Deborah Jones
OEF/OIF Veteran



"...They completely supported me when I went through my breast cancer treatment and I got the very best care all around."

Melissa Tompkin
Persian Gulf Era Veteran

"I love the West Palm Beach VA Medical Center. If it wasn't for their support, guidance and services, I don't know where my daughter and I would be."



Violet Galloway
Persian Gulf Era Veteran



Bay Pines

VA Healthcare System

www.baypines.va.gov

Wallace M. Hopkins, FACHE, Director

Bay Pines Receives VA's Top Quality Award for 3rd Year

The Department of Veterans Affairs selected the Bay Pines VA as this year's recipient of the Robert W. Carey Circle of Excellence Award, the department's top honor for quality achievement. This is the third consecutive Carey award for Bay Pines VA in recent years.

Bay Pines VA was also recognized in 2010 with the American Heart/Stroke Association's "Get With The Guidelines" award for the hospital's stroke and heart failure programs. Bay Pines was the only VA hospital to be awarded the gold level for its stroke care program.

Centers for day surgery, cancer treatment & more coming to St. Petersburg campus

Groundbreaking is a sign of progress for further expansion of services at the Bay Pines VA's main campus in St. Petersburg and in Lee County, Fla.

At Bay Pines, construction began on a new \$6.9 million Radiation Oncology Center and a \$8.1 Million Eye Treatment and Ambulatory Surgery Center. The radiation center is scheduled for completion and occupancy in spring 2011. Estimated completion of the surgery center is in 2011 with projected opening the following year.

In Lee County, ground was broken in Cape Coral, Fla., on a 220,000 square foot specialty care and outpatient clinic that will triple the space available for care to Veterans in Lee and surrounding southwest Florida counties.

Clinics Relocated, Expanded

Expanding and relocating VA community-based services in southwest Florida helps bring VA health care closer to where our Veterans live so trips to the medical center are not required as frequently. This year, the Dunedin Community Based Outpatient clinic was relocated to Palm Harbor, the South St. Pete clinic moved to St. Petersburg, and the Ellenton clinic was expanded and relocated to Bradenton. We also plan to relocate and expand services at the Sebring clinic and enhance services at the Naples site.

Happy Nurses = Better Outcomes

VISN 8 employs more RNs (nearly 5,000!) than any other VA network of hospitals and clinics in the country and our nurses are the most satisfied, say survey results this year. That's important when it comes to retaining a top notch workforce that provides the very best health care to a population of 1.7 million Veterans.

Exceptional Nurses Mean Exceptional Care

Certified nurses are the best qualified and most educated in their specialties. This year, Bay Pines was presented with the Nursing Service Certification Development Award by the Veterans Health Administration.

Nursing certification is a voluntary credentialing process that recognizes clinical knowledge, experience, and clinical judgment. There are 281 certified nurses, Licensed Practical Nurses, Nurse Practitioners, and Nurse Anesthetists at Bay Pines.





VA Caribbean

Healthcare System

www.caribbean.va.gov

Wanda Mims, MBA, Director

New Bed Tower to Open, More Construction Underway

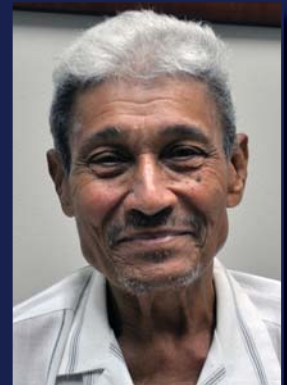
A new, multi-million dollar bed tower will open at the San Juan VA Medical Center in 2011, one of a series of major improvement projects to enhance services for our nation's heroes. The six-story, seismically correct building will feature the most modern medical equipment to include ceiling lifts that move patients safely and comfortably while reducing caregiver injury. And with the installation of the new Internet Protocol Television System, Veterans will be able to watch TV, call a nurse, and access the Internet—all on a touch screen TV at their bedside. Elsewhere on the campus, a new administration building is already under construction. Over the next two years, the hospital's outpatient clinic building will be renovated and expanded to provide more than 130,000 square feet of clinical and diagnostic facilities. Future phases include construction of a 1,500 space parking garage and renovation of the main hospital building. Construction of all phases of these major initiatives are scheduled for completion in fall 2015.

Rural Clinics Bring Veterans, VA Health Care Together

Veterans in Utuado, Comerio and other underserved areas in Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands, can now obtain their VA Health Care close to where they live. The VA Caribbean Health Care System opened its first rural health clinic in Utuado, P.R. in March 2010. This compact, state-of-the-art clinic provides primary care services and more. Veterans can also get specialized services at the clinic through telehealth technology which uses interactive videoconferencing. Rural clinics in Comerio and Vieques, P.R. also opened in 2010, and the St. John's Outreach Clinic opened in early 2011.

"Services at the VA are excellent. They treat patients like family. When I go to the VA, I feel like I am in my second home."

**Juan A. López,
Korean War Veteran**





James A. Haley

Veterans' Hospital and Clinics

www.tampa.va.gov

Nancy Reissener, Acting Director



Top Performing Hospitals = Better Care

One of the nation's top performing hospitals, the Tampa VA received the 2010 Robert W. Carey Performance Excellence Award. This is the second year the Tampa VA received this prestigious award for providing the very highest quality of care by an organization in the Department of Veterans Affairs.

In 2010, the Tampa VA also received the Governor's Sterling Award, the state of Florida's highest award for outstanding performance. The award is based on the internationally acclaimed Baldrige criteria. The leadership team at the Tampa VA sets the standard, fostering a participatory, collaborative, organizational culture, which in turn, fuels a motivated and energetic workforce committed to the Veterans they serve. **The result: better care and the very best outcomes for patients.**

Tampa VA receives National Beacon Award for Critical Care Excellence

The American Association of Critical Care Nurses (AACN) named the Tampa VA a 2010 Beacon Award winner for critical care excellence. The Tampa VA's Critical Care Unit and Surgical Intensive Care Unit were two units from 57 hospitals nationwide that were recognized.

These units have demonstrated that they provide the very best in nursing care and exemplify the tradition within nursing of professional nursing practice, according to the AACN.

"Beacon Award for Critical Care Excellence recipients join an elite community of adult and pediatric critical care and progressive care units that embrace evidence-based standards of excellence in recruitment, retention, education, training and mentoring," said AACN President Kristine Peterson. "Units that receive this award serve as shining role models to others that seek to optimize the care they provide to patients and families," she said.

Tampa VA Leads the Way in 'Operation Haiti Relief'

The VA is known for its leadership in the medical community and emergency preparations when disaster strikes.

When a devastating earthquake shook Haiti in early 2010, the Tampa VA responded, taking in active duty service members who needed urgent medical care due to injuries sustained in the disaster.

The Tampa VA's medical response team also took a leadership role in the community and nation, seamlessly putting into motion the Tampa VA Emergency Operations Plan in an effort called "Operation Haiti Relief."

Tampa's Chief of Medicine, Dr. Jose Lezama, Jr., served as medical director for the operation that received, triaged and tracked critically ill Haitian patients, active duty and U.S. citizens.

The operation was based at Tampa International Airport where 36 patients arrived in a series of eight C-130 flights. Dr. Lezama, along with nurse interpreters, medical clerks, and public affairs staff, coordinated the entire effort.

Injured civilians were taken to Tampa hospitals. The response required flexibility, communication, and collaboration among multiple agencies and disciplines.



Veterans with TBI Benefit from 'Smart Home' Technology

The Tampa VA is leading a \$3 million research project that uses advanced technology to help Veterans with Traumatic Brain Injuries (TBI) independently plan, organize and complete everyday activities. The 'Smart Home' project helps Veterans relearn these skills by following their movements around the house and sending them text or video prompts when they get off-track.

Tampa VA has five "transitional" apartments on its hospital campus for patients leaving in-patient care on the hospital's Polytrauma unit. The apartments are equipped with the high tech equipment including a system that can track patients'

location, has sensors to monitor the use of appliances, and includes screens to relay video prompts. Appliances like washing machines are equipped with sensors that determine whether the patient put soap into the machine or emptied it when the load was done.

Jan Jasiewicz, the VA researcher at the hospital who manages the project described 'Smart Home' as a "cognitive prosthetic" whose ultimate goal is to rehabilitate Veterans with TBI so they can function normally outside the hospital.

(Portions reprinted from NextGov)

Letter to the Editor: An Honor to Serve

Reprinted from The Tampa Tribune, May 29, 2010

You probably have heard this expression: "It's an imperfect world peopled by imperfect folks." Well, I'm here to challenge that absolute by sharing my experiences at a special place staffed by perfectionists.

During a series of visits, I saw the team concept executed by a caring line-up of professionals: doctors, nurses, technologists, blood-lab researchers, social workers, primary care case managers, travel office workers, veterans' claims examiners, van drivers, prosthetists, appointment schedulers, operators and many others—including the vast numbers of volunteers who assist patients at this special place, the James A. Haley Veterans' Hospital in Tampa.

The impressive treatment begins at the main entrance of the medical center when one of those escorts is assigned to move his charge in a wheelchair from the lobby to the check-in desk, where the team adviser goes over the relative data and gives the appropriate directions. I was en route to a doctor's appointment with my escort, who is about half my four-score-plus years, when he said, "Sir, it's an honor for me to serve you. Thanks."

His thoughtful comment was a pleasure to hear and reminded me of a quote attributed to G.K. Chesterton: "Compassion and a sense of humor would be the companions to take along on the road of life."

That's the game plan of the James A. Haley Veterans' Hospital. It is the policy carried out successfully by its employees.

FRED M. KENNY - Valrico, Florida



Orlando

VA Medical Center

www.orlando.va.gov

Timothy Liezert, FACHE, Director



Artist Rendering of the new Orlando VA Medical Center

New Orlando Medical Center Closer to Completion

The Orlando VA awarded the final contract to complete construction for the build out of their new hospital. This fourth and final phase of the contract, worth \$260.3 million, is a huge milestone toward providing a comprehensive modern health care facility for Central Florida Veterans. Contracts were also awarded for construction of a central energy plant, parking garage and warehouse. The project is currently on schedule and under budget. The \$665 million medical campus, located on a 65-acre campus in southeast Orange County, is expected to open in 2012.

One Stop Shop Opens for OEF/OIF Veterans

The Orlando VA consolidated its OIF/OEF teams, which includes a Post-Deployment Clinic, into a separate building. This program is dedicated solely to Veterans returning from the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Veterans receive primary health care, psychological support, social work services, and more. During initial appointments, patients get a complete evaluation and care plan by health care specialists tailored to address each Veteran's specific needs.

Orlando VA Recognized as One of Top 100 Companies for Working Families

The Orlando VA was recognized as a 2010 winner of the Orlando Sentinel's Top 100 Companies for Working Families. The criteria for selection consisted of a series of questions to determine what benefits are provided in categories of core and family-related benefits, work environment, communication and training. The award is presented to companies that meet qualifications set and reviewed by an independent panel of local human resources experts.

Clinics Open at Clermont, Lake Nona

The Orlando VA improved access to care for our Veterans by adding a Community Based Outpatient Clinic in Clermont, Fla. and a primary care annex in Lake Nona, SE Orlando. The new 6,300 square foot clinic provides a broad range of medical services including primary care, mental health, social work, on-site laboratory draws and consultative pharmacy services for Veterans in the Clermont area. The annex offers primary care, internal medicine and geriatric medicine services for Veterans in the Lake Nona area.



Lake Nona Annex in Orlando



West Palm Beach

VA Medical Center

www.westpalmbeach.va.gov

Charleen R. Szabo, FACHE, Director

Patient Centered Care: A Relationship for Life

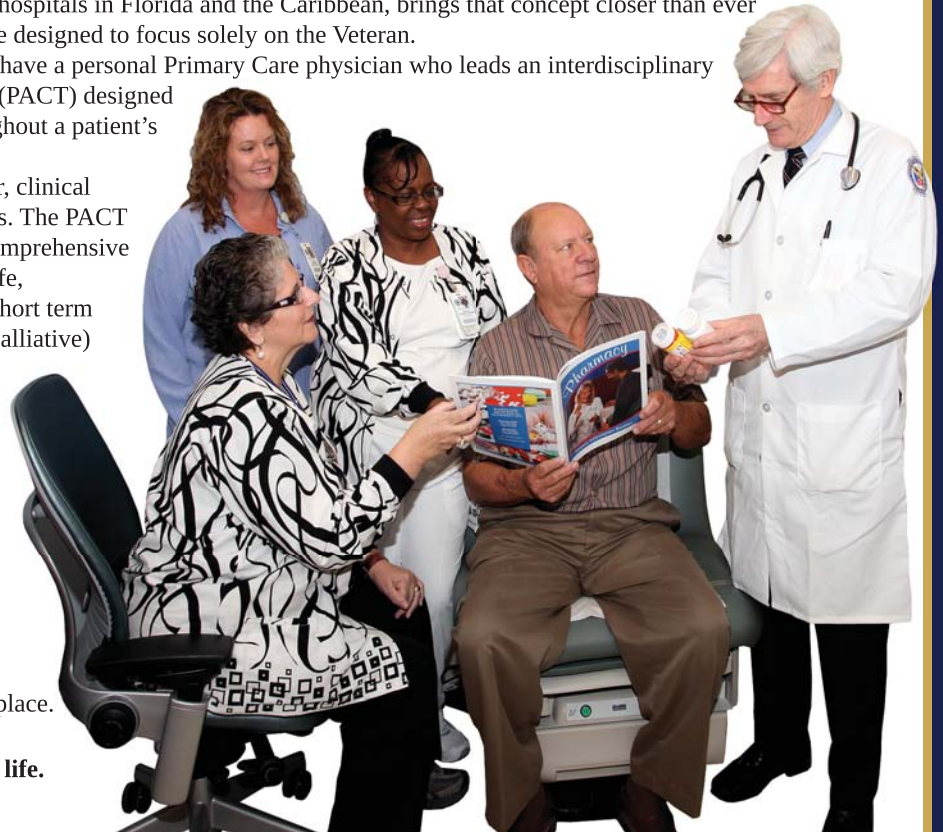
A family doctor who's with you for life. Isn't that what we would all like? A new patient-centered approach implemented at the West Palm Beach VA and throughout VA hospitals in Florida and the Caribbean, brings that concept closer than ever with a personalized health care experience designed to focus solely on the Veteran.

At the West Palm Beach VA, every Veteran will have a personal Primary Care physician who leads an interdisciplinary medical team called a Patient Aligned Care Team (PACT) designed to provide continuous and coordinated care throughout a patient's lifetime.

The PACT includes a Registered Nurse Manager, clinical and administrative staff, and health care specialists. The PACT works closely with one another as they provide comprehensive care for the Veteran during the various stages of life, providing early detection screenings, acute care (short term medical treatment), chronic care and end of life (palliative) care. The team uses education, lifestyle coaching, and ongoing communication and consultation to deliver whole-person care focused on keeping patients healthy.

The Veteran is a key member of this partnership—respected and encouraged to take an active role in his/her own care. Likewise, the patient's electronic medical record is vital to the entire effort as it pulls information together from multiple sources. Every test, medication and visit is recorded and available to the treatment team throughout the Veteran's lifetime—any time, any place.

Patient-Centered Care. Innovative health care focused on the Veteran. A relationship for life.



TOPS IN QUALITY—West Palm Beach VA Medical Center is committed to delivering the highest quality and safest healthcare to the Veterans we serve. The West Palm Beach VA met or exceeded national health care quality measures in screenings for Colorectal Cancer, Breast Cancer, Cervical Cancer, and Diabetic management.

New Post Deployment Clinic; Expanded Women's Clinic

Space was renovated at the West Palm Beach VA to make room for a new Post Deployment Clinic for returning Veterans and an expansion of the Women Veterans' Clinic.



The Post Deployment Clinic offers primary care, mental health, physical medicine/rehabilitation and social work services in one area to make it more convenient for returning Veterans to access services. The new Women's Clinic is warm and inviting with a family room, more clinic exam space, and a larger waiting area.

Mental Health Improvements to Meet Increased Demand

Demand for Mental Health services increased by 16 percent this year at the West Palm Beach VA. To meet the need, a new Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) building opened on the main campus and the mental health services were expanded at the Port St. Lucie VA Clinic. Also, the substance abuse outpatient program has increased capacity to provide more appointments for patients and the Mental Health inpatient unit was renovated to incorporate state-of-the-art patient safety design.



Miami

VA Healthcare System

www.miami.va.gov

Mary D. Berrocal, MBA, Director



Miami's New Fisher House is First in Southern Florida

Ken Fisher, Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Fisher House Foundation, joined a crowd of almost 600 who witnessed the official dedication of the new Fisher House on the grounds of the Miami VA campus in November, 2010.

The Miami VA Fisher House—the first in Southern Florida—opened and began receiving guests in 2010. The 15,000 square foot Fisher House is a “home away from home” for families of Veterans hospitalized at the Miami VA.

With 20 private guest suites, families are provided comfortable, temporary lodging at no cost to them in a beautiful, relaxed communal setting. The house was built by the Fisher Foundation and was turned over to the VA which maintains it with staff and volunteers.

State-of-the-Art Women's Center Opens at the Miami VA

We are always looking for better ways to serve our Veterans. This year, the Miami VA expanded its services for Women Veterans.

August 5, 2010, was the perfect day for pink, as women and men gathered at the grand opening of the new Breast Imaging Center on the hospital campus to see the new facility, and also to celebrate hope.

The new Center features the most advanced medical technology and equipment along with experienced, highly trained professionals that provide the best care possible for women Veterans.

The facility is also designed with a unique patient experience in mind. A relaxing lounge area makes patients feel comfortable, safe and well cared for while they wait for breast imaging services or procedures.



(Left) State-of-the-art Mammography X-Ray System. (Above) Patient Lounge.

'Swim with the Dolphins' Is an Innovative Treatment Program

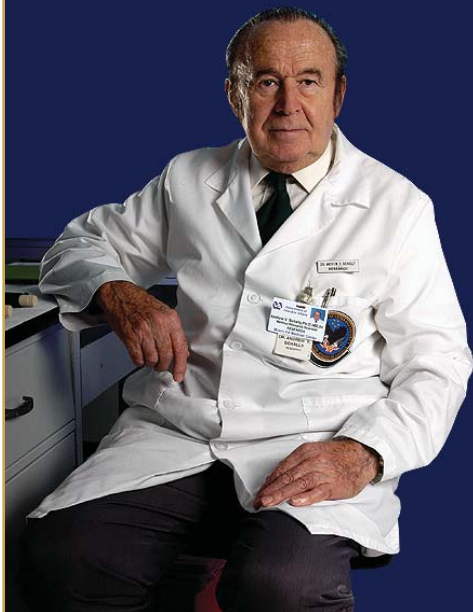
It's a well known fact that pets can be good for your health and well-being. Bringing pets and people together create meaningful interaction and a sense of joy and harmony that helps fight depression, among other therapy benefits. Dolphins were recently added to the Miami VA Recreation Therapy Animal Assisted Activity Therapy Program. The program includes dogs, cats, fish, birds, ponies, horses, and now dolphins—a feature unique to South Florida.

The 'Swim with the Dolphins' treatment program at the Miami VA is yet another innovative way the VA meets the needs of our Veteran patients.

"My stress, anxiety and irritability melted away in the water as I bonded with my wonderful hosts (dolphins) Bella and Rigi."

- Jacky, a Veteran

Miami VA Researchers are Changing Lives One Scientific Breakthrough at a Time



The Miami VA is home to three distinguished medical research scientists whose work is changing the lives of not just Veterans—but all Americans. VA and University of Miami researcher Dr. Andrew Schally (pictured at left) may not yet have found the fabled "cure for cancer," but he's come as close as any medical researcher. At age 80-plus, the winner of the 1977 Nobel Prize in Medicine is hot on the trail of compounds he believes will revolutionize cancer treatment.

Meanwhile, another Miami VA researcher, Dr. Robert Gailey is a physical therapist and investigator who is studying the best ways to identify the functional deficits of amputees.

Also, Dr. Michael D. Norenberg is researching potential targets for therapeutic intervention in spinal cord injury leading to a better understanding of brain trauma. His work contributed to a dramatic reduction in the incidence of mortality from brain trauma. Recognizing his outstanding scientific contribution, Dr. Norenberg received VA's prestigious William S. Middleton Award—the highest honor presented annually by VA's Research and Development Office.



North Florida/South Georgia

Veterans Health System

www.northflorida.va.gov

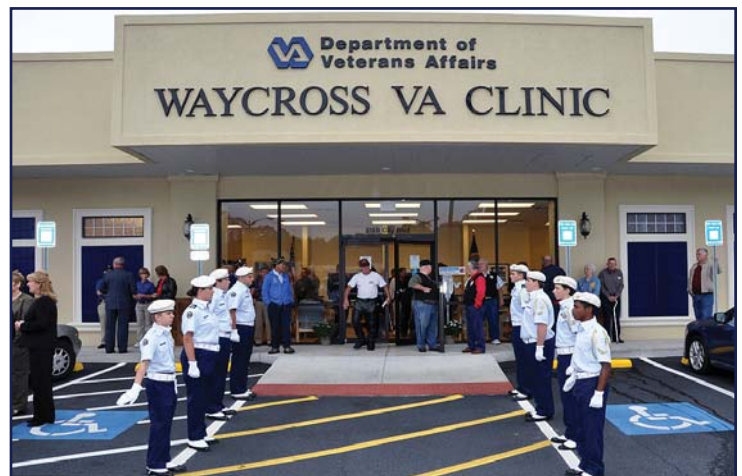
Thomas A. Cappello, MPH, FACHE, Director

Bringing Primary Care & More Closer to Home

Expanding access to health care is a top VA priority. In 2010, the NF/SGVHS opened three rural health clinics, one outpatient clinic, and a 45-bed domiciliary for a total of 15 sites of care. The Community Based Outpatient Clinic, located in Palatka, Fla., and two outreach clinics in Waycross, Ga., and Perry, Fla., provide primary care to Veterans in rural areas and underserved areas.

The Villages Outpatient Clinic provides primary and specialty care close to home for about 90,000 Veterans in Marion, Lake, and Sumter counties.

Services include Primary Care, Radiology, Audiology, Dental, Endocrinology, Pharmacy, Gastroenterology, Orthopedics, Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation Service, Women's Health, Visually Impaired Services Team, CT Scan, Cardiology, Eye Care, Dermatology, Pulmonology, Minor Surgeries, MRI, Podiatry, Wound Care, Mental Health, and Social Work.

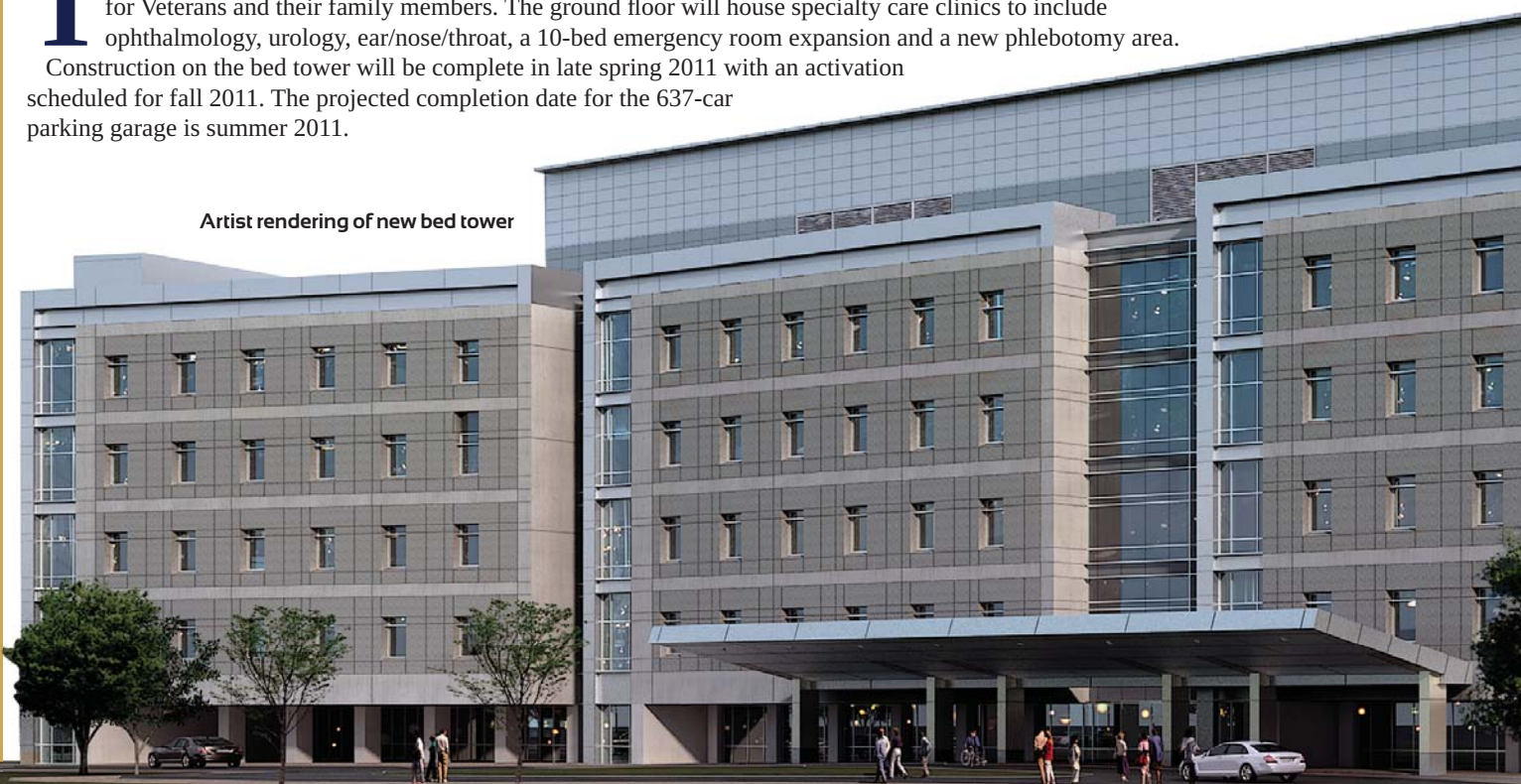


Coming Soon: New Bed Tower, Parking Garage

The Malcom Randall VA is expanding to meet the needs of its patients. The bed tower will provide 226 private rooms and space for Veterans and their family members. The ground floor will house specialty care clinics to include ophthalmology, urology, ear/nose/throat, a 10-bed emergency room expansion and a new phlebotomy area.

Construction on the bed tower will be complete in late spring 2011 with an activation scheduled for fall 2011. The projected completion date for the 637-car parking garage is summer 2011.

Artist rendering of new bed tower



Welcome to the Neighborhood: It's All About 'You'

The Lake City VA's Community Living Center (CLC) provides compassionate, resident-centered, multi-level nursing home care for Veterans in six distinct neighborhoods. Residents are given a voice and a choice in aspects of their care. The philosophy of building relationships earned the Lake City VA CLC a first place award at the VA's Office of Geriatrics and Extended Care 2010 National Cultural Change Conference for their "Bathing Without Battles" and "Whispering Spa" practices. VISN 8 also recognized the CLC for their family-style dining opportunities.



Post-BSN Nurse Residency Program Receives Accreditation

Exceptional staff, exceptional care. In 2010 the Malcom Randall VA was accredited for its post-baccalaureate nurse residency program by the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education. The post-Bachelor of Science Nursing (BSN) nurse residency program is only one of three accredited programs in the country and is the first in the Department of Veterans Affairs. The nurse residency program has improved the one-year retention of newly graduated nurses at Malcom Randall from 69 percent in 2007 before the residency to an average of 91 percent since the residency began. The accreditation is the result of the strong partnership between the University of Florida's College of Nursing and the VA Nursing Academy.

Award-Winning Program Reduces Readmission of Heart Failure Patients

Nothing is more important than keeping our patients healthy. Our Heart Failure Readmission Reduction Team (HFRRT) is significantly reducing the readmission rate of heart failure patients to the hospital. Through HFRRT, patients with signs or symptoms of heart failure are tracked, scheduled for follow-up visits and provided education about their disease. **The result: in FY2010, there were 232 fewer readmissions to the hospital by heart patients.** For their efforts, the HFRRT team received the 2010 Clinical Innovation Abstract Award from the American Association of Heart Failure Nurses. The team also won second place for the VA's National Systems Redesign Award.



Fighting Homelessness

VA Programs Help Veteran Start New Life

Veteran Grady Thomas graduated from the School of Hard Knocks but hopes to soon graduate from University of Florida (UF) in Gainesville, Fla., with a degree in Information Systems Management. He credits the VA health care system in North Florida with turning his life around.

Orphaned at the age of 12, Grady enlisted in the U.S. Navy at 19 and served his country honorably. However, for many years, he found himself in a continuous battle with depression, anger and self-destructive behavior; using drugs, drinking heavily and ending up in jail more times than he cares to remember.

Along the way, Grady sought help from other VA and community sources in the Virginia area, but “I wasn’t ready to surrender—I wasn’t ready to admit that I couldn’t keep myself off drugs without help,” he said. “Every time

I entered a program, I had the same questions, got the same answers that I didn’t like, the same concerns.”

In February 2007, Grady again sought help—this time at the Gainesville VA. He began attending an outpatient detox program and then moved on to the Substance Abuse residential recovery treatment program.

“This program is a teaching environment where you learn all of the components of substance abuse and focus on the physical, spiritual and mental aspects,” he said. “The staff were so informed on the issues – they had the answers I was looking for and needed.”

After successfully completing treatment, Grady began his journey through the VA Homeless Program. He entered a day program, eventually transitioned to the VA Grant and Per Diem program. He now resides in his very own apartment thanks to the Department of Housing and Urban Development and VA’s Supported Housing (HUD-VASH) Program.

“Now I have a safe place for my 10-year old daughter to come visit with me,” Grady said with a smile. “I am grateful, I have gratitude; it humbles me to be in a stable environment and stable job.”

Grady works at the VA HONOR Center in Gainesville, Fla., a one-stop shop for homeless

Veterans, as an administrative support employee. He is currently working full time, is attending Sante Fe Community College and is planning to enroll at UF soon. He loves his work and the staff at the HONOR Center. “I want to be just like them when I grow up—giving selflessly to those in need and being successful from a moral standpoint.” -Mary Kay Hollingsworth

“Now I have a safe place for my 10-year old daughter to come visit with me...I am grateful, I have gratitude; it humbles me to be in a stable environment and stable job.”



HOMELESS NO MORE - Navy Veteran Grady Thomas now has his own apartment and works at the VA HONOR Center in Gainesville, Fla., a facility that opened in March 2010 and provides comprehensive programs for homeless Veterans. He credits the VA for helping him turn his life around.

Recipient: VA Secretary's 2010 Award for Excellence

A Passion for Helping the Homeless

On December 7, 2010, Department of Veterans Affairs Secretary Eric K. Shinseki presented Ms. Vianne Marchese, Chief of Community Care Services at the NF/SG VHS, with the Secretary's Award for Excellence for her leadership in development of the HONOR Center's Domiciliary Care for Homeless Veterans Program in Gainesville, Fla. It opened in March 2010.

The HONOR Center (providing Hope, Opportunities, Networking, Outreach and Recovery) is a state-of-the-art facility that provides comprehensive homeless programs, including Permanent Supported Housing, VA Supportive Housing vouchers (HUD-VASH), Grant and Per Diem Transitional Housing, Health Care for Re-Entry Veterans, and Veterans Justice Outreach.

The facility also features *The Residence*, a 45-bed domiciliary designed to meet the needs of homeless Veterans who are disabled or need a place to recuperate from health care crises or serious illness.

The 24-hour, homelike facility offers private and semi-private rooms. Besides traditional services, residents are offered cooking classes, recreational therapy, dental services, library/media center, and horticulture therapy.



Vianne Marchese



"Through the HONOR Center, we are attacking the entire downward spiral that ends in homelessness."

Thomas Cappello
Director, NF/SG VHS

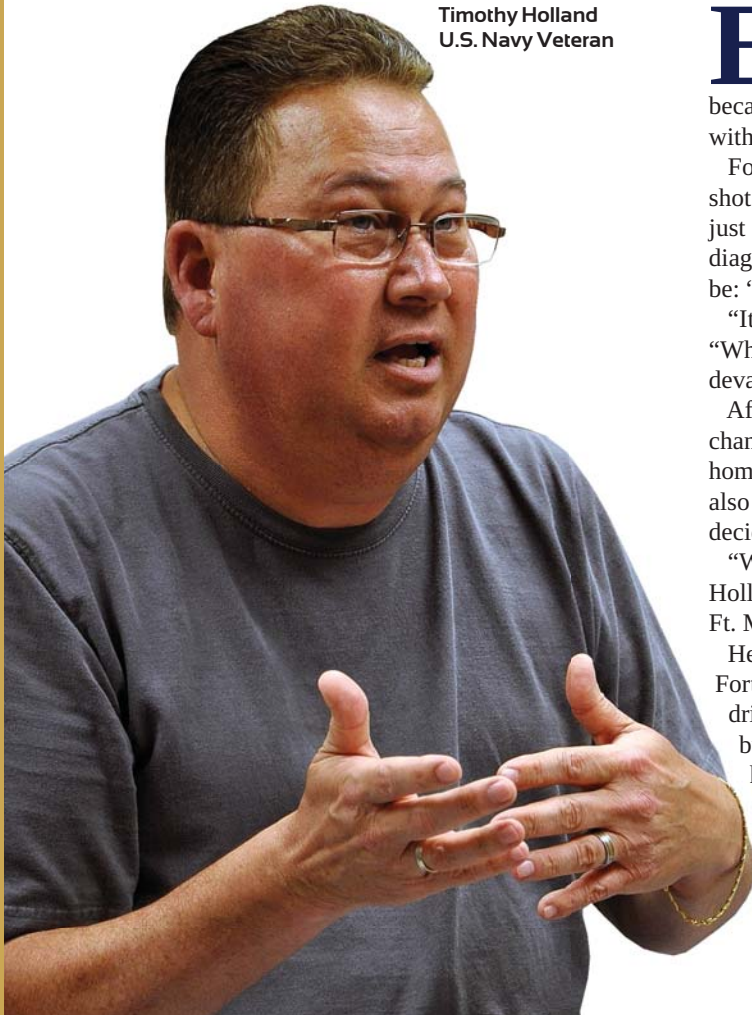


"The VA Sunshine Healthcare Network (VISN 8) has aggressively tackled the problem of Veteran homelessness in Florida and our other service areas with notable success. In 2010, VISN 8 Homeless Outreach Program staff identified, contacted and offered assistance to about 4,430 Veterans living without homes—the highest number in the nation."

Daniel M. Robbin
VISN 8 Homeless Coordinator

Expanding Health Care Access

As the VA Sunshine Healthcare Network expands its telemedicine program, technology is giving a Navy Veteran time he could never get back.



Timothy Holland
U.S. Navy Veteran

Eighteen years ago, Timothy Holland, a 52-year-old U.S. Navy Veteran from Fort Myers, Fla., started planning his funeral. He wasn't suicidal, nor did he suffer from depression, rather, he became one of the estimated 600,000 Americans currently diagnosed with Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV).

For people like Holland, receiving the catastrophic news is like a shot to the heart. "What do I do now? Where can I go for help?" are just some of the questions that may run through someone's mind newly diagnosed with the virus. However, the most worrisome question might be: "How much time do I have left?"

"It's not really anything anyone can prepare for," Holland explained. "When I was told that I tested positive for HIV, I was absolutely devastated and really didn't know what to do."

After being diagnosed with the disease, Holland's life began to change rapidly. Besides the health problems, there were troubles at home and Holland's wife of nine years left and filed for divorce. He also had a hard time finding health insurance. Finally, 10 years ago, he decided to take advantage of his VA Health Care benefits.

"When I started going to the VA, I was extremely impressed," Holland said. "Initially, the only real problem I had was the drive from Ft. Myers to the medical center at Bay Pines to see my doctors."

He was originally assigned to the Fort Myers VA Outpatient Clinic in Fort Myers, Fla., for primary care appointments, but routinely had to drive nearly three hours to Bay Pines VA Medical Center in St Petersburg, Fla. to see doctors who specialized in treating and monitoring his condition. The result: Holland had to dedicate almost an entire day for one appointment.

A lot has changed since then. Now, instead of driving 120 miles each way for specialty appointments, Holland has a 15 minute drive from home where he connects one-on-one with his Bay Pines doctors at the Fort Myers clinic using Clinical Video Telehealth (CVT) technologies.

(Continued on next page)

Increasing Access - 2010 Clinic Openings

- The Villages Outpatient Clinic a large Primary and Multi-Specialty care clinic

Community Based Outpatient Clinics

- Palatka CBOC, Palatka, Florida
- Clermont CBOC, Clermont, Florida

Rural Clinics bringing VA Health Care to Veterans living in remote and underserved areas

- Taylor VA Outreach Clinic, Perry, Florida
- Waycross Outreach Clinic, Waycross, Georgia
- Comerio Rural Clinic, Comerio, Puerto Rico
- Vieques Rural Clinic, Vieques, PR
- Utuado Rural Clinic, Utuado, PR
- St. John's Outreach Clinic, U.S. Virgin Islands

“If you include my travel time, an appointment at Bay Pines used to take me at least six hours to complete and get back home. Now, I can get everything done in less than an hour,” he said.

Clinical Video Telehealth is an emerging VHA program. The system involves video conferencing, sometimes with supportive peripheral devices that are used to provide care and consultation to Veterans between clinics and hospitals. The program has different clinical applications that can be completed in a real-time, interactive video environment between the patient, and doctor, nurse or other clinician. Common CVT applications include mental health, rehabilitation, pre and post-operative surgical care, neurology, dermatology, spinal cord injury, pharmacy, routine medical exams and more.

“This type of technology greatly improves my quality of life,” he said. “I am grateful for everyday that I have, and (CVT) has saved me a lot of time I could never get back if I still had to drive to the medical center every three months.”

“I feel closer to my doctors at the hospital than I do with my primary physician,” he said pointing up to the system’s monitor. “I know this sounds strange to say, but on many levels, the people I talk with on this screen are my family; they know everything about me and I trust them with my life.”

Expanding Health Care Access for Veterans

More and more, Veterans like Tim Holland can access high quality VA Health Care close to home using CVT. As part of the VA Sunshine Healthcare Network (VISN 8), the Fort Myers VA Outpatient Clinic is one of 53 sites of care equipped with CVT systems across Florida, Southern Georgia, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. The network is

“When talking about Clinical Video Telehealth, we are probably only using it at 20 percent of our capacity. I want to see CVT used at least 8 hours a day at all points of care. Right now, our focus is developing the clinical systems we need to do just that.”

**- Pat Ryan, Director
VISN 8 Community Care
Coordination Service**



Dr. Jesus Casal, a staff physician and CVT clinical champion at the San Juan VA in Puerto Rico, conducts an appointment with a patient using CVT technologies.

VISN 8 Telehealth: Right Care, Right Place, Right Time

VISN 8 has the largest VA Home Telehealth program in the nation using technology to provide quality health care in the comfort of a patient’s home. Besides avoiding long trips and offering easier access to specialists, this kind of care reduces emergency care visits, hospitalization, and long-term institutional care for Veterans especially important to an aging population. And the costs are much lower.

- **In 2010, more than 6,800 Veterans were enrolled in the Home Telehealth program** in our facilities. This enables patients with chronic diseases like diabetes, heart failure and chronic pulmonary disease to be monitored at home. Mental health conditions like Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and depression can also be closely watched.
- **100,504:** That’s the **number of Home Telehealth encounters** between our healthcare providers and their patients in 2010.
- **Our patients in Florida, South Georgia and the Caribbean who use Telehealth absolutely love it.** How do we know? Almost **90%** of those we asked told us so.

Volunteers Go Above and Beyond



This year, more than **8,500** volunteers from VISN 8 hospitals and clinics provided nearly **967,000 HOURS OF SERVICE**. This represents the equivalent of **463 FULL TIME POSITIONS**.

In addition, volunteers raised **\$1.2 MILLION IN MONETARY DONATIONS** that benefit VA hospitals and Veterans served throughout the network.

Spending Stimulus Funds **Wisely**

With Federal Stimulus funds provided by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, VISN 8 awarded nearly \$40 million in contracts to Veteran-owned small businesses, local businesses and other vendors surrounding its hospitals and clinics in Florida, South Georgia Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. These funds are helping to maintain and improve our facilities across a vast 61,000 square mile area. Here a few of many projects awarded at VISN 8 facilities using Stimulus dollars.

- **\$1.2 million Electrical Distribution project** in the main building and Community Living Center (Nursing Home Care Unit) at the Malcom Randall VA.
- **\$964,000 project** – Upgrades to the Heating, Ventilation and Air Conditioning system connected to the operating rooms at the Orlando VA.
- **\$888,000 project** at the Tampa VA that improves the interior and exterior areas of the campus to meet Americans with Disability Act standards.
- **\$750,000 project** – New emergency generator at the Ponce VA Outpatient Clinic in Puerto Rico. This project will provide full Emergency Power to the clinic during power blackouts.
- **\$375,000 project** – New, five-bed, Intensive Care Step Down Unit at the Malcom Randall VA
- **\$195,000 project** – A new piping system will supply oxygen to the second floor of the Community Living Center at the San Juan VA Medical Center.

I love my VA Health Care



"The VA provides the health care I need and is very affordable which helps out since I'm going to college. Everyone I have dealt with has been phenomenal and has gone out of their way to help me."

- Ryan Dixon
(OEF/OIF) Veteran



"This (West Palm Beach) VA is the best hospital in the world, and the best thing that could ever happen to a Veteran."

- Kip Monroe
World War II Veteran
Battle of the Bulge



"The Orlando VA Medical Center has the most caring staff. The entire clinic as a whole is awesome when it comes to caring for the Veterans. The staff are more pleasant than any clinic on the outside."

- Ronald P. DeVasto
Vietnam Veteran

I Love My VA Health Care

My family was traveling from West Palm Beach daily, or we would sleep in the hospital room to be with my husband. Words cannot express how thankful we are for the Fisher House.

-Rosie Coleman, West Palm Beach



**Letters from our
Fisher House guests**

We live over 100 miles from the Miami VA hospital. I didn't know how I could possibly go so far or know where I would stay. The warmth and caring personnel, not to mention this wonderful 'home away from home,' have made such a difference.

- Pauline Millette, Fort Pierce

The VA was established to keep a promise:

“To care for him who shall have borne the battle and for his widow and his orphan...”
- ***Abraham Lincoln***

VISN 8 publishes this Annual Report for the patients, employees, volunteers and friends of the VA Sunshine Healthcare Network. For questions and comments on this publication's content, contact Susan Wentzell at susan.wentzell@va.gov.



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