Our Veterans Mean the World to Us

We are on a mission. And to say we’re determined would be an understatement. Simply put, our mission is to give the Veterans and families we serve greater access, choice and control over their health care. Our compassionate, comprehensive care takes place in a full range of services at 8 major hospitals, 60 community clinics, and when needed, in the private sector. And to make it even more convenient, there are over 50 clinical specialties offered through our telehealth program where patients connect with their doctors remotely using the latest technology. All of this is to empower Veterans to make decisions that work best for them and those who love them. In the pages that follow, you will read about how we’ve improved patients’ access to health care, how we are modernizing our systems and improving our facilities, and how we’re focusing our resources on the care and services Veterans need most. And yes, truly, it’s because our Veterans mean the whole world to us.
Our Network
Orlando VA Medical Center
James A. Haley Veterans’ Hospital & Clinics
North Florida/South Georgia Veterans Health System
West Palm Beach VA Medical Center
VA Caribbean Healthcare System
Bay Pines VA Healthcare System
Miami VA Healthcare System

Serving a Population of 1.6 Million Veterans at Nearly 70 Locations in Florida, South Georgia, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands
Our Top Priorities in 2017

1. Greater Choice
Veterans and their families deserve greater access, choice and control over their health care. VA is committed to empowering Veterans to make decisions that work best for them and their families.

2. Improve Timeliness
Some Veterans are still waiting too long for care and services. We can and must do better.

3. Modernize Systems
Veterans and VA employees need systems and technology that enable us to deliver the high-quality care and services our Veterans deserve. Investing in 21st century technology is critical for our modernization effort.

4. Focus Resources
VA owes it to Veterans and taxpayers to ensure resources are being spent on the care and services Veterans need the most. We will streamline our services by eliminating redundancies and align our employee resources by focusing on the core functions and services that VA is uniquely positioned to deliver and administer. If VA continues to try to be all things to all people, quality and timeliness of care and services will continue to decline.

5. Suicide Prevention
Suicide prevention is VA’s highest clinical priority. Suicide is a national health crisis that must be addressed through a “whole government” approach along with public-private partnerships.

HURRICANES IRMA & MARIA: Powerful Reminder of What A Positive Difference People Can Make

In September, Hurricanes Irma and Maria were, without a doubt, one of the most significant events of 2017. These monster storms ripped through Florida and the U.S. Virgin Islands leaving devastation in their path and impacting Veterans and others in our service areas, especially in Puerto Rico.

Through it all, thousands of dedicated VA employees like West Palm Beach VA Medical Center RN Lynn Warren, below, worked endless hours to keep Veterans in their charge safe and well cared for.

Fortunately, our hurricane-hardened VA hospitals fared well and most of our community clinics were unaffected.

Dedicated then—and always—to our #1 Mission: Caring for Those Who Have Borne the Battle.

Photo by Joanne Diethorn
FY 2017

BY THE NUMBERS

VETERANS BY GENDER

Male ...............................................................550,649
Female .............................................................60,659
TOTAL .....................................611,308

VETERANS BY AGE

0.8% 7% 7.6% 11.6% 18.6% 29.7% 15.1% 9.7%
<25 25-34 35-44 45-54 55-64 65-74 75-84 85+

VETERANS BY SERVICE ERA

1. OEF/OIF ..........................................................7.5%
2. Persian Gulf War...........................................27.2%
3. Post-Vietnam .................................................12.5%
4. Vietnam Era...................................................38.8%
5. Post-Korean .................................................. 5.0%
6. Korean ......................................................... 8.4%
7. Pre-Korean .................................................... 0.2%
8. WW II .......................................................... 3.9%
9. Other ............................................................ 4.0%

OPERATING BEDS

TOTAL OPERATING BEDS ........2,888
Nursing Home ...................................................869
Domiciliary .......................................................... 375
Medicine ............................................................ 813
Psychiatry ........................................................... 224
Surgery .............................................................. 287
Rehabilitation ......................................................100
Spinal Cord ........................................................... 156
Neurology ........................................................... 11
Intermediate ....................................................... 28
Blind ................................................................. 25

WORKLOAD

VETERANS TREATED .............598,712
Outpatient Visits .................................8.6 Million
Inpatient Admissions .........................81,752
First-Time Users .................................70,132
Surgical Procedures .........................37,162

WORKFORCE REPORT

Employees....................................................29,334
Veterans Employed .........................31%
New Hires ..................................................3,052
Nurses .........................................................6,505
Physicians ....................................................2,710

OPERATING BUDGET & SPENDING

TOTAL OPERATING BUDGET* .......... $4.7 Billion
Salaries & Benefits .................................$3.05 Billion
Consolidated Mail Out Pharmacy .......$255 Million
Care in the Community Spending ......$457 Million
Medical Care & Collection Fund ......$257 Million
Equipment .................................................$147.4 Million
Lands & Structures ...............................$88 Million
Prosthetics .................................................$285.2 Million

*Not all budget categories shown

** Veterans Counted Once

Veterans can be in more than 1 category or service era
FREE WI-FI
Now In All VISN 8 Hospitals

Complimentary wireless internet or “Wi-Fi” for Veterans and visitors is now available in the main hospital buildings of all VISN 8 hospitals. The new Wi-Fi service allows Veterans and guests with internet-enabled smart phones, tablets and laptops to stay in touch with family and friends during outpatient visits and hospital stays. They can read (and send) e-mail messages, access social media sites like Facebook and Twitter, or just surf the internet.

The Wi-Fi network is high speed and secure. However, guests are cautioned not to use it to transmit sensitive data such as health information, social security numbers, credit card information and other confidential transactions.

Phase II of the project includes expanded Wi-Fi access to additional areas of each healthcare system to include Outpatient Clinics.

Primary Care Appointments at VISN 8 Facilities Within 30 Days*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Facility</th>
<th>Caribbean VA</th>
<th>Tampa</th>
<th>West Palm Beach</th>
<th>Orlando</th>
<th>Bay Pines</th>
<th>North Florida/South Georgia</th>
<th>Miami</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>99.6%</td>
<td>99.4%</td>
<td>98.4%</td>
<td>98.2%</td>
<td>96.7%</td>
<td>95.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*When Provider Says They Need It or Veteran Wants It

Average Wait Times at Our Facilities*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Facility</th>
<th>Primary Care</th>
<th>Specialty Care</th>
<th>Mental Health Care</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bay Pines</td>
<td>2.94</td>
<td>5.34</td>
<td>2.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miami</td>
<td>4.50</td>
<td>3.74</td>
<td>1.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Palm Beach</td>
<td>1.99</td>
<td>4.99</td>
<td>2.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Florida/South Georgia</td>
<td>5.57</td>
<td>7.09</td>
<td>3.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caribbean VA</td>
<td>2.15</td>
<td>6.15</td>
<td>2.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tampa</td>
<td>2.36</td>
<td>4.97</td>
<td>2.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orlando</td>
<td>2.94</td>
<td>6.52</td>
<td>3.05</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*New and established patients; measured in days based on patient’s desired appointment date
Did You Know?

Over 50 clinical specialties are offered through VISN 8’s telehealth programs.

45% of Veteran patients in VISN 8 use Secure Messaging (SM) to communicate directly with their VA health care team through an on-line portal.

VA Video Connect is a new secure technology that allows Veterans and their providers to see and talk with each other from anywhere, making VA healthcare more convenient and reducing travel times – especially helpful for those in rural areas.

A mobile video and web-based application, VA Video Connect enables Veterans to virtually meet-up with their VA healthcare providers in something called a virtual medical room, using encrypted video to ensure the session is secure and private.

When a VA Video Connect (VVC) visit is scheduled, VVC sends an email to the health care provider and Veteran. The email includes a web link. When the web link is clicked, it takes the Veteran or provider into a virtual medical room where they can see and hear each other, and start their clinical session.

Users can learn more about the app and watch videos at https://mobile.va.gov/app/va-video-connect
Health Care
THEN / TODAY

Treat Illness

THEN
Wait days to be seen. Deal with traffic and bad weather getting to your appointment.

TODAY
Access primary care services the same or next day with a face-to-face visit, phone call, telehealth or video care visit on your mobile device via VA Video Connect.

Make An Appointment

THEN
Call to arrange between meetings and family responsibilities.

TODAY
On your time and schedule, use your mobile device to conveniently request appointments for primary care and mental health visits, and self-schedule select primary care appointments. Track and cancel visits using the Veteran Appointment Request (VAR) App.

Personalized Care

THEN
Your primary care doctor is on vacation and you have a health issue. You decide to postpone your scheduled visit until his return. After all, who else knows you so well?

TODAY
Get personalized advice from your assigned VA care team. Send a secure message through My HealtheVet to your PACT, short for Patient Aligned Care Team, expressing your concerns. Your PACT is familiar with all aspects of your health. And they’re with you for life.

Care Team Communication

THEN
Call and leave a message.

TODAY
‘Talk’ directly to your assigned VA PACT Team using My HealtheVet’s On-Line Secure Messaging. Get a response in 24 hours or less.
Lab & Test Results

THEN
Sit by the phone waiting for a call back.

TODAY
Securely access your lab and test results as soon as they are available via the My Health\text{eVet} online portal.

Medical Records

THEN
Visit your facility for access to your medical records.

TODAY
Avoid unnecessary trips. Get your medical records quickly and securely online through My Health\text{eVet}. 
HURRICANE MARIA: In This Together

On September 20, when Hurricane Maria, a massive Category 5 storm, made landfall in Puerto Rico it was the strongest hurricane to hit there in 85 years. Striking just two weeks after Hurricane Irma, it lashed the island with wind and rain for more than 30 hours, leaving devastation in its path.

No stranger to hurricanes, the VA Caribbean Healthcare System was ready for both storms with emergency plans activated and underway.

In San Juan, more than 800 VA staff and hundreds of their patients awaited Maria's wrath, sheltering in place inside the construction-hardened main hospital while employees at VA clinics across the island and in the U.S. Virgin Islands prepared for the worst.

When the storm passed, the VA Medical Center had sustained only minor flooding and continued operations on generator power. Damage at the clinics was assessed and outreach continued to contact the most vulnerable Veterans.

Despite their own personal challenges, after the worst of the weather, VA Caribbean staff continued to work around-the-clock at all facilities to provide healthcare and mental health services to Veterans most impacted by the storm.

Today, that recovery in Puerto Rico continues and VA staff there continue to go above and beyond to ensure Veterans get the very best care possible.

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An additional mission of the VA is being prepared to answer the public’s call for help. In early September 2017, VA Caribbean staff were part of a team of federal, state and local partners who coordinated the patient reception, medical triaging and relocation of Hurricane Irma evacuees to hospitals in Puerto Rico, including the San Juan VA Medical Center.

“There is help and hope. At the VA, I have received the best help.”

Dilmarie Ramos
U.S. Army Veteran
Patient, San Juan VA Medical Center

VISN 8 Mental Health Services

170,677 Patients

1.66 Million Outpatient Encounters

1,635 Number of Veterans Provided Residential Care

8,254 VA Crisis Line Consults
VA CARIBBEAN Offers Same-Day Audiology Services

Improving access to health care is a top priority. In 2017, the VA Caribbean Healthcare System began offering same-day audiology services. This enhanced service eliminates the requirement for Veterans to first seek a referral to audiology by a primary care provider. Veterans can now be evaluated for tinnitus, hearing aids and other audiological evaluations on the same day of their visit. “I am excited we are able to further open access to our Veterans who deserve no less,” said Dr. Martha Aleman, Chief, VA Caribbean Audiology and Speech Pathology.

New CT Scanner in San Juan

Continuing to modernize its diagnostic equipment, the VA Caribbean acquired and installed a Somatom® Definition Flash CT Scanner in the San Juan VA Medical Center.

The new state-of-the-art equipment can acquire images of the heart and lungs in a fraction of the time compared with traditional equipment. It also reduces radiation exposure and cardiac CT can be done without the use of betablockers. The Scanner can accommodate larger patients with a table weight capacity of 500 lbs.

“I have come alive again, Thanks to God and the VA’s New Beginning Program, I can now enjoy life with my family and friends.”

Hector Melendez
Vietnam Veteran
Patient, San Juan VA Medical Center

VA Community Care Service Launched in Caribbean

The VA Caribbean launched the first VA Community Care Program with staff who serve as facilitators and coordinators of care between Veterans, the CHOICE program, and community providers. The more than 19 staff, many who are Veterans themselves, help others like them get new and follow-up appointments in the community when care there is appropriate. Also, since the program’s inception, the number of community CHOICE providers in the Caribbean region has nearly doubled thanks to VA staff’s aggressive recruitment efforts.

INNOVATIVE Mental Health Services

One unique mental health treatment option for Veterans in the VA Caribbean Healthcare System is equine-assisted therapy.

“Through a patient’s interaction with a horse, Veterans learn about their own emotions and how to manage them. In addition, some Veterans have expressed a decrease in pain after an equine-assisted therapy intervention” Recreation Therapist Ivia Ramos said.
Virtual Honor Flight Brings 
**Tears and Cheers**

There were many tears, cheers and smiles when South Florida Veterans took part February 11 in a Virtual Honor Flight tribute at the Bruce W. Carter VA Medical Center in Miami.

Since not all Veterans were able to make the trip to Washington, D.C., the virtual event brought the welcoming and homecoming ceremonies, mail call, USO show, honor guard salute and video tour of our nation’s monuments directly to these deserving Veterans.

Vietnam Veteran John Wikel salutes as he enters the T.C. Doherty Auditorium underneath a military saber arch for the first virtual honor flight for residents of the Community Living Center at the Bruce W. Carter VA Medical Center.

**MIAMI VA**  
**Earns 4-Star Rating ★★★★★**

The Miami VA Healthcare System is proud to have achieved a 4-star quality rating for FY2017. This rating, which measures a wide range of criteria including health care outcomes, access, patient satisfaction and continuity of care, reflects the commitment and quality our employees bring to South Florida Veterans every day.

**Expanding Telehealth**

Telehealth expansion at the Miami VA Healthcare System continues to bring care to Veterans where and when they need it. In places like the Florida Keys were transportation to and from Miami is a challenge, telehealth allows a VA medical expert in Miami to serve a Veteran in Key West virtually and without the 300-mile drive.

“I just can’t say enough about the VA. They sure helped me out.”

*Dorothy Hartley*  
97-year-old WWII Navy Veteran and hearing aid recipient  
Patient, Miami VA
**Partnering with the Community to Help Veterans**

Mental health care sometimes means more than the Same-Day services available at the Miami VA Healthcare System. For one group of Veterans, a partnership with Fishing with America’s Finest is a chance for Veterans and the community to come together to support our heroes.

“It was one of the most moving things I’ve ever seen,” said program founder Neal Stark. “We’re teaching the Vets how to fish, but the therapy doesn’t end at the end of the day.”

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**Caring for Vulnerable Veterans**

With Hurricane Irma bearing down on South Florida in September, Miami VA Healthcare System employees contacted hundreds of the most vulnerable Veterans to ensure they had the medical supplies and care they would need in case of a worst-case scenario.

Those with the highest medical needs were kept in the hospital along with other patients and were cared for by more than 500 staff who remained in the facility for the storm.

Most dramatically, nine elderly Veterans were transported to and sheltered in the hospital when a local non-VA nursing home lost air conditioning.

“I think they saved my life.”

**Calvin Williams**

South Florida Veteran who was moved to the Miami VA’s Community Living Center when the air conditioning malfunctioned at his community home after Hurricane Irma.

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**Helping the Homeless in VISN 8**

4,333
Formerly Homeless Veterans Placed in Permanent Housing

23,179
VETERANS
VA Homeless Assistance Provided

“After 19 years (of being blind), the first thing I saw was my son’s face. I could also see my Miami VA Doctor, and when we walked around the hall, I was able to tell where the door and window frames were for the first time. That might not mean a lot to other people, but it meant the world to me.”

**Otto Catalan**

U.S. Navy Veteran
Patient, Miami VA
Haley in VA Top 10 for Access to Care

Our staff has worked hard to ensure Veterans get the care they need when they need it, and it has paid dividends. National VA access data showed approximately 98 percent of all Veterans with scheduled primary care and mental health appointments were seen within 30 days, putting the James A. Haley Veterans’ Hospital in the top 10 of all VA medical facilities for access to care.

As a barometer of success this year, more than 80 percent of Veterans offered the opportunity to see an outside provider through the CHOICE program turned down the option so they could be seen at JAHVH instead.

Robotic-Assisted Surgery

A major achievement this year at the James A. Haley Veterans’ Hospital was the activation in February of the daVinci System, a robotic innovation that allows for minimally invasive surgery. With the system, surgeons operate through a few small incisions using tiny wristed instruments and magnified 3D high-definition vision enabling surgeons to operate with enhanced precision and control.

Tampa VA: Where Care Never Stops

“I’ve been very, very pleased with the quality of healthcare I’ve gotten here at James A. Haley. I’ve been treated well and comprehensively.”

Bruce Johnson
U.S. Navy Veteran, Vietnam Era

“James A. Haley has always been there for me through thick and thin. There’s no other organization that I am more grateful for.”

Matt Kelker
U.S. Navy Veteran

“If I could use just one word to describe my care at the Tampa VA, I would say exceptional. They all have the same attitude – patient first.”

Laquan Taylor
U.S. Navy Veteran, Spinal Cord Injury Patient

“I’ve been receiving care from James Haley for 10 years. The level of respect for Veterans is amazing.”

Marylin Rivera-Sanchez
U.S. Army OEF/OIF Combat Veteran
Whole Health for Life Pilot Program

We are proud to have been chosen as a pilot site for VA’s new Whole Health for Life program. Whole Health places each person at the center of his or her own health care and shifts the focus of care toward health and well-being vs. managing disease. It uses mindful awareness to promote self-care and healing, emphasizes the importance of relationships and partnerships, and incorporates a range of conventional and complementary approaches. The James A. Haley Veterans’ Hospital is one of only 18 facilities VA-wide that are the first to implement this health care transformation.

“The VA has provided me with exceptional, patient centered care for more than 20 years. I am so grateful for all the healthcare professionals who have been tending to my needs for such a long time. The doctors and clinicians here at the VA are top-notch.”

Kendall Carter
U.S. Navy Veteran

Initiating and Strengthening Partnerships To Benefit Veterans

To expand the opportunities available to our Veterans, the James A. Haley Veterans’ Hospital has worked to strengthen existing partnerships and initiated new ones with local community agencies. We renewed our partnership with Mission United, a United Way program that helps Veterans and their families acclimate back to civilian life. We also entered into new agreements with the local YMCA and the National Endowment for the Arts that will give Veterans access to services otherwise unavailable to them through the VA.

Warrior Care in the 21st Century

This year, the James A. Haley Veterans’ Hospital had visits from more than 100 people from around the world who wanted to know how we conduct business and learn from us.

In FY17, we hosted the 2nd Annual Warrior Care in the 21st Century Symposium that brought together medical personnel and service providers from more than 15 countries and the Department of Defense to identify innovations in resilience, recovery, rehabilitation and reintegration.

Visitors from VA and private sector health care facilities have also flocked to our Primary Care Annex to see the first such building designed with Patient Aligned Care Teams in mind.
Mental Health Center Opens
AT BAY PINES

An idea conceived nearly two decades ago became reality as the Bay Pines VA Healthcare System activated its new 155,000 square foot Mental Health Center during a ribbon cutting ceremony at the C.W. Bill Young VA Medical Center on Sept. 22, 2017. The facility brings together most mental health programs and services in one location. The hurricane-hardened building features include natural lighting in patient care areas to promote

Innovative Medical-Legal Partnership Program Launched

The Bay Pines VA Healthcare System, in collaboration with Bay Area Legal Services, and Stetson University College of Law’s Veterans Law Institute, launched a new program in February 2017 that provides legal representation/consultation services for Veterans at no cost. Called the Medical-Legal Partnership (MLP) program, the new service was designed specifically for qualifying, low-income Veterans enrolled for care with the Bay Pines VAHCS (some expectations may apply) who need legal assistance for non-criminal offenses.

Bay Pines To Get Second Fisher House

The C.W. Bill Young VA Medical Center, part of the Bay Pines VA Healthcare System was selected as one of 14 VA facilities to receive a Fisher House, a “home away from home” for families of Veterans and military service members hospitalized in military hospitals and VA medical centers. The new 16-room facility will be the medical center’s second house and is tentatively scheduled to open in the next three to four years. It will be built close to the existing nine-room Fisher House located on the east side of the medical center campus.

“It’s really hard to find the quality of care we receive here anywhere else. We are grateful for the team of doctors who help us get the care we need.”

Linda and Joseph Croce
U.S. Army Veterans
Patients, Bay Pines VA Healthcare System
National Environmental Award

The Bay Pines VA Healthcare System’s efforts to reduce and recycle waste have earned them a national environmental award for the second consecutive year. Bay Pines was one of 75 Veterans Health Administration facilities nationwide recognized as a “Partner for Change” by Practice Greenhealth, the nation’s leading organization dedicated to environmental sustainability in health care. The award announcement was made during Practice Greenhealth’s annual awards ceremony in Minneapolis, Minn. on May 18.

SIMPLY THE BEST AT BAY PINES:
When It Comes to Patient Safety

In 2017, for the seventh consecutive year, the Bay Pines VA Healthcare System was recognized nationally as Cornerstone Recognition Award gold winner by the VA National Center for Patient Safety. The healthcare system is one of 113 VA facilities nationwide out of 144 to receive recognition, and one of 99 that received the gold award. The award recognizes facilities for transparent incident reporting processes and for using root cause analyses (RCA) to improve health care delivery systems and patient safety.

Aging Veterans Served in VISN 8

958 Placed in Medical Foster Homes

5,161 Served in VA Community Living Centers and Community Nursing Homes

5,490 Enrolled in Home Base Primary Care

6,706 Veterans Receiving Family or General Caregiver Support Services

Top Hospital for Geriatric Care

The Bay Pines VA Healthcare System recently achieved "Exemplar" status for the third straight year for its Nurses Improving Care for Healthsystem Elders (NICHE) program. NICHE is the premier designation indicating a hospital’s commitment to excellence in the care of patients 65-years-and-older.

Exemplar status recognizes the Bay Pines VAHCS’s ongoing dedication to geriatric care and system wide interventions and initiatives that demonstrate organizational commitment to the care of older adults.

“...The skilled providers responded quickly to my emergent needs and provided me with a pace maker. Now, I’m as good as gold.”

Gerard Duignan
U.S. Navy Veteran
Patient, Bay Pines VA Healthcare System
Increasing Primary Care, Mental Health Access

New Urgent Care Walk-In Clinic

Over the past fiscal year, the West Palm Beach VA Medical Center has significantly improved its outpatient Same-Day access in Primary Care and Mental Health. In Primary Care, Same-Day access for Veterans increased by 4 percent and in Mental Health, Same-Day consult appointments seen increased by 20 percent. Also, the medical center developed and implemented a Walk-in Clinic co-located near the Emergency Department to serve Veterans experiencing urgent, non-emergency health issues.

Domiciliary Breaks Ground

The West Palm Beach VA Medical Center broke ground on its Domiciliary in September 2017. This 60-bed, 30,000 square foot building is being constructed on the northeast area of the medical center grounds and will complement the facility’s existing mental health treatment program. The domiciliary is slated to be completed and open in FY 2019.

“I enjoy visiting the VA for my healthcare. They’re professional, they get to know you, they take care of your needs. And they always have your best interests in mind. If you have any doubts, I urge Veterans to go ahead, take that first step, enroll, and come visit the VA.”

Rafael Rodriguez, Jr.
U.S. Army Veteran
Patient, West Palm Beach VA Medical Center
PRIORITIES:
Greater Choice, Improve Timeliness, Modernization, Focus Resources

“"I witness the dedication, care and compassion on a daily basis from the staff here. When it comes to my physical health and my emotional well-being, I know I’m in good hands -- and that’s why I love the West Palm Beach VA.”"

Evelyn Alba, M.D.
U.S. Army Veteran
Patient, West Palm Beach VA Medical Center

New MRI Center Opens

The West Palm Beach VA Medical Center opened its new Magnetic Resonance Imaging suite in March 2017. This 6,168 square-foot suite features a modern design, patient-centered layout and state-of-the-art equipment to include two new MRI machines – a 1.5T and 3T Siemens.

The equipment has advanced the quality of the images captured by the medical center as well as enhanced Veterans quality of care.

Health Care Safety and Quality
a Major Focus at West Palm

The West Palm Beach VA Medical Center earned the Cornerstone Recognition Award for safety in FY 2017. The goal of the Cornerstone program is to enhance the Root Cause Analysis process and recognize the good work done in patient safety at the facility level. Each facility receives recognition according to their applied levels of achievement (Bronze, Silver or Gold) in meeting the Cornerstone criteria.

Staff who reported adverse events and close calls represent the foundation of a robust and effective patient safety program and the Cornerstone program draws strong attention to this premise. West Palm Beach VA is often recognized for its patient safety initiatives and achieved the Gold Cornerstone Award for the third consecutive year.

The West Palm Beach VAMC’s Surgery Service made significant improvement in quality, safety, access, productivity and operating room efficiency in Fiscal Year 2017. This improvement is the result of intensive process improvement projects and initiatives which resulted in decreased surgical morbidity and mortality rates which remain lower than the national average.
Gainesville

**Infusion Clinic Expands**

The Malcom Randall VA Medical Center Infusion clinic, which serves more than 130 Veterans each week, was renovated and expanded to provide better access and experiences for Veterans undergoing treatment and their family members. The clinic, which increased from 10 to 14 chairs, and more spacious area and open design concept, allows caregivers trouble free access to provide assessments as well as more privacy and access for family members to stay with their loved ones while they undergo treatment.

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**Employee Recognition: Great Catch Awards**

Recognizing staff who go above and beyond in their every day jobs, the Great Catch Awards were implemented to highlight employees whose actions and quick thinking stopped a potentially harmful outcome for our Veterans. Recipients receive a surprise recognition from leadership in front of their peers as well as a special baseball that signifies their ‘Great Catch’!

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**Malcom Randall VAMC Celebrates 50 Year Anniversary**

“The house that Malcom built” 50 years in the making, and from humble beginnings as a 480-bed inpatient facility located in the shadow of the University of Florida’s Health Center, the Gainesville VA Medical Center, now named after founder Malcom Randall, has grown to be the center of the nation’s largest health care system for Veterans.

The anniversary celebration on Oct. 27, 2017 which drew hundreds of former employees and local and national dignitaries, highlighted the long history and impact the hospital has had on the community.

---

**Braille Flag is Dedicated**

The Jacksonville Outpatient Clinic was the recipient of a special gift as U.S. Army Veteran and ‘CNN Hero’ Walt Peters honored the facility and vision impaired Veterans with a specially made Bronze Braille Flag in a beautiful ceremony after Memorial Day. Peters, a patient in the low-vision clinic at the facility wanted to give back in a way that both recognized the excellent care Veterans with visual impairment receive throughout the system as well as give other blind Veterans a way to ‘see’ the flag they all served.
Healthcare Innovators

The North Florida/South Georgia Veterans Health System was recognized as one of VA's national sites for innovation and charged with a mission to build the innovation capacity of the VA by engaging employees in the field. One of 33 sites nationwide, NF/SGVHS goals are to teach and train VA employees in human-centered design and entrepreneurship, spark-see-spread funding of innovative ideas that can be used in VA and support the diffusion of excellence.

FOCUS ON SUICIDE PREVENTION: ‘Vietnam War’ PBS Partnership

Suicide prevention was a singular priority of the North Florida/South Georgia Veterans Health System (NF/SGVHS) in September 2017.

The NF/SGVHS viewed the announcement of the 10-Part documentary on the Vietnam War by Ken Burns as a golden opportunity to reach Veterans suffering in silence from their traumatic war experiences as well as those who may have been impacted by Hepatitis C.

Recognizing Heroism at the Villages

December 13, 2016 is a day that staff and patients at the Villages OPC will never forget as they came together to avert what could have been a significant tragedy when a disgruntled Veteran came to the facility with a weapon to do harm. Alert volunteers, administrative staff, providers, caregivers and police used emergency incident training they had received to help subdue the assailant and ensure there were no injuries or loss of life.

‘ORIGINAL’ Honored

Deputy Secretary of Veterans Affairs Tom Bowman ‘pins’ long-time VA employee Betty Jones-Baker during a 50th Anniversary celebration at the Malcom Randall VA Medical Center in Gainesville, Fla. on Oct. 27, 2017. Ms. Jones-Baker, who has worked at Malcom Randall since 1968, began her VA career at age 19. She is considered the last of the ‘original’ Malcom Randall VAMC employees who first came to work there when the facility opened its doors five decades ago.

“The care has been great! I love the staff and my wife holds them in high regard. One of the reasons I moved to Lake City was because of the VA.”

Terry Swearingen
U.S. Army Veteran
Patient, Lake City VA Medical Center
Emergency Department Opens at Lake Nona

Even Hurricane Irma couldn’t stop the Orlando VA Medical Center in meeting a significant milestone Sept. 12 when it formally opened its Lake Nona-based Emergency Department. Previously an Urgent Care center, the ED serves its more than 110,000 Veterans with 24/7 emergent care. The opening signaled completion of the 1.2 million square foot Lake Nona campus activation.

The Impact of Volunteers

5,655
Volunteers in VISN 8

$6.2 million
Total Value of Gifts & Donations Received

$25.3 million
Total Impact of Voluntary Service (gifts, donations, volunteer time)

Volunteers Help Transform Lake Baldwin Clinic

More than 1,500 Lockheed Martin employees, friends and family members descended on the Lake Baldwin Outpatient Clinic Oct. 22 to transform the grounds and main auditorium during their annual Day of Caring. The record breaking volunteer team completed more than 80 projects including an outdoor kitchen, walking trail and fitness stations, a half basketball court for the Domiciliary, and thousands of cut and fitted pavers to beautify one of the Orlando VAMC’s oldest OPCs.
PRIORITIES:
Improve Timeliness, Modernization, Focus Resources

Orlando VA Fisher House Breaks Ground

On Nov. 30, the Orlando VA Medical Center broke ground on a Lake Nona-based Fisher House to provide a “home away from home” at no cost for families and caregivers of hospitalized Veterans and active duty military receiving VA treatment. Located on the Lake Nona campus, the two-story, 16-suite home will feature a common kitchen, laundry facilities, a spacious dining room and inviting living room, with a library and toys for children.

“Working at the Orlando VAMC with and for my brothers and sisters that I have served and fought with is an honor. The five-star care and extra mile we go here for our Veterans is what makes us proud. This is my family.”

Goekhan Goektas
U.S. Army Veteran
Apache Helicopter Mechanic
Program Support Assistant with one year at the Orlando VAMC

“Opening the Lake Nona VA Medical Center was a great win for Veterans like myself who live in the Orlando area, and not having to travel long distances encouraged me to continue my VA care. As an employee, it gives me great pleasure to serve my fellow Veterans, as they have sacrificed everything for us.”

Jaswantie Decaul
U.S. Marine Corps Veteran
Administrative Clerk
Executive Administration Support with seven months at the Orlando VAMC

National Veterans Wheelchair Games head to Orlando in 2018

In a successful bid, the Orlando VA Medical Center and the Orlando Chapter of the Paralyzed Veterans of America won the right to host more than 600 athletes July 30 to Aug. 4, 2018, during the 38th National Veterans Wheelchair Games. The events will be held at the Orange County Convention Center and other Orlando-based venues where Veterans will Conquer the Challenge, while participating in several special adaptive sports events.