



VA HEALTH CARE Defining EXCELLENCE in the 21st Century

Veteran Connection

VA Portland Health Care System Newsletter

Keeping the Promise - Advancing Excellence



VA Portland Health Care System

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Produced by the VAPORHCS Public Affairs Office

QUESTIONS / COMMENTS ??
Please email us at...
VHAPOR-PublicAffairs@med.va.gov

Lincoln's Promise (VA Mission Statement)

"To care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow, and his orphan" by serving and honoring the men and women who are America's Veterans.

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For [VAPORHCS Events and Classes](#)—got to the VAPORHCS Web page...
www.portland.va.gov/calendar.asp

Message from the Director



Joanne M. Krumberger
Director, VA Portland Health Care System

I discussed the new VAPORHCS Veteran & Family Advisory Board (VFAB) in last month's newsletter in great detail, however, I am so thankful to the 12 volunteer members I must make mention again. On the fourth page of this newsletter is a photo of the entire group during their first face-to-face meeting in Portland. We name all the members and give a brief snapshot of their background. It is an incredibly diverse group of individuals who represent different eras and locations of the Veterans we serve across VAPORHCS from Bend all the way to the coast. Thank you to our volunteers and the many others who applied to be a part of this important group. They will play an instrumental role in helping us provide the best care and service possible to our Veterans.

On May 8 we were honored to host Under Secretary for Health Carolyn Clancy, M.D. in Portland who presented the 2013 Robert W. Carey Performance Excellence trophy award to VAPORHCS. You can see more detail on page two about this event. The collective energy that resulted in this national recognition was not for the purpose of receiving an award; our ultimate goal was performance improvement and developing a road map to help us provide the best care and Veteran experience possible. This undertaking is just one tool to help us do just that.

May 2015

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During recent travels I had a chance to see the new 100,000 square foot Eugene Outpatient Clinic nearing completion. Scheduled to open this summer, this VA Roseburg Health Care System clinic is a great example of what the VA is doing to expand access to care all around the region to help meet the growing Veteran demand for care in the Pacific Northwest.

Just a quick update; we at VAPORHCS are excited to also be rapidly moving forward with new facilities and expansions:

- New Vancouver Primary Care Clinic - 2015
- New Portland VA Fisher House - 2015
- New 12,000 sq ft Vancouver Primary / Specialty Care Lease - 2015/16
- New East Portland CBOC - Opens in early 2016
- New 50-room Freedoms Path at Vancouver—enhanced-use leased facility - Opens 2015-16 to provide homeless, at risk or being homes, and disabled Veterans permanent housing

We are very excited about the progress we are making at VAPORHCS in steadily improving access to care and ensuring we are providing exceptional service every time.

Thank you for your service to our county and it is an honor for us to care for you.

I wish everyone a wonderful Memorial Day.

In Service to Veterans,

Joanne M. Krumberger

VAPORHCS / VBA Veterans Town Hall - May. 19 in Vancouver

Also at several CBOCs by video teleconference

When: Tuesday, May 19, 2015 at 5:00 – 6:30 p.m.

Where: VAPORHCS Vancouver Campus, Columbia Room, Bldg. 11, and at the Bend, Salem, N. Coast, West Linn, Hillsboro and The Dalles CBOCs via video teleconference.

Who: Veterans, family members & caregivers

Questions?

VHAPOR-PublicAffairs@med.va.gov

503-402-2975

Why: Share information, answer questions and address concerns.

VA Under Secretary for Health presents award to VAPORHCS

Robert W. Carey Performance Excellence Award for 2013 is officially presented May 8 in Portland

On Friday, May 8, 2015, VA Interim Under Secretary for Health Carolyn Clancy, M.D. presented the 2013 Robert W. Carey Performance Excellence trophy award to VA Portland Health Care System (VAPORHCS) in Portland.

The annual VA Secretary-sponsored Robert W. Carey Award recognizes VA organizations that have demonstrated organizational performance excellence which were established to support high levels of performance excellence in the following areas: leadership; strategic planning; customer and market focus; measurement, analysis, and knowledge management; workforce resource focus; process management and results.

“This national recognition is indicative of the efforts VAPORHCS staff put forward every day to deliver ever-improving service to Veterans,” said Joanne M. Krumberger, Director VAPORHCS. “



The Robert W. Carey Award applies the same criteria as those used for internationally and nationally recognized Malcolm Baldrige Performance Excellence awards, sponsored by the Department of Commerce.

This criterion provides a model for organizations to assess their quality transformation efforts, organizational effectiveness, and performance in delivering service and satisfying customers.

As part of the process to earn this recognition, a team of VAPORHCS staff performed a critical self-assessment of existing management systems. The team wrote a consolidated application on exactly what those systems were, identified gaps on where and how to improve, and then put in place ways to help design, implement, and then continuously improve these management systems.

The award is named in memory of Robert W. Carey, a publicly recognized VA quality leader and a champion for excellence in the federal government. He was the Director of the Philadelphia Regional Office and Insurance Center from 1985 until 1990.



VA Interim Under Secretary for Health Carolyn Clancy, M.D., (left) unveils the 2013 Robert W. Carey Performance Excellence trophy award on May 8, 2015, in the Portland VA Medical Center auditorium. To her right is VAPORHCS Director Joanne Krumberger and Larry Carroll, VISN20 Network Director.

VAPORHCS Volunteer highlight

Meet Betty and Al Herrera

By Phillip I. Meyers, VAPORHCS Public Affairs Office Volunteer



If it were not for a “nagging” friend, Al and Betty Herrera would not be Volunteers at VAPORHCS. As Betty describes it, “A friend who was a member of the Ladies Auxiliary of the Order of the Purple Heart kept nagging Al and me to volunteer at the Portland VA Hospital.”

And, so, in 2010, Al and Betty Herrera joined the distinguished cadre of volunteers who serve at VAPORHCS. Al is no stranger to the Order of the Purple Heart. He received his medal subsequent to being wounded in Vietnam in 1969. Al was drafted in 1955 and served in the U.S. Army for 22 years, retiring as a command sergeant major.

It was in November 2011, that Al was recognized for his heroic action in Vietnam, and, as reported in the Oregonian, “The Silver Star, the military’s third-highest award, finally found its way to the chest of Beaverton’s Al Herrera, 42 years after the actions that earned it.”

Al’s Company Commander, Phil Greenwell, was captain of the mechanized infantry company in which Al served as first sergeant.

The Oregonian article describes what happened: Greenwell and Herrera were part of a procession of armored vehicles whose lead element suddenly ran into intense enemy fire...the incoming North Vietnamese gunfire drowned out the sound of the outgoing fire.

Herrera was severely wounded by two RPG rounds, but hit the ground running, moving men into fighting position. “I saw we had a bunch of wounded guys we had to get off that hill,” said Greenwell, and he ordered Herrera to get it done.

Al had taken shrapnel under his right arm, left leg and abdomen, but despite his wound succeeded in getting the troops to safety. “He ran the show,” said Greenwell who intended for a long time to submit Al for a medal for heroism. Finally, it was done and Al was recognized in 2011 in the Oregon Governor’s office, and later was honored along with fellow soldiers at Fort Riley, Kansas.

The Governor also appointed Al to the Governor’s Advisory Committee for the Oregon Department of Veteran Affairs.

Al is a native Oregonian and Betty was born in Washington. When asked where they met, Al, smiling, says they first saw each other at a Jiffy Lube in Hillsboro. Al introduced himself...they have been married 18 years.

They say that they get a great deal of satisfaction serving Veterans. Their primary volunteer duties include making and delivering coffee, along with newspapers, magazines and books to VAPORHCS patients.

Al was the Honorary Sergeant Major of the 16th Infantry Regiment, First Infantry Division. He is also a “Distinguished Member of the Regiment” and participates in the Division’s annual reunions. Al is proud of his role in the 350 member “Bandido Charlie Association,” made up of Vietnam Veterans and current active duty soldiers of Charlie Company, 16th Infantry Regiment.

In honor of Al and Betty’s service, Charlie Company built a convoy control building in Al Assad, Iraq, and named it Herrera’s Hall.

Al and Betty are both active members of the Military Order of the Purple Heart (MOPH). They both have served as officers of the MOPH for more than eight years; Al belongs to Chapter 72, and Betty is a member of unit 72 of the Ladies Auxiliary of the MOPH.

Al and Betty Herrera can be described as a “dynamic duo” that faithfully serve VAPORHCS and its Veterans every Friday morning delivering coffee and newspapers. Thank you for your service to your country and our Veterans, Al and Betty.

Meet the VAPORHCS Veterans and Family Advisory Board (VFAB)



Pictured with VAPORHCS Director Joanne Krumberger are VFAB board members Shelli Svendsen, Family Member of OIF Veteran; Maurice “Alex” Harkins, Navy, Vietnam; Steve Schreiner, Marine Corps, Vietnam; Brandon Guerrero, Navy, OIF (x 2); Reinaldo “Skip” Palma, Air Force, Vietnam; Marc Mooney, Navy, Vietnam; Bill Kroger, Army, Vietnam; Barbara Besand, Family Member of Navy Veteran; Michael Elston, Army, Vietnam; Robert Rasey, Navy, served in Vietnam and retired in 2004 from the National Guard; Wendy Rudy, Navy, Family Member of OEF Veteran; Nathan Page, Marine Corps, Operation Iraqi Freedom (x2)

For several months VAPORHCS has been forming the VFAB. We are dedicated at VAPORHCS to provide the best care possible as well as ensure every Veteran’s experience here is nothing but exceptional. The VFAB is one more tool we are using to help us achieve this goal by advising us on key health care issues. We want to thank our VFAB members for their time and commitment to this end.

Implications of legalized marijuana in the VA

Provided by Office of Regional Counsel, VA Region 20, Seattle

In the last two years, Alaska, Colorado, Oregon and Washington have all passed measures legalizing recreational marijuana use. In addition, 23 states plus the District of Columbia have enacted laws to legalize marijuana for medical uses. The Controlled Substances Act prohibits the distribution and possession of marijuana. 21 U.S. Code (U.S.C.) § 841(a). Under the Act, marijuana is a Schedule I drug with a “high potential for abuse” and “no currently accepted medical use in treatment in the United States.” 21 U.S.C. § 812(b). Given the interplay of federal law and state laws legalizing marijuana in varying contexts, an individual can be legally using marijuana under state law but still be in violation of federal criminal law. Possession of marijuana on federal property remains a criminal offense. See 38 Code of Federal Regulations (C.F.R.) § 1.218(a)(7).

Legalization of marijuana retail sales and marijuana for medical use does not protect VA employees, contractors, or visitors from possible prosecution under federal law. With states legalizing marijuana, more Veterans Health Administration (VHA) providers may encounter Veterans who test positive for the substance. VHA policy does not

administratively prohibit Veterans who participate in state marijuana programs from also participating in VHA substance abuse programs, pain control programs, or other clinical programs where the use of marijuana may be considered inconsistent with treatment goals—reference VHA Directive 2011-004. If clinically appropriate, the Veteran participating in state marijuana programs may continue to receive pain medications from VA providers. However, VA providers may modify a Veteran’s treatment plan or decide not to prescribe pain medicine altogether if the Veteran is using marijuana and there is a risk of a drug interaction. Consistent with VHA policy, these clinical decisions must be made on a case-by-case basis and not pursuant to a blanket policy.

VA providers are not permitted to prescribe marijuana or complete state medical marijuana forms. VHA Directive 2011-004. If a veteran presents an authorization form for marijuana to a VA provider or pharmacist, VA will not provide marijuana nor will it pay for it to be provided by a non-VA entity - VHA Directive 2011-004.



Veterans Choice Program - did you know???

Dental Care is a covered benefit under the Choice Program for eligible Veterans?

Although dental care is a covered benefit under the Veterans Choice Program for Veterans who meet dental eligibility requirements, VAPORHCS's Choice Program Third Party Administrator— TriWest Health Care Alliance — does not provide dental referrals; VAPORHCS follows the procedures set in place for the Non-VA Care Dental Program.

The Non-VA Care Dental Program provides pre-authorized treatment to eligible Veterans when VA medical centers are not capable of providing care due to geographical inaccessibility or when the needed care is not available at a VA facility. The same eligibility requirements for the Choice Program apply to dental benefits; >30 days wait time, >40 mile rule, enrolled on or before Aug. 1, 2014 for VA health care.

What Veterans eligible for dental care need to do to use the Choice Program within VAPORHCS...

Dental patients will receive a call from VAPORHCS Dental Service if they are on the waitlist for an appointment or have an appointment greater than 30 days from clinically indicated date or the Vet-

eran's preferred date. Veteran will then be offered Non-VA Care for the episode of care for which they are waiting. If Veteran chooses to use this option, the Dental Service will enter a Non-VA Care Consult to the VAPORHCS Purchased Care department, who will work with the patient and a community Dentist to provide care.

VA Dental benefits are limited to certain groups of Veterans; here is a link to a VA dental benefit fact sheet to see if you might be eligible. This fact sheet can also be found on the VA Dentistry Web site.

Veterans may call the VAPORHCS Business Office about their eligibility questions;

Portland area: (503) 273-5289

Outside Portland area: (800) 949-1004, ext. 55289

The VAPORHCS Portland Dental Clinic:

503)-273-5024

VAPORHCS Research Day — May 21, 2015, 10:00-11:30 a.m.

Please join us in Portland to hear direct from VAPORHCS investigators on their latest research studies



Where: VA Auditorium

Bldg. 100, 3710 SW U.S. Veterans Hospital Rd., Portland, OR 97239

This public event will showcase the accomplishments of the following local VAPORHCS scientists:

David Cohen: *Genetics of water balance in veterans*

Pat Feeney: *Exploring the middle ear with sound*

Deb Finn: *Traumatic stress and binge drinking as risk factors for excessive alcohol intake*

David Lieberman: *New advances in colorectal cancer screening*

Ben Morasco: *The Relationship between Posttraumatic Stress Disorder and Chronic Pain*



Clay Hunt Suicide Prevention for America Veterans (SAV) Act

VA Fact Sheet

On February 12, 2015, President Obama signed the Clay Hunt Suicide Prevention Act into law. Sgt. Clay Hunt left Active Duty service with the U.S. Marine Corps in 2008. Following his discharge, he struggled with depression, panic attacks and post-traumatic stress but threw himself into Veterans advocacy and humanitarian work. In 2011, he died by suicide at the age of 28. Mental health care and suicide prevention are already among the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) highest priorities. This Act will give VA additional authority to address these priorities.

Statement from VA Secretary Robert McDonald on Passage of the Clay Hunt Bill; *“I’m pleased that both houses of Congress have come together to pass the Clay Hunt Suicide Prevention for America Veterans (SAV) Act. Sgt. Clay Hunt’s death was a tragedy. Every suicide is one too many. I had the honor of meeting Sgt. Hunt’s parents and was inspired by their strength and their commitment to further improve care for Veterans like Clay. Thanks to their efforts, this legislation will help VA take additional steps to improve mental health care for those who have borne the battle.”*

Anticipated improvements to mental health care from the SAV Act :

- VA will have an independent third party conduct annual evaluations of the mental health care and suicide prevention programs that are carried out by the Department.
- VA will publish an Internet website that serves as a centralized source to provide Veterans with information regarding all of the mental health care services provided by VA. The information on the website will be updated at least every 90 days, and VA will include information about the website in outreach efforts.
- VA will conduct a pilot program for the repayment of educational loans for certain psychiatrists in VA. The pilot will pay up to \$30,000 of educational loan expenses per year and would require a service obligation period. Eligible individuals would include those licensed or eligible for licensure to practice psychiatric medicine in VA or those who are enrolled in the final year of a residency program leading to a specialty qualification in psychiatric medicine. VA will provide an initial and a final report addressing the results of the pilot program.
- VA will establish a three-year pilot program focused on assisting Veterans transitioning from active duty and improve the access of Veterans to mental health services. The pilot program will be established in at least 5 Veterans Integrated Service Networks (VISNs) and will establish a community-oriented peer support network and a community outreach team for each medical center in those VISNs. VA will produce an initial and a final

VAPORHCS actively collaborates with many local organizations through regular outreach, educational events, and other opportunities to help prevent suicide among Veterans.

If any organizations would like to inquire about working with the VAPORHCS Suicide Prevention team, please contact the VAPORHCS Public Office...

VHAPOR-PublicAffairs@med.va.gov

(503) 402-1920 or 2975

report addressing the results of the pilot program.

- VA will collaborate with nonprofit mental health organizations to prevent suicide among Veterans and VA will appoint a Director of Suicide Prevention Coordination to lead the collaboration efforts.
- Combat Veterans who were discharged between January 1, 2009, and January 1, 2011, and did not enroll in the VA health care during their 5 year period of eligibility will have an additional one year to enroll. The additional one-year eligibility period begins on the date of enactment of the Act (February 12, 2015).