



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

or call 503-402-2975

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Message from the Director



Todd D. Burnett, PsyD
Acting Director, VA Portland Health Care System

This will be my last column for the Veteran Connection. As announced earlier this month, Michael W. Fisher has been selected as the new Director of VAPORHCS and is scheduled to begin his tenure on July 25th. I have had the privilege of working with Mr. Fisher at the Veterans Integrated Service Network (VISN) 20 office in Vancouver where he previously served as the Chief Financial Officer and Deputy Network Director; VA Portland could not be in more capable hands. Michael also served as the Interim VAPORHCS Director for several months in 2014 prior to taking his current position as Director at the VA Long Beach Healthcare System and knows our staff, community, and Veteran population already... the future is bright for the Portland Healthcare System.

It has been a privilege to serve this organization these past several months. I am pleased to share some of the strides we have made in several areas:

- In the past 30 days, we have authorized the hiring additional staff in both clinical and administrative support areas. This is a first step towards right-sizing our investments to match our access priorities and the quality outcomes this

organization takes pride in providing.

- We have undertaken a sweeping review of administrative governance structures to maximize our organizational agility. These conversations are evolving to help leadership collaboratively develop and seamlessly execute needed to advance services to Veterans, their families, and our community.
- We increased the usage of recruitment and relocation incentives for our hard to recruit/retain positions, approved a nursing retention incentive to honor the invaluable work of our Nurses and addressed needed pay adjustments in several physician classes to make a dedicated career at the Portland HCS not only feasible, but the option of choice for the finest providers in this region.
- We invested in Food Services to implement Room Service (a Veteran Satisfaction priority), invested in our VA police to ensure our environment remains stable commensurate with our growth, our housekeeping staff to ensure this remains a facility that sets the standards in environment of care, and investments in several other areas to facilitate Portland's future as the leaders of healthcare quality in the Northwest.
- We opened the Fisher House and the Fairview Clinic in March and are

[\(continued on last page\)](#)

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

If you would like to be added to the VAPORHCS Partner email list, please email us at VHAPOR-PublicAffairs@med.va.gov

Project Healing Waters — helping Veterans through the art of fly tying and fishing

By Phillip Myers

Public Affairs Volunteer / Writer

Dry Flies. Wet Flies. Nymphs. Terrestrials.
Streamers. Saltwater Flies.

Are these names for a secret code? No, they are names that describe the great sport of fly fishing as practiced by thousands of avid fishermen in the Pacific Northwest, including many Veterans who participate in Project Healing Waters at VAPORHCS.

Project Healing Waters was designed and implemented for Veterans at the Walter Reed Army Medical Center (now known as the Walter Reed National Military Medical Center) in 2006. Enrolled in the Healing Waters program, Veterans learn how to tie flies and participate in actual fishing events.

As the plank members of Healing Waters left Walter Reed, they exported the program to many VA medical centers and military hospitals. Currently, there are 200



Vietnam Veterans George Wilson (Army) from Beaverton and Jerry Vricky (Navy) from Tigard tie flies at the Portland VA Medical Center during a monthly Project Healing Waters workshop held this spring. George and Jerry are two of a number Project Healing Waters members who volunteer their time to work with Veterans at the Portland and Vancouver VA medical centers.



A recent Healing Waters fishing outing with Veterans at Big & Little Tree Lakes located in the foothills of the Cascades southeast of Oregon City.

such programs, 75 percent of which take place at VA locations, including one at VAPORHCS.

Jerry Lorang is the Project Healing Waters leader at

For more information contact
Jerry at 971-404-5154 or call
VAPORHCS Voluntary Services at
(503) 402-2896

VAPORHCS. Jerry, who retired as a VA employee in 2007 after 32 years of service at VBA, is an U.S. Army Veteran. “In the early ‘90s, I enrolled in a fly fishing class and was immediately hooked,” said Jerry. Eventually, Jerry and Nancy McFarland, a VAPORHCS recreation therapist, organized a Healing Waters program at VAPORHCS that conducts monthly fly fishing classes at the Portland and Vancouver campuses, as well as classes in Salem, Bend, Eugene, Roseburg, and White City.

“Our primary mission,” said Jerry, “is to teach the fundamentals of fly fishing to disabled Veterans, although we welcome any Veteran who would like to participate.”

If you look in on a fly fishing instruction class, you might be bewildered by the vast array of flies being tied. They

Project Healing Waters (continued)

are colorful specimens designed to capture the fish's attention and bite. Flies differ in color, size, presentation and shape.

"It might look difficult," says Jerry, "but you can learn how to tie a fly in just minutes. There are an infinite number of flies, and we teach how to tie flies in line with the type of fish they are designed to catch. I prefer fishing for small stream trout."

In fact, regular fishing excursions are planned in local waters. Transportation for Vets are offered via VA vehicles, and if the individual is part of a therapy program, he or she receives free transportation. The program is frequented by both male and female Veterans.

While Jerry, a native of Buffalo, N.Y., has no tall tales about "the fish that got away," he is not reluctant to talk about his VA career. "I started with the VA in 1975 and retired in 2007. I traveled all over the country working



Rick Driver (Air Force), a Vietnam Veteran from Vancouver, ties a "Flashback Pheasant Tail Nymph" fly at a Project Healing Waters workshop at the Portland VA Medical Center earlier this spring.

for the Veterans Benefits Administration, and answered literally thousands of Veterans' questions regarding their available benefits."

Let's Go Fishing!

See information on these and many other classes and events across VAPORHCS on our [Events & Classes calendar](#) located in the center of the VAPORHCS Web site at www.portland.va.gov.

Are you a woman who served in the military?

Oregon Dept. of Veterans Affairs wants to hear YOUR perspective on health and wellness

What: Focus group for women Veterans

When: Thursday, July 14, 2016, 6:30-8:00 p.m.

Where: Portland (contact organizer below for details)

If you are interested in attending, give Erin a call at (503) 764-9696 or email her at erin.charpentier@redgroup.co

To ensure your spot, please call by July 10th.



OREGON DEPARTMENT
of VETERANS' AFFAIRS

Food & \$50
in compensation for your
time will be provided

Expanding access to care through telehealth at VA Portland

By Bill Kroger

Public Affairs Volunteer / Writer

Department of Veterans Affairs is creating a new telehealth initiative and VA Portland Health Care System (VAPORHCS) is part of it by linking with other VA health care systems including Seattle and Boise. The Undersecretary for Health, [David K. Shulkin, announced recently](#) that the VA is adding five VA Mental Health Telehealth Clinical Resource Centers in several cities that includes an online network consortium with the three Northwest VA health care systems to provide enhanced mental health access and services to Veterans in remote locations.

[Telemedicine](#) is one of the tools the VA is using to address an ever-increasing demand for healthcare by Veterans and especially for those who live in rural areas. Related telemedicine programs are not new to Portland and they have been making a difference in Veterans lives in the Pacific Northwest for years.

“The telemedicine program has been years,” said Dr. David Douglas, Chief, VAPORHCS. “But it has become a lot health is part of the larger program called and their rural medical professionals can (usually specialists) and technicians via “Twenty-first century medicine involves are instead of having them come to us,”

and works with individuals suffering from Alzheimer’s disease. He also oversees the [Northwest Innovation Center \(NWIC\)](#) located at the Portland VA Medical Center.

“Veterans are no longer confined to the time and space of a VA medical center to get care,” said Douglas.

“Telehealth changes the traditional model where patients always had to come to the medical facility. Now, patients can get medical help when they need and want it.”

VAPORHCS cares for approximately 95,000 Veterans and is one of the larger VA health care systems in the country. A good percentage of those Veterans live in remote areas of Oregon and Washington State, some more than several hundred miles away from the nearest VA facility. For many, to travel frequently to Portland for medical care could be prohibitive, and securing a place to stay in Portland could be problematic or too expensive, if not authorized as part of their care. With telehealth, the Veterans can communicate live and one-on-one with their medical providers.

Paulette Channon, the NWIC Virtual Care Director, said VAPORHCS has been practicing telehealth for seven years. “Portland has been a trailblazer..., a leader in some of the national programs, such as video in the home neurology and



Portland VA staff demonstrate a telehealth capability (file photo). Exams with specialized equipment can be used at remote locations to share information with clinicians elsewhere. Telehealth changes the location where health care services are routinely provided and expands access to Veterans, wherever they may be.

“Veterans are no longer confined to the time and space of a VA medical center to get care”

around in various forms for nearly 20 Health Information Officer at more sophisticated.” He added that tele-Connected Health , where Veteran patients communicate long distances with doctors computers and other new technology. reaching out to the patients wherever they said Douglas, who is a geriatrics specialist

Telehealth (continued)



A team from the Peruvian Ministry of Health (MOH) poses with Paulette Channon (right), the Northwest Innovation Center (NWIC) Virtual Care Director, on June 23 at the Portland VA Medical Center. The MOH team was on an educational visit in the U.S. and the Portland VA Telehealth team demonstrated and discussed the VAPORHCS Telehealth program capabilities and benefits it brings to Veterans across our health care system, especially rural area Veterans.

sleep programs” she said. “We also piloted the Clinical Video Telehealth in the home, jails and other venues. We assist Veterans in jail, primarily those who are about ready to get out by connecting them with a social worker in preparation for their transition to VA care,” Channon said.

Most of the telehealth programs are for patients who have an established relationship with a doctor. For example, doctors can monitor pacemakers long distance. “Patients present at a clinic where a trained professional downloads the information from their pacemakers to the computer and then sends it to their doctor,” said Channon. Another example of the benefit of telehealth: a photo of a skin problem can be sent to the specialist long distance and read while the Veteran is at the remote of-

vice. The VA also has a home sleep program where patients take a sleep monitor home from the rural clinic, hook it up, and then bring it back later. The information is sent to a specialist in Portland to be interpreted and the patient is then set up with the appropriate technology or care program to assist them. This precludes Veterans from having to come to Portland and spend a night.

An increasing area of use with telehealth involves remote care for mental health issues, such as for post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and depression. “There’s always a trained mental health professional at the Portland end,” said Channon. So, if a Veteran patient needs to speak with a mental health professional quickly, it can be done, she added, and with video teleconferencing it can be face-to-face. Other areas where telehealth has made progress include seizures, electroencephalogram (EEG) (brain) testing, speech and diabetic eye testing.

Currently, more than 555,000 Veterans access healthcare through the VA’s telehealth network, representing 10 percent of the nation’s 5.8 million Veterans who receive VA care. VA telehealth programs have greatly improved access to care, reduced travel time for veterans, and reduced the number of days Veterans spend in VA hospitals. To date, in VAPORHCS alone, more than 215 specialty telehealth platforms have been developed and implemented, with more on the way.



Contact VESO at
855-VA 4 VETS
(855-824-8387)

www.vaforvets.va.gov

The VA Veteran Employment Services Office (VESO)

New VA service leads VA’s efforts to recruit qualified Veterans to join its workforce.

VESO offers career resources that help Veterans launch or advance their civilian careers at the VA. The site includes:

- Jobs for Veterans as well as some open to all U.S. citizens
- Federal hiring process information
- Training videos
- Deployment checklists for VA’s National Guard & Reserve employees
- A link to the new Employment Center on VA and DOD’s [eBenefits Web site](#)



WOMEN VETERANS HEALTH CARE

*You served, you deserve
★ the best care anywhere.*



This month, VA's Women's Health Services (WHS) is raising awareness about menopause, common signs and symptoms in women, and health services available to women Veterans.

Here is a list of informative resources related to woman's' health:

- Age Page Factsheet: Menopause
- Hormones and Menopause
- Menopause: Time for Change
- American Academy of Family Physicians
- American Academy of Family Physicians, Clinical Guidelines on Management of Menopausal Symptoms
- eBenefits
- Veterans Health Administration
- Veterans Crisis Line
- FDA
- My HealtheVet
- National Institute on Aging, National Institutes of Health
- Office of Women's Health, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
- The American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, Menopause: Resource Overview
- The North American Menopause Society
- US Department of Veterans Affairs
- US National Library of Medicine, MedlinePlus
- VA Women Veterans Health Care
- Veterans Benefit Administration



- The [Women Veterans Call Center](#) now offers a new online, one-to-one chat function.
- The service enables women Veterans to go online and anonymously chat via real-time text messaging about benefits, eligibility and services specifically for women Veterans.
- The chat is available by visiting the Women Veterans Health Care webpage at www.womenshealth.va.gov and clicking the "Chat with the Women Veterans Call Center" icon.
- The chat function is anonymous; please do not use personally identifiable information such as social security numbers.
- WVCC Chat is available Monday through Friday 8 AM – 10 PM ET, and on Saturdays from 8 AM – 6:30 PM ET.



Menopause isn't slowing me down. It shouldn't slow you down either.

Ask us about your menopause symptoms

WOMEN VETERANS HEALTH CARE

#womenVets



www.womenshealth.va.gov

New VA Web-based health care application launched June 30

Beginning June 30, 2016, Veterans applying for health care will be directed to the health care application on www.vets.gov. Previously, Veterans could apply for health care online, but the user experience was often frustrating. Veterans and other stakeholders will still have access to enrollment application form ([VA Form 10-10EZ](#)) which was originally available through the Veterans On-line Application; however, going forward, those applying for health care eligibility will use the online application or call 877-222-VETS (8387).



Disability Benefits

Help with service-related medical conditions.

Education Benefits

Tuition assistance, training programs, and more.

Careers and Employment

Meaningful employment and career development for Veterans and their families.

Health Care

Apply for health care at the VA, including preventative care, primary care and more.

Common Questions

[How do I apply for disability benefits?](#)

[How do I apply for education benefits?](#)

Popular on vets.gov

[Find nearby VA locations](#)

[View education benefits available by school](#)

[Contact the Veterans Crisis Line](#) 



Sunday
Sept. 18, 2016

**Enjoy all day,
FREE admission to the
Oregon Zoo**

Save the Date!

Welcome Home Veterans!

The VA Portland Health Care System honors and shows its appreciation for service members by hosting a *Welcome Home* celebration for Veterans and their families in the Pacific Northwest!

Registration is from 9 a.m.—12 noon

The Zoo is located at 4001 SW Canyon Rd. Portland, OR

- ♦ FREE admission and food for Veterans and their guests!
- ♦ RSVP required by Monday, September 12, 2016
- ♦ RSVP contact; welcomhome@va.gov, (503) 273-5075
- ♦ Enjoy the day and learn about VA benefits and services.

Message from the Director (continued from page 1)

scheduled to open a new 12,000 square foot Specialty Care clinic in the Clark County Public Health building in the fall as well as the Freedoms Path enhanced-use leased facility for homeless Veterans next month.

Though many of these steps need time to take root, our trajectory for sustaining excellence in service access, quality of care, and Veteran satisfaction is clear. This organization has the finest healthcare staff and leadership

anywhere... women and men who have dedicated their careers to the success of our Veterans, their families, one another, and this community.

I am proud to have played a small part these past 3 months and will continue to cheer the successes of Portland VA Health Care System in the days ahead.

Todd D. Burnett