



**VA HEALTH CARE** Defining EXCELLENCE in the 21st Century

# Veteran Connection

VA Portland Health Care System Newsletter

**Keeping the Promise - Advancing Excellence**



June 2015

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## VA Portland Health Care System

3710 SW U.S. Veterans Hospital Rd.  
Portland, OR 97239  
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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](http://www.portland.va.gov/calendar.asp)

## Message from the Director



Joanne M. Krumberger  
Director, VA Portland Health Care System

I was honored and proud to have hosted the annual VA Portland Health Care System Voluntary Service Banquet held in Portland on June 4th. Our volunteers are amazing. The 870 registered volunteers at VAPORHCS provide incredibly important contributions to Veterans and support to our service departments that we would not be able to accomplish otherwise — their skills and experience, their smiles, a person to talk to or a special touch. They make a real difference in the lives of our Veterans every day and I cannot thank them enough for what they do.

The VA is conducting a *Summer of Service* initiative in 2015. This new nation-wide initiative is designed to build upon its existing partnerships to grow the number of individuals and organizations serving Veterans in their communities. We at the VA are asking Americans everywhere to join the *Summer of Service* and help us give back to those who have given so much to our nation.

VAPORHCS is holding a *Summer of Service* event as part of this initiative on June 29, from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. in the Portland VA Medical Center Auditorium. We are inviting organizations of all kinds that support Veterans in our communities as well as all Veterans and the general public

to attend. We plan to have all these organizations under one roof at one time along with VAPORHCS staff from many services to share information about their mission, services they provide, and volunteer and employment opportunities. By sharing this information amongst the attendees, our hope is to increase volunteerism, partnerships, and create awareness about available services and employment resources and opportunities at the VA. I look forward to seeing you there.

Ending Veteran homelessness is a high priority across the VA and here in the Pacific Northwest the effort clearly has importance in the communities we serve. VA recognizes that every homeless Veteran's story is different, including their specific needs to help them get back into permanent and stable housing. There are many VA benefits that support homeless or at risk of being homeless Veterans however, we can not end Veterans homelessness alone and neither can our partners. On June 23rd VAPORHCS is hosting our first Homeless Summit at the medical center to collaborate and share ideas with community leaders and partner agencies on what is working as well as available resources for homeless Veterans. I look forward to the discussions and the proactive involvement of our partners.

Happy Flag Day and Happy Birthday to the Army on June 14, 2015.

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

In Service to Veterans,

*Joanne M. Krumberger*

## VAPORHCS / VBA Veterans Town Hall - Aug. 5 at PVAMC

Join us at via video teleconference at six CBOCs

**When:** Wednesday, Aug. 5, 2015, 5:00 – 6:30 p.m.

**Where:** Portland VA Medical Center Auditorium 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](mailto:VHAPOR-PublicAffairs@med.va.gov)  
503-402-2975

**Why:** Share information, answer questions and address concerns.



U.S. Department  
of Veterans Affairs

Summer of Service 2015

## VA Summer of Service public event scheduled at Portland VA

Organizations that support Veterans invited to share information, promote volunteerism and partnerships; Employment resources for Veterans; learn about employment opportunities in the VA

On Monday, June 29, 2015, VA Portland Health Care System (VAPORHCS), in partnership with Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) Portland Regional Office and Willamette National Cemetery, will be hosting a **VA Summer of Service** event.

This summer, VA is renewing our commitment to America's Veterans, and we're asking for everyone's help in honoring that commitment – we're calling it the **Summer of Service**.

We are asking that organizations and individuals partner with us during this **Summer of Service** – to give back to those who have given so much to our nation. Community by community we can work together to better serve Veterans—a surge of action on their behalf.

This public event is intended to bring together under one roof as many organizations as possible that support Veterans in their local communities. The intent is to build upon the VA's existing partnerships and to grow the number of individuals and organizations serving Veterans. We want to share with Veterans, visitors, VA staff and amongst the event participants what these organizations do, opportunities for volunteering or joining these groups, partnering opportunities, and to share resources to Veterans that support their needs and how to help honor those who served. The VA will have people there to discuss employment opportunities and Veteran employment resources will be available as well.

Organizations interested in participating are asked to contact VAPORHCS Public Affairs Office at VHAPOR-publicaffairs@med.va.gov or 503-402-2975. More information is available on the [VAPORHCS Facebook page under Events](#).

## VAMCs will soon be able transfer calls direct to Veterans Crisis Line

VA-wide change set for fiscal year 2016 will allow direct transfers to Veterans Crisis Line by pushing “7”



If you have called any VA Medical Center, you probably heard this message...

*“If you are having thoughts of hurting yourself or want to talk to a health professional, hang up and dial 1-800-273-8255.”*

Starting this month, the VA is starting a pilot project at 11 VA medical centers that will allow Veterans to simply push “7” to be forwarded to the Veterans Crisis Line. This new system will include technology that will allow caller ID information to be

forwarded to the Veterans Crisis Line that, if deemed necessary, will allow the technicians to call back the Veteran or call for local welfare checks or emergency responders to go to the caller's location. The VA will conduct on-going evaluation of the new system this summer with full implementation expected across the VA in fiscal year 2015. (Please note—VAPORHCS is not part of this pilot project).

The proposed message is *“If you are having thoughts of suicide, press 7 now to be connected with the Veterans Crisis Line or you may call 1-800-273-8255, then press 1.”*

## VAPORHCS volunteers honored at annual banquet on June 4



Eight VAPORHCS volunteers were awarded June 4 in Portland with the President's Lifetime Achievement Award for those who contribute more than 4,000 volunteer hours of service in their lifetime. Pictured left to right are VAPORHCS Chief of Voluntary Service Shaun Benson, Jerry Cox, Rex Hopper, Phillip Ruhmshottel, Robert Peake, Bill Gallup, VAPORHCS Director Joanne Krumberger, Beverley Smith, Karen Haltiner, Dorothy Leonard (not pictured)

A Portland Health Care System director hosted the annual Voluntary Service Banquet June 4, 2015 in Portland. More than 200 people attended the event to include 120 volunteers that assist staff and improve the care experience of more than 90,000 Veterans VAPORHCS serves each year.

Established in the VA 67 years ago, Voluntary Service is one of the largest centralized volunteer programs in the federal government. In VAPORHCS, 870-plus volunteers logged 111,570 hours of time in 2014 equating to 54 fulltime positions. They provide incredibly important contributions to Veterans and support to our service departments that we would not be able to do otherwise.

### VAPORHCS Volunteer Facts...

- 870 registered volunteers today
- 111,570 hours logged in 2014 equating to 54 fulltime employees.
- FY2014 VAPORHCS received \$78,000 in cash donations & \$673,000 in item donations.

## VAPORHCS now offering alternative to colonoscopy

VAPORHCS is now offering an alternative to colonoscopy screening for patients who otherwise do not have signs or symptoms, family history or other indicators of colon cancer.

This alternative is called a **Fecal Immunochemical Test (FIT)**.

The first patients to be offered FIT will be those who otherwise do not have any symptoms or family history of colon cancer but are currently waiting for their routine colonoscopy screening.

FIT testing will be replacing the Fecal Occult Blood Test (FOBT).

**Quick facts about FIT** – The sensitivity of one FIT test is around 70% (as opposed to FOBT which was about 15%). With serial annual screening using FIT, this approaches or equals the 95% sensitivity rate for colonoscopy.

Veterans with symptoms or a positive family history will get a colonoscopy. Asymptomatic and family history negative patients

will be given three options: (1) FIT test annually, (2) Veterans Choice Program (VCP) colonoscopy, (3) Clinical appeal to be reviewed by the VAPORHCS Deputy Chief of Staff.

Veterans who choose FIT testing will be followed via the registry which will assure Veterans receive annual testing.

All patients will be followed by RN Coordinators. They will use the colon cancer screening registry to track Veterans who are on wait lists for colonoscopies with lab order status and results displayed for Veterans that choose FIT. The registry will produce reminder letters when FIT is elected and kits have not been returned within 30 days, follow up on positive results with notification letters and generation of high risk colonoscopy consults, and manage discontinuation of consults for negative results. All actions on the consult as well as contacts with the Veterans and final disposition of FIT tests will be automated in the registry with reports available for regular review by clinical staff.

If a Veteran elects to have FIT and it is positive or if they have a VCP screening colonoscopy that is positive, they will be referred for follow up by the VAPORHCS Gastroenterology group.



## Effect of military noise exposure on tinnitus and its outcomes in recently discharged Veterans

NOISE Study is currently enrolling Veterans and current military service members



Many Veterans have hearing loss and tinnitus – the two most common service-connected disabilities for Veterans since 2007. The NOISE Study is designed to address recommendations from the congressionally-mandated Institute of Medicine (IOM) report, *Noise and Military Service: Implications for Hearing Loss and Tinnitus*, which identified the need to understand why Veterans experience delayed effects of military noise exposure. The goal is to enroll and follow Veterans over the course of their lifetimes to primarily study the effects of military and non-military noise exposures on tinnitus and hearing loss.

The NOISE Study is currently enrolling Veterans and service members who received a DD-214 within the last two and a half years or have separated from the Guard/Reserves during this same time frame. The VA is collecting data on lifetime noise exposures, history of blast exposures, traumatic brain injury (TBI), and other military and non-military exposures that can result in auditory complaints (hearing loss, tinnitus, trouble understanding speech in noise). The VA is collaborating with the Department of Defense Hearing Center of Excellence in San Antonio, Texas, which broadens the population to include active-duty service members. To date, 155 Veterans have been enrolled at VAPORHCS. The majority of participants report having hearing difficulties and almost 50 percent of those with hearing problems associated exposure to loud noise as the main cause of their hearing issues. Initial analyses also reveal that almost 70 percent of participants experience tinnitus.

By conducting this study that follows Veterans over time, the VA is learning about:

- 1) Relationships between military and non-military exposures and hearing loss/tinnitus;
- 2) Effects of hearing loss and tinnitus on Veterans' daily lives; and
- 3) The long-term impact of military and non-military exposures on hearing loss and tinnitus.

This information can eventually be used by the VA for resource planning to improve clinical care services offered to Veterans experiencing these auditory complaints.

For more information or to participate in the NOISE Study, please follow this link...  
[www.ncrar.research.va.gov/Join\\_Research\\_Study/NOISEStudy.asp](http://www.ncrar.research.va.gov/Join_Research_Study/NOISEStudy.asp)  
 or call Cody at 503-220-8262 ext. 51765.

The National Center for Rehabilitative Auditory Research (NCRAR) located at the VAPORHCS VA Medical Center in Portland.



## Are you signed up for MyHealthVet?

My HealthVet is the VA's Personal Health Record. It was designed for Veterans, active duty service members, their dependents and caregivers. My HealthVet helps you partner with your health care team. It provides you opportunities and tools to make informed deci-



Register on line [here](#) or contact VAPORHCS at (503) 220-8262, ext. 57854 or in person at PVAMC bldg. 100, room 1D140 (in the Pharmacy)



## Your Virtual Lifetime Electronic Record (VLER) is here!!

Program shares parts of your health record between the VA, DOD, and selected private health care providers over a secure and confidential network known as the eHealth Exchange.

### How might VLER Health benefit me?

Many Veterans receive a portion of their care from non-VA health care providers. Sharing certain parts of your Electronic Health Record (EHR) will help reduce the need for patients and families to carry records between health care providers as well as allow your private health care provider to make more informed decisions about your care. In an emergency, immediate access to additional health care information could save your life.

**Do You See a  
Non-VA  
Health Care  
Provider?**

### Who can view my health information?

Your non-VA health care providers that participate in the [OCHIN](#) and Oregon Health & Science University (OHSU) secure health information exchanges and VA doctors will be able to see certain parts of your health record and use it to create a better picture of your overall health.

### What if I decide not to join?

Participation is entirely voluntary. Deciding not to participate will not affect your VLER Health benefits or your relationship with your doctor and/or the Portland VAMC.

### What if I join and later change my mind?

If you change your mind, you can visit your [VAPORHCS Web site](#) or call the toll-free VLER Health Information line at 1-877-771-VLER (8537) to request the [VLER Health Revocation form](#) to stop sharing your health information.

## How do I join to be a part of the Virtual Lifetime Electronic Record (VLER) ???

### Ebenefits online sign up process:

If you are a Premium\* eBenefits account holder, we invite you to Connect Your Docs through the VLER Health Information Exchange.

### Here's how to sign up today to begin sharing your health records:

1. To get started, go to [www.ebenefits.va.gov/](http://www.ebenefits.va.gov/) and log in.
2. Select Manage Health.
3. Scroll to the Health Records row and select VA Health Record Sharing.
4. Select Manage My Authorizations and Preferences and then select Start Authorization.
5. Accept the terms and conditions (you must click Yes to continue), then select Save and Continue.
6. Mark the box and select Sign. You will then be prompted to re-enter your username and password.
7. Finally, click Re-authenticate. (This next step may take a couple of minutes to process)



**Sign up in person:** We have two locations to serve you.

- In **Portland** you can find us in the Portland VA Medical Center, 3710 SW U.S. Veterans Hospital Road, Building 100, Room 1D-140.
- In **Vancouver** we're in the MyHealtheVet Program office, VAMC Vancouver Campus, 1601 E. Fourth Plain Blvd, Building 15, Room 230, Vancouver, Washington. When you're here just ask for a VA Authorization form (VA Form 10-0485), complete it, sign it and hand it back over to your friendly MyHealtheVet Specialist and you're done!

**By Fax:** If you prefer you can fax your [VA Authorization 10-0485](#) to the My HealtheVet Coordinator (503) 721-7948.

**By Mail:** You can find a copy of the Authorization form (VA Form 10-0485) online by going to <http://www.va.gov/vaforms/medical/pdf/vha-10-0485-fill.pdf> filling it out, signing it and mailing it to us at: MyHealtheVet Specialist, V4MHV 1601 E. Fourth Plain, Vancouver, WA 98661

**Please do not email the VA Authorization form to the VA Medical Center.**



## **VAPORHCS selected The Magnet Recognition Program® for 3rd time**

Magnet recognizes health care organizations for quality patient care, nursing excellence and innovations in professional nursing practice.

In 2006, the VA Portland Health Care System (VAPORHCS) achieved Magnet® status. The American Nurses Credentialing Center (ANCC) Magnet Recognition Program® requires review every of four years, so in 2010 VAPORHCS underwent the rigorous review process and again achieved Magnet® status. In October 2014, for a third time, VAPORHCS initiated the review process. On July 21-23, 2015, appraisers from the Magnet Recognition Program® will be on site to conduct the final phase of the review.

The Magnet Recognition Program® recognizes health care organizations for quality patient care, nursing excellence and innovations in professional nursing practice. Approximately 7percent of all registered hospitals in the United States have achieved Magnet Recognition® status (*AHA, Fast Facts on US Hospitals, 2015*) and four VA hospitals are currently honored with Magnet Recognition® status. Magnet® status is not a prize or an award. Rather, it is a credential of organizational recognition of nursing excellence and is highly valued within an organization.

# **Public Notice**

## **Magnet Recognition Program®**

### **Site Visit**

The VA Portland Health Care System was designated as a Magnet organization in 2006 and 2010 by the American Nurses Credentialing Center (ANCC) Magnet Recognition Program®. This prestigious designation recognizes excellence in nursing services. In July 2015 the VA Portland Health Care System is applying for re-designation.

Patients, family members, staff, and interested parties who would like to provide comments are encouraged to do so. Anyone may send comments via e-mail, fax, and direct mail. All phone comments to the Magnet Program Office must be followed up in writing.

**YOUR COMMENTS ARE CONFIDENTIAL AND NEVER SHARED WITH THE FACILITY. IF YOU CHOOSE, YOUR COMMENTS MAY BE ANONYMOUS, BUT MUST BE IN WRITING.**

**YOUR COMMENTS MUST BE RECEIVED BY July 11, 2015.**

Address: American Nurses Credentialing Center (ANCC)  
Magnet Recognition Program Office  
8515 Georgia Ave., Suite 400  
Silver Spring, MD 20910-3492  
Fax: 301-628-5217  
E-Mail: [magnet@ana.org](mailto:magnet@ana.org)  
Phone: 866-588-3301 (toll free)