



U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs

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

Lincoln's Promise (VA Mission)

"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



Darwin G. Goodspeed
Director, VA Portland
Health Care System

I hear many people exclaiming "good riddance to 2020". I have even seen a Christmas ornament with the Grinch-2020 and the words 'Stink, Stank, Stunk'. I certainly understand the sentiment. This year has been like no other. Not only did we all have to endure lockdowns, and separation from friends and family, we missed so many meaningful events this year. Memorial Day Celebrations



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intended to commemorate the 75th Anniversary of the end of WWII were not nearly the celebration many of us wanted. Fourth of July was just not the patriotic celebration it usually is and Veterans Day was a woeful understatement.

Out of all of this, we have all changed. Nearly 60% of all medical appointments shifted to VA Video Connect or telephone appointments. I have been impressed with the ingenuity of VA providers who figured out a way to

stay connected with their Veteran patients. We went from extremely limited testing capabilities to a robust testing platform which allowed us to safely do surgeries and other procedures desperately needed by our Veterans. When community health care systems stopped accepting referrals during the shutdown, VA staff reached out to thousands of Veterans to ensure they were safe and not experiencing any deterioration during the lock down. As we began to emerge from the shutdown, Veterans rose to the occasion and showed up for testing, wore masks to protect themselves, healthcare workers and their fellow Veterans.

I know this year has not been perfect; there have been ups and downs, disappointments and mix-ups. However, in the end, I think many good things did happen. Many stepped up to the challenge and many more endured drastic measures to ensure we could safely provide healthcare. And now, as we have just begun receiving vaccine, the promise of brighter days seem even more close than at any time during this whole ordeal. In the coming weeks, we will have opportunities to vaccinate all Veterans enrolled for VA care. We will, of course, start with our most vulnerable and work until every Veteran who wants a COVID-19 vaccine has one.

This year Christmas has taken on a very different feel. When we typically reunite families to celebrate the holiday, many of us are foregoing gatherings out of fear and concern for our families. Though this is

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December 2020

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Message from the Director

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the winter of the pandemic and all seems less festive, remember the message of hope Christmas brings. Remember the Sunday School lessons about the light coming into the world and let's all enter 2021 with hope and courage to finally be past this pandemic and move into our spring and summer with excitement about seeing those we love dearly and again being able to hold them without fear of sharing a deadly virus. Though 2020 has been the most challenging time of many people's lives, let's continue to lean on each other and support each other and enter 2021 renewed, that though we are not at the end of this pandemic, we do have hope, we do have a plan and we do have our collective strength and courage to see this to its inevitable end.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to you and yours.

Darwin Goodspeed

-VAPORHCS-

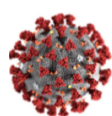
VA Portland COVID Vaccine Update

On Dec. 16, VA Portland vaccinated our first 60+ staff from our emergency department, critical care unit and medical-surgical inpatient wards; on Dec. 17 we vaccinated our 1st Veterans and staff at our Community Living Center located on the Vancouver VA campus.

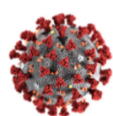
VA Portland will continue to follow CDC guidance on vaccination prioritizations.

Details are being worked out but we will communicate broadly how and which Veterans can get vaccinated by the various means we have (web, social media, news outlets, email, phone, etc.). A lot depends on how quickly we receive the vaccine. There are MANY variables to consider in handling the vaccine so we do not waste one dose. Our goal is to vaccinate as many people as possible as quickly as possible in an orderly fashion.

Veterans are asked to **please NOT call the VA inquiring about vaccinations**, but rather follow our [main web page](#) &/or follow us on [Facebook](#) for updates. It will take some time before the availability of vaccines allows us to vaccinate larger numbers of people.



**VA Portland
Veteran
COVID-Vaccination
HOTLINE
(503) 220-3434**



Please call the VA Portland COVID-vaccine HOTLINE phone line for the latest details about COVID-19 vaccination options for Veterans; (503) 220-3434 . You cannot leave a message at this number.



On Dec. 15, 2020, VA Portland received our first 2,925 doses of the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine.



WII Veteran John Stephens, a resident of our Community Living Center in Vancouver, who was our first Veteran within VA Portland to get the vaccination on Dec. 17.

-VAPORHCS-

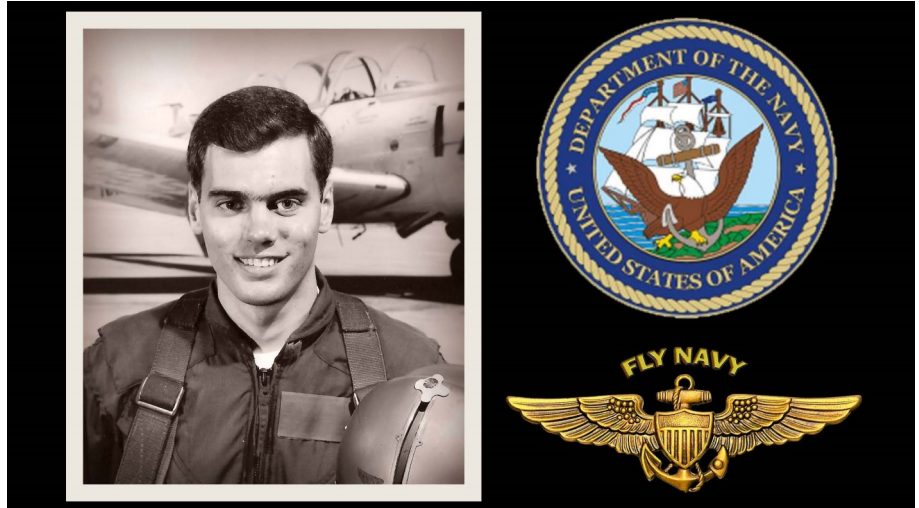
VA Portland's Whole Health Helps Veterans Take Command of Their Well-being

By Anna Robaton-Winthrop
VA Portland Public Affairs Volunteer

As a Navy pilot, Steve Riley led by example. Now in his 70s, he's leading by example in a different sense.

Riley is a volunteer peer facilitator for [Whole Health](#) classes offered by [VA Portland Health Care System](#) (VAPORHCS), a flagship site for VA's Whole Health program. Whole Health is a patient-centric approach to health care that empowers and equips Veterans to take charge of their physical and emotional well-being.

Whole Health hinges, in part, on changing the dynamic between Veterans and their VA health care providers. Providers approach care differently by paying closer attention to the goals and priorities of Veterans. Put simply, they don't ask, "What's the matter with you?" when caring for Veterans. They ask, "What matters to you?" The answers form the basis of a personalized health plan.



Navy pilot Steve Riley, now retired, is a VA Portland volunteer peer facilitator for Whole Health and shares his story of determination, heartbreak, deep struggle and, ultimately, hope. ([Click here for a web version of this story.](#))



possible to make changes."

Riley's life story is one of determination, heartbreak, deep struggle and, ultimately, hope.

A native of Portland, he attended Oregon State University on a Naval Reserve Officers Training Corps (NROTC) scholarship. He went on to flight school and a career as a Navy pilot that included stints as a flight instructor and assistant navigator aboard a Kitty Hawk-class aircraft carrier, the USS America (CV-66).

After leaving active Naval service in 1983, Riley earned a master's in computer and information science, moved to the

Riley is no stranger to such soul searching. As a Whole Health volunteer, he speaks openly about his own struggles and successes, which, in turn, inspires others to explore their own needs and aspirations in a group setting.

"Sometimes, it takes one person to share their story for others to feel comfortable opening up," says Brian Price, an Army Veteran and Whole Health peer specialist at VAPORHCS. "As a peer facilitator, Steve provides that encouragement. He's been through the Whole Health journey and is living proof that it's

VA Portland's Whole Health (Con't from previous page)

United Kingdom with his family and embarked on a second career in information technology.

But the ambition that fueled his success in the Navy and later in the business world faded when his father died in 1999. "All of a sudden, the importance that I had placed on competitive success and personal accomplishments became essentially meaningless with the passing of my father," he recalls.

In the months after his father's death, Riley was involved in an alcohol-related, single-car accident that resulted in the death of the passenger in his vehicle. He later pled guilty to criminally negligent homicide and was sentenced to four years in a state prison.

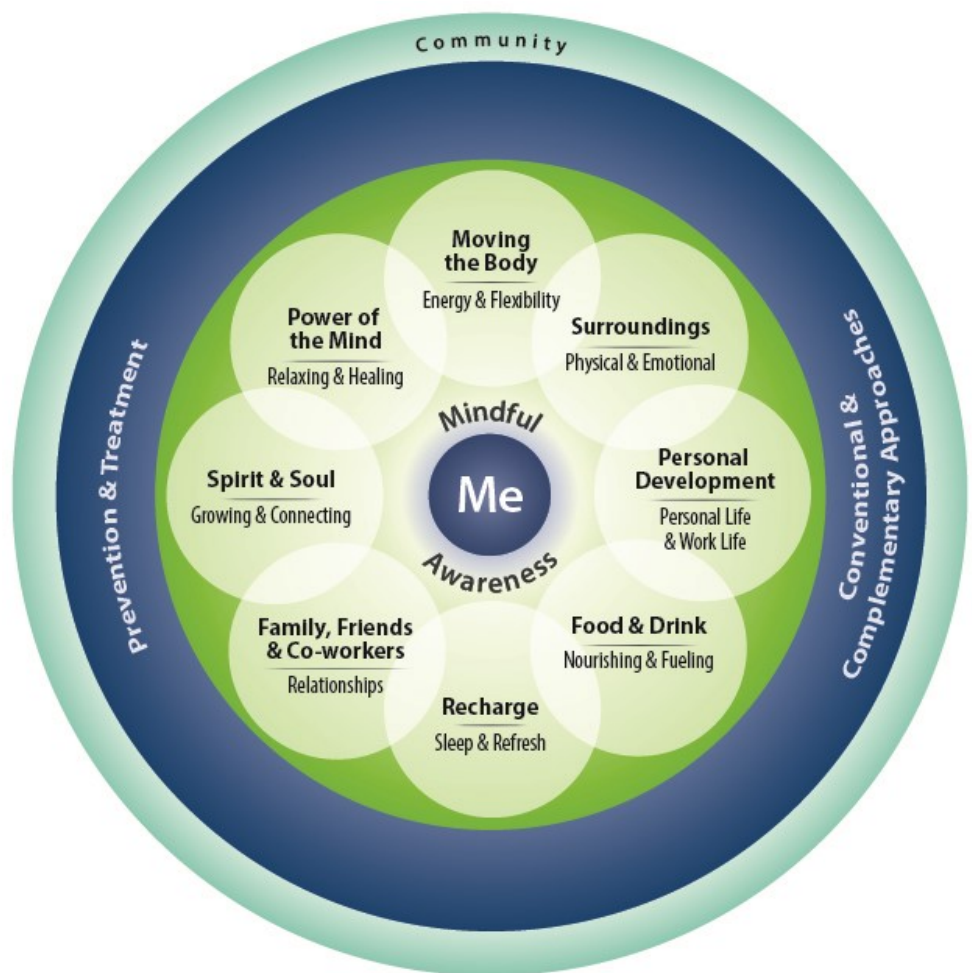
While in prison, Riley completed a rehabilitation program for first-time offenders that made him eligible for early release. The program focused on fitness and diet, changes in thinking patterns (cognitive dissonance), stress management, anger management, relationships and substance abuse. The experience marked the start of what Riley describes as a journey of self-discovery that continues to this day.

By the time he enrolled Whole Health classes years later, Riley wasn't shy about sharing his experiences and emotions in a group setting.

"I took to it right away," he says, reflecting on his participation in *Taking Charge of My Life and Health*, a six-week, peer-led course that focuses on self-exploration, self-care and goal setting around what matters most to participants.

Riley and other participants delved into each aspect of what's called the [Circle of Health](#), a foundational component of Whole Health that helps Veterans visualize and explore the connections between their health and other aspects of their lives. By doing so, Riley began to put a greater emphasis on certain aspects of self-care that contribute to emotional well-being. For instance, after learning about the connection between surroundings and mood, he decided to try to do more to improve his surroundings at home.

"Whole Health is about lifestyle change," Riley explains. "So, I needed to believe strongly in the value or values that underpinned the path on which I was about to embark. Doctors can fix broken bones and prescribe medicine, for



VA Portland's Whole Health (Con't from previous page)

example. But only the individual Vet can change his or her lifestyle and many maladies and conditions require just that.”

Whole Health, he adds, focuses on setting small, attainable goals.

“You don’t say, ‘I’m going to solve world peace by next Tuesday.’ You say, ‘I’m going to clean up my bathroom.’ It’s about baby steps and establishing a pattern of goal accomplishment,” he explains.



Riley’s experience with Whole Health went much deeper than realizing he needed to do more around the house. He and other Veterans also learned about mindfulness and its power to help people manage their emotions. They also explored ways to tend to their spiritual lives, which is considered another aspect of self-care.

The class left Riley wanting more — in the form of ongoing connections with fellow Veterans. That desire inspired him to serve as a Whole Health volunteer. He also volunteers with VA’s [MOVE!® weight management program](#), which helped him shed nearly 30 pounds since being diagnosed with Type 2 diabetes in 2016.

“When I was in AA, there was a sense of belonging that gave me strength. I found the same thing in Whole Health,” he says. “I realized that I need to be involved with people because I tend to be a bit of hermit. Volunteering with Whole Health is an ideal way to do it.”

What message does Riley have for fellow Veterans who are taking Whole Health classes or interested in doing so?

“To my fellow Vets already in Whole Health, I would say, ‘Keep coming back, keep learning about yourself, keep listening, keep striving and keep forgiving yourself if at first you don’t succeed.’ There is no magic goal line we cross that means we don’t have to continue to work at our lifestyle. To those Vets who are thinking about Whole Health, I’d say, ‘Be open-minded, take a chance and join with us in an awesome experience.’”

There are multiple virtual offerings for Veterans to attend and explore their Whole Health journey. For more information on these, please call (503) 220-8262, ext. 54612, or contact the VA Portland Whole Health Team through [MyHealtheVet](#) secure messaging at *Whole Health Coaches_VAPortlandHCS*.

What is Whole Health?

VA Whole Health is a cutting-edge approach to care that supports your health and well-being. Whole Health centers around what matters to you, not what is the matter with you. This means your health team will get to know you as a person, before working with you to develop a personalized health plan based on your values, needs, and goals.

You can still get your flu shot!

We can do it!
We can fight COVID-19 & flu together.



Get a flu shot...
Wear a mask...
Stay 6 feet apart.

Get your flu shot today at your regularly scheduled VA appointment or with one of the VA's many community partners through March 31, 2021.

Community Care Options:

[VA Community Care Network retail pharmacies or urgent care/walk-in care clinics](#) will provide no-cost, no copayment flu vaccinations to Veterans enrolled in the VA health care system.

Show a picture ID card and provide the pharmacist with Group Number: RX3841

[Click this link](#) for ALL the details on HOW & WHERE YOU can get a flu shot.

New VA Portland [“Nutrition Classes” web page](#)



U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs

VA » Health Care » VA Portland Health Care System » Nutrition Classes

VA Portland Health Care System

Nutrition Classes



For 2021, try participating in one of the **MANY** virtual VA Portland nutrition classes!

Your VA Portland dietitians are offering many nutrition classes designed to help you achieve your health goals via [VA Video Connect](#) (VVC).

- VA Video Connect makes VA health care more convenient for you and other Veterans and caregivers.
- VA Video Connect enables you to quickly and easily meet with your VA care team through secure and private videoconferencing sessions.
- You can attend nutrition classes in a virtual medical room using the camera on your phone, computer, or tablet.
- There are NO Co-Pays for VVC appointments.

Registered dietitians are available to meet with you to discuss nutrition concerns:

- **Contact:** Nutrition Scheduling (503) 273-5112 - You can self-refer to these classes, but an appointment is required.
- **Or Consult:** Contact your provider or care team and ask them to enter a consult to schedule into the group.

Sign up to get email alerts on all things VA Portland!

- **COVID Vaccine updates**
- **Emergency Notifications**
- **News & Announcements**
- **Customize to get ANYTHING VA**

Go to the [VAPORHCS main web page](#)
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