Message from the Director

Michael W. Fisher
Director, VA Portland Health Care System

On August 14 we opened the long-awaited new Vancouver Primary Care Clinic! For those who were able to attend the grand opening event on August 9, thank you for taking time out of your day to celebrate the occasion with us. There are some photos of the event and new facility on the next page of this newsletter.

Not long before 9-11, VA Portland basically had two sites of care – Portland and Vancouver. Today we host 12 care facilities from Astoria to Newport to Bend and other sites in between. This expansion in Vancouver is part of a continuing effort to provide world-class health care closer to where Veterans live across the 26-county/ two-state VA Portland Health Care System. Community-based clinics and clinics like this one are key to providing Veterans better access to high-quality care closer to home. By reducing the distance Veterans must travel, we have shown that more Veterans benefit from the health care services they have earned through their service to our nation.

Over the past five years or so we opened new clinics in downtown Portland – the Community Resource and Referral Center, which serves primarily homeless and at risk of being homes veterans - new CBOCs in Bend, The Dalles and Salem; we also partnered with Lincoln County to open a new part-time clinic in Lincoln City; collectively, these new facilities greatly expanded space, staff and services to Veterans in their communities. VA Portland now serves more than 95,000 patients with nearly one million appointments a year and maintains steady growth.

Very briefly, as I mentioned in our last newsletter, our priorities in the VA moving forward are:

- Providing greater choice for care
- Modernizing our systems
- Improving timeliness of services
- Preventing Suicide

I intend to keep you informed of the progress and gain your feedback in the weeks/months/years ahead with our progress on these initiatives. I encourage YOU to share your ideas and feedback by writing my office, communicating through your local Veterans Service Organizations (VSOs), encouraging your VSOs to attend our monthly VA Portland VSO Committee meetings (email or call my Public Affairs office at 503-402-2975 to join), and/or attend the quarterly VA Portland Veterans Town Hall meeting in person or via Facebook Live. The next town hall meeting is on Sept. 27 in Salem—details are in this newsletter.

We in the VA do not have all the solutions and partnering with our stakeholders in as many ways as we can is imperative for our collective success.

New facilities like these I mentioned and our shared efforts to communicate are examples of the many on-going endeavors around our health care system that enable us to provide the best care possible to our Veterans, wherever they may be.

Thank you for your support.
Thank you for your service and for letting us serve you.

Michael Fisher
VAPORHCS celebrated the opening of the new Vancouver Primary Care Clinic on August 9!

Located on the Vancouver VA Campus, this new 21,300 square foot facility replaces the previous by more than doubling the size and serves nearly 13,200 local area Veterans with Primary Care and integrated Mental Health services.

The new clinic opened for patient care on August 14.

The VA has a long history in Vancouver and has been providing primary care services since 1946, when President Truman authorized the transfer of the U.S. Army Barnes General Hospital to the VA.

See all the photos on the VAPORHCS Facebook page!
SEPTMBER IS SUICIDE PREVENTION MONTH

Connect with support.

No matter what you’re going through, resources are available.

VeteransCrisisLine.net

VAPORHCS Suicide Prevention Program Team

Contact the VAPORHCS team to find out about outreach and training opportunities for your Veteran or community organization.

If YOU or a friend/family member is in crisis...
...please call the Veteran Crisis Line 1-800-273-8255 & press '1'
...or text the Veteran Crisis Line at 838255

For more information, during business hours, call the VAPORHCS Suicide Prevention Team at (503) 402-2857
VA Portland Fisher House reaches milestone!

- As of July 31 after 16 months of operation, Portland VA Fisher House served 1,000 families (1,700 individuals)...
- ... more than 6,000 nights of lodging...
- ...average length of stay was 6 days...
- ... volunteers donated 1,225 hours and sponsored over 80 meals.

“It’s a home away from home,” says Barbara Decoito-Weaver, while describing the numerous amenities and style of the Fisher House located at VAPORHCS’ Vancouver campus. Indeed, taking a tour of the Fisher House emphasizes Barbara’s enthusiasm and pride as manager of the home.

The VA Portland Fisher House was the 70th of its kind when it welcomed the first guest on March 28, 2016. There are currently 72 Fisher Houses located on 24 military installations and 29 VA medical centers across the nation; more houses are under construction or in design. Since the Portland VA Fisher House opened, it has served more than 1,000 families, 1,700 individuals, and has provided 6,000 nights of lodging. Nationally, since the Fisher House Foundation program began in 1990, the organization’s homes have offered more than seven million days of lodging to more than 305,000 families.

VA Portland Fisher House is a 13,400-square foot, 16-suite structure. Its estimated donation value is $7.5 million gifted by the Fisher House Foundation and community donors. Special features include private bedroom/American Disabilities Act (ADA) accessible bathroom suites, communal living room, dining room, library, laundry

(Continued on next page)

The VAPORHCS Fisher House, located on the Vancouver VA Campus, is "a home away from home" for families of Veterans and military service members who are hospitalized at the Portland VA Medical Center or Vancouver Campus. It may also serve family and caregivers of Veterans who are receiving extended outpatient specialty care. The Fisher House enables family members to be close to their loved one during their hospitalization by providing comfortable lodging in a beautiful and relaxing setting in Vancouver. There is no charge for families staying at the Fisher House.
Fisher House milestone (Con’t)...

facility and gourmet kitchen. It includes an elevator for accessibility to the second floor.

Families of Veterans stay at no cost in the Fisher House while their loved one is hospitalized. The homes are located on VA Medical Center campuses or active duty military bases.

“The average length of stay is six days,” says Barbara. “Twenty-five percent of the guests arrive with children, and we provide a variety of activities for the entire family.”

A wide array of comfort items is provided such as food, television, DVDs, books and a huge kitchen area in which guests can store their preferred food items and prepare their own meals.

Barbara Decoito-Weaver understands what military families are going through. She is a former military spouse and caregiver of her father who is a Marine Corps Vietnam Veteran. She has been with the VA more than 13 years. She was a staff member of the Voluntary Services offices at the Portland and Vancouver campuses for 10 years, prior to her current position. Barbara is no stranger to the hospitality industry. Her previous experience includes five years with the Hilton Hotel organization. She is a graduate of the University of Seattle with Bachelor of Science and MBA degrees.

There are four staff members located at the Vancouver Fisher House in addition to Barbara. The local Fisher House team includes Dawn Schultz, assistant manager; Elisa Romero, program support assistant; and Michelle Swanson and Anthony Nelson, housekeeping.

Fisher House was founded in 1990 by Zachary and Elizabeth Fisher as a non-profit organization to serve United States military members, their families and American military Veterans. Its slogan is “Fisher House-because a family’s love is good medicine.”

Barbara noted that the facility is 100 percent occupied 95 percent of the time. Families who live at least 50 miles from treating facility in need of lodging while the Veteran is hospitalized is referred to the Portland VA Fisher House by the Veteran’s care team. Fisher House staff may also receive referrals from the active duty military for service members or their families who may be receiving care in the local area.

“We are thankful for the 20 volunteers who devote time to our facility providing meal preparation and helping with grocery shopping,” says Barbara. “I’ve seen numerous families bond while here. They take care of each other.”

Fisher House literature indicates that it has received an A+ rating from the American Institute of Philanthropy. And the same can be said for the devoted VAPORHCS staff that cares for the families who need the support and comfort offered by our own Fisher House.

-FISHER HOUSE-
VA Portland Health Care System is proud to have some of the best doctors in the business serving our Veterans! We are particularly proud of the diversity of our staff to include the many incredible women MD's we have! This photo, taken by our own staff photographer Michael Moody, is a replica of the animated cover titled “Operating Theatre,” by the French artist Malika Favre featured on the cover of The New Yorker’s Health, Medicine & the Body Issue earlier this year. As a result of that image, there was a nation-wide challenge to replicate the image in real life, bringing visibility to the women and other minority groups working in a traditionally white, male-dominated field. Hundreds of surgeons across the world responded to the challenge, taking photographs and sharing them online with the hashtag #ILookLikeASurgeon as well as on The New Yorker, Association of Women Surgeons and #NYerORCoverChallenge. Pictured are VA Portland MD's (starting with the red capped doctor and going clock-wise) Karen Kwong, Kavita Bhavsar, Andrea D’ostroph, Kimberly Winges, and Hana Takusagawa. Thank you for YOUR service to our Veterans, doctors!
Opioid overdose can happen.  
Save a Life.  
Carry Narcan (naloxone)

Naloxone (Narcan) is an emergency medication to treat overdose. It comes as a nose spray or injection.

Even prescribed opioid medications (hydrocodone, oxycodone, methadone) can slow or even stop breathing causing an overdose.

VA provides free Naloxone Kits for Veterans, with a prescription.

Show family, friends, neighbors, and caregivers how to use the kit and where it is kept.

Protect yourself.  
Ask your provider for your naloxone (Narcan) prescription today!
New maps posted on the web for VAPORHCS’ Portland and Vancouver Campuses

Located on the VAPORHCS web site under “Locations & Directions” for each respective Campus map...

Print / post and share locally

-VAPORHCS-
VA Portland Health Care System and the Mental Health and Clinical Neurosciences Division, in sponsorship with the Oregon Department of Veterans’ Affairs and Returning Veterans Project, invite you to participate in the 5th Annual Mental Health Summit.

This event is for community providers who work with Veterans, non-profit agencies, government and VSO organizations and those who have an interest in mental health issues for Veterans and their families.

This is open to the public, however, the event is intended to be a working summit, where participants join in the discussion about how to improve mental health care for Veterans in all clinical settings, not just the VA.

Please contact Sushma Ambady at (503) 220-8262, ext. 55463, or sushma.ambady@va.gov if YOU plan to attend.

**VAPORHCS & VBA Portland Regional Office**

**Veterans Town Hall and Claims Clinic**

**WHAT?** At the **Claims Clinic**, Veterans can speak to specialist about claims issues or to VAPORHCS Patient Advocates about your specific health-related issues or questions.

At the **Veterans Town Hall**, get the latest updates from the Directors of VAPORHCS and VBA Portland Regional Office and ask questions and speak to staff.

**FOR WHO?** Veterans, family members and media representatives are invited

**WHEN? Sept. 27, 2017;** Claims Clinic is 5–7:30 p.m.; Town Hall 6-7:30 p.m.

**WHERE?** Oregon Department of Veterans Affairs Auditorium, 700 Summer St. NE, Salem, Oregon 97301 & Facebook Live
VA Portland Health Care System’s Nutrition & Food Services (NFS) is proud to announce our new Dining Program – “Veterans Cuisine, Choice Offerings.”

After years of work in preparation for this change, including complete space remodeling, new equipment, hiring additional staff, new menu designing, and just plain labor-intensive training, our Veterans and staff will finally see the efforts come to fruition! Our customer service commitment is strengthened with the ambassadors assisting our Veterans with choice menu selections. These innovative menus will now be available for all three meals on the Vancouver Campus beginning August 29, 2017.

Every meal will be cooked fresh by the VAPORHCS Vancouver Culinary Team and delivered directly to our Veteran in-patients. They will have more options than ever before with a three-week cycle including:

- A wide selection of chicken, beef, pork, fish, seafood, stews, roasts, vegetarian, and pasta entrees
- Signature sandwich or entrée salad offered at lunch and dinner
- New side dishes
- Variety of desserts

This conversion from “cook-chill” to “Enhanced Dining” will continue to improve Veteran satisfaction and empowerment, as well as to reduce food waste and improve staff pride.

The next step for NFS is to convert the main Portland VA Medical Center in-patient food services to the same high-quality standard. This is scheduled to happen over the next several months. Updates will be provided as the process moves along.

-VAPORHCS-