



U.S. Department  
of Veterans Affairs

# Veteran Connection

VA Portland Health Care System Newsletter

Keeping the Promise - Advancing Excellence



## VA Portland Health Care System

3710 SW U.S. Veterans Hospital Rd.  
Portland, OR 97239  
503-220-8262 | 800-949-1004

Produced by the VAPORHCS  
Public Affairs Office

QUESTIONS / COMMENTS ??

Please email us at...  
[VHAPOR-PublicAffairs@med.va.gov](mailto: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](http://www.portland.va.gov/calendar.asp)

## Message from the Director



**Darwin G. Goodspeed**  
Director, VA Portland  
Health Care System

On Veterans Day, a grateful nation pauses to reflect, remember, and honor those brave men and women who heeded the call to arms and served our Nation in uniform. Today, there are 19.6 million living American Veterans. These are ordinary citizens who did extraordinary things for all of us. They are our mothers and fathers, our brothers and sisters, our aunts and uncles, our children, and our neighbors. This solemn tradition of honoring those who served their country and secured for us the peace and freedom we enjoy traces its roots back to the eleventh hour, of the eleventh day of the eleventh month. This is the precise time and date of the Armistice that ended World War I in 1918; one hundred and one years ago today.

In 1938, Congress passed a law officially making November 11th, Armistice Day, a national holiday. In 1954, legislation changed the name to Veterans Day, formally recognizing it as the time to honor all Veterans or all eras who served in uniform in defense of their nation.

In cities large and small throughout this great land there are monuments and markers that commemorate the memories and the service of those Americans who have served in all our wars, in every era. Remembering their service is one small way of repaying the debt America owes her Veterans; those

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who offered their lives so that others might be free. Simply put, Veterans answered our country's call. It is one of our nation's great strengths that men and women from every region and every ethnic background have answered that call and continue to heed it today. So, as we salute Veterans, we can reflect that, long after the guns fall silent, the cost of freedom continues to be paid.



**Choose VA**

It is up to us, now, to keep faith with the men and women who served. At the Department of Veterans Affairs, every single day is Veterans Day. We trace our very existence to President Abraham Lincoln's devotion to Veterans and his steadfast belief that the service of our Veterans must be justly recognized by a grateful nation. Almost 160 years later, the commitment to Veterans is being realized in improved access to health care, benefits, and improved national shrines where Veterans are laid to rest. VA is dramatically transforming to provide the best care for those who have served. They deserve our best efforts in all we do for their service and sacrifice. VA is also committed to ending sexual harassment and pledge to "Stand Up to Stop Harassment Now!" This public pledge reaffirms our commitment to creating a safe, respectful and welcoming environment for everyone. Not all Veterans feel welcome in our system and many have been subjected to disparaging comments and disrespectful treatment. It is up to all of us to advocate for our fellow

(Continued on next page)

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

## Message from the Director

(Continued from previous page)

Veterans and each other. Simply put, we cannot tolerate even one person feeling uncomfortable in a place of healing built solely for Veterans.

Today, Veterans Day 2019, our country rightfully offers its full measure of gratitude to citizens who wore the uniforms of our Armed Services. Veterans preserved this country and helped it grow. In the days to come, the more than 4,000 employees of the VA Portland Health Care System will be standing at the ready to honor the service of those who have taken up the challenge laid before our Nation. We will provide them the benefits and services a grateful Nation offers in return for what they have done for all of us and we will do this with Integrity, Commitment, Advocacy, Respect and Excellence (ICARE) in an environment that is open and welcoming and free from harassment.

Darwin Goodspeed

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**MISSION Act  
VA Portland  
Telephone  
Town Hall**



**Get the latest information about the  
MISSION Act**

**MISSION Act Telephone Town Hall  
Nov. 6, 2019, 4 - 5 p.m.**

Register today by clicking [THIS LINK](#) to join VA Portland's MISSION Act Telephone Town Hall.

It's simple; provide your phone number & on Nov. 6 just before 4 pm you get a call to join the conversation.

Get information; ask your questions; easy!

[Click HERE](#) for ALL the details.

Download a presentation that will be discussed during the call [HERE](#).

**[MISSION ACT](#) Hotline (503) 220-8262, option 6, or (844) 698-2311 option 1** for MISSION Act for information on the following topics. To speak to a representative, select and listen to the entire message and then press "0" to be connected. The following are the Hotline topics...

- (1) Health Care Eligibility
- (2) Care in the Community Eligibility
- (3) Urgent and Walk-in Care Information
- (4) Copayment and Insurance Information
- (5) Complaint and Appeals Process

**VA Portland Health Care System Community Care Team - (360) 759-1674**; for Veterans to talk to a VA Portland staff member about their active non-VA care coordination status or any issues or concerns.

**VA Urgent Care in the  
Community Details**

[CLICK HERE](#)

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# Veterans find a path to work and mental health

## VA Portland's [Vocational-Rehab](#) team paves the way

By Anna Robaton-Winthrop  
 VA Portland Public Affairs Volunteer

As an Uber driver, John spends a portion of his days getting people where they need to go. To do so, John has traveled a long road himself.

For many years, the Navy Veteran struggled to manage to his mental illness, which made it difficult for him to keep a job and contributed to low self-esteem. By the time John was referred to the VHA Vocational-Rehabilitation (Voc Rehab) program, also known as the [Therapeutic and Supported Employment Services](#) program, at [VA Portland Health Care System](#) (VAPORHCS), he hadn't worked for several years.

Offered throughout the [Veterans Health Administration](#) system, Voc Rehab helps Veterans, including those with serious mental illnesses, overcome barriers to employment and stay in the workforce.

In some cases, Veterans are placed in limited-term, paid positions, often within a VA medical center, that help them gain hands-on skills and reinforce behaviors that are critical to long-term employment, such as the ability to work well with others. In other cases, program participants work one-on-one with case managers who function as job coaches — helping Veterans identify appropriate, community-based job opportunities; apply for positions; prepare for interviews and, when appropriate, providing ongoing support with navigating job-related issues.

In the Portland metro area, [Voc Rehab served more than 2,000 Veterans in 2018-2019](#). By returning to work, program participants often gain more than just a regular paycheck. Many also find a renewed sense of purpose and pride — not to mention much-needed social interaction.

“My main job is to get people from point A to point B, but the social interaction helps me a lot,” says John, 57, who first began to drive for Uber in February 2016 and has since earned more than 1,500 five-star ratings.

“The social interaction makes me feel good inside. Most people are nice and really appreciate what I do. That gives me a positive feeling inside. I feel I can accomplish this task, and that mental illness isn't going to get the better of me. Not anymore,” adds John.

His journey back to the world of work wasn't quick or easy. Long before John felt ready to try to return to work, he sought help with personal [challenges through Footsteps to Recovery, Psychosocial Rehabilitation and Recovery Center \(PRRC\)](#).

The outpatient program promotes skill building, socialization and the development of coping strategies for Veterans with chronic mental illnesses. Participants are asked to consider what will make their lives more meaningful and manageable — perhaps even joyful — and they work with staff members to set goals that reflect their desires.



Navy Veteran John at the Portland VA Medical Center ready to provide rides as part his job as a rideshare driver.

## **Veterans find a path to work and mental health** *(Con't from previous page)*

John set out to build his self-confidence through the Footsteps program, and he achieved his goal through volunteer activities and classes that helped him challenge negative thinking, better cope with his illness and improve his social skills. In 2016, John's peers in Footsteps elected him to serve as the program's Veterans' representative, a volunteer role that entailed some public speaking.

"The Footsteps program helped me to understand that my illness is not who I am. It helped me to understand that I can resolve issues and have a positive impact on my life and on my family. I can be more than just John who has this illness," he said.

After about a year and a half in the Footsteps program, John felt ready to try to return to work and met with a case manager in the Voc Rehab program to develop a plan for doing so.

Uber turned out to be a good fit for John in more ways than one. The job met his desire to work part-time, sitting down and in a low-stress environment. It has also helped him to strengthen his social skills — as an Uber driver he encounters all types of passengers — and gain a renewed sense of pride in his own abilities.

An introvert by nature, John works to anticipate the needs of his passengers. Some want to sit in silence. Others prefer to chat, and John obliges, often working in a good-natured joke or two. He also carries complimentary bottles of water, chewing gum, cell-phone charging cords and local maps and restaurant guides for out-of-towners.

Thanks to the social-skills training he received through the Footsteps program, he's learned not to take things personally if he gets a less-than-perfect rating from a passenger, which apparently doesn't happen often.

"Since returning to work, he's really blossomed," said Carey Taylor, John's case manager in the Voc Rehab program.

"He was very introverted when I first met him. He's really learned to read people," added Taylor, who has seen first-hand the therapeutic benefits of returning to work after an extended absence from the workforce.

Even after John returned to work, Taylor continued to provide support, meeting John monthly to help him track his Uber earnings and complete paperwork needed to maintain his Social Security disability benefits.

What advice does John have for Veterans who have shared his struggles and worry that they might never be able to return to work?

There is hope and help, if you're open to it, says John.

"A lot of people my age that had my problems wouldn't want to go back to work," said John, recalling his own reluctance to participate in the Footsteps program.

"Get in there, share your story and hear what other people are going through," said John, referring to the Footsteps program. "You can realize that there is a future for you outside of your mental illness."

## **Resources:**

[VHA Vocational Rehabilitation \(Therapeutic and Supported Employment\) Services](#) - (360) 696-4061 Ext. 31274

[VA Portland Mental Health Services](#) - 503-273-5187

[Footsteps to Recovery Program](#) - 503-220-8262 ext. 55328

[VA Portland Eligibility / Enrollment Services Office](#) - 503-220-8262 Ext. 55069

# Stand Up to Stop Harassment Now! Declaration

On October 30, VAPORHCS Director Darwin Goodspeed held a brief public ceremony at PVAMC reaffirming VA Portland's commitment to creating a safe, respectful and welcoming environment for everyone.

The VA is embarking on a nation-wide "Stand Up to Stop Harassment Now!" campaign. On October 30, VA leaders across the country signed a public declaration as a pledge to put an end to harassment at the VA and called for Veterans, volunteers, employees, caregivers and visitors at our facilities to recognize, intervene (if possible), and report harassment.

While efforts are underway to improve reporting harassment, we encourage all to use existing pathways to report.

## Resources at VA Portland Health Care System;

o **For Veterans and Visitors:** Patient Advocates (503-273-5308), VA Police (503-808-1911), and the Women Veterans Call Center (1-855-VA-Women (1-855-829-6636).

o **For Employees:** Harassment Prevention Program, VA Police, Disruptive Behavior Reporting System.



Left; staff and right, VAPORHCS Director Darwin Goodspeed signs a public declaration signing reaffirms VA Portland's commitment to creating a safe, respectful and welcoming environment for everyone and encourages the reporting of incidents of harassment when they occur.

## Stand Up to Stop Harassment Now! Declaration

VHA is committed to a harassment-free health care environment for everyone and will not tolerate harassment of any kind. We promise to:

**Create a safe, respectful, and welcoming environment for everyone**



**Empower everyone to recognize, intervene, and report harassment**



**Advance a culture where harassment is never tolerated**



**Provide a seamless, secure, and compassionate system for reporting harassment without fear of retaliation**



**Assist Veterans, visitors, volunteers, and employees in reporting harassment**



**Take prompt and appropriate action to respond to reports of harassment**

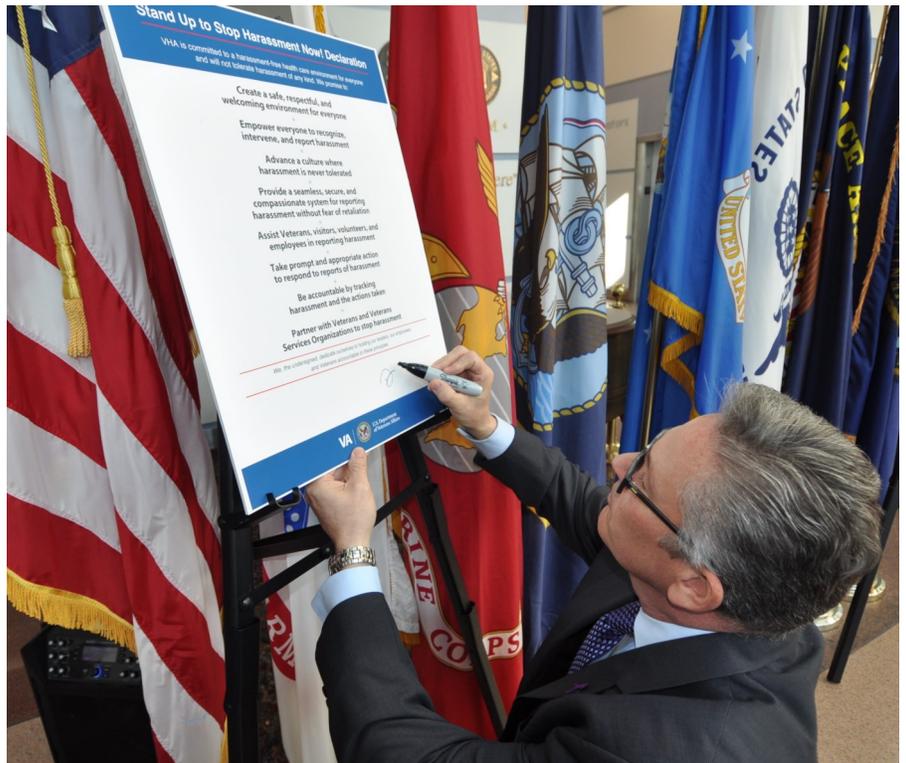


**Be accountable by tracking harassment and the actions taken**



**Partner with Veterans and Veterans Services Organizations to stop harassment**

*We, the undersigned, dedicate ourselves to holding our leaders, our employees, and Veterans accountable to these principles.*





# Veteran Listening Session Vancouver VA Campus

**Thursday, December 19, 2019**

**5:30 to 7:00 p.m.**

**Columbia Rm.**

**1601 East 4th Plain Boulevard, Vancouver, WA**

Veterans, families, Veterans Service Organizations, and all are invited join VA Portland Health Care System and Portland Regional Benefits Office (VBA) Directors to discuss ideas, ask questions, or raise concerns regarding VA services. **All are welcome.** Other VA staff members will be present to provide information about resources and programs available for Veterans such as:

- **Veterans Benefits Administration**
- **National Cemetery Administration**
  - **VA Health Care Enrollment**
    - **My HealtheVet**
    - **Women's Health**
- **Transition and Care Management**
  - **Office of Veteran Experience**

If you are a Veterans Service Organization that would like a table at this event, please email [VHAPOR-PublicAffairs@med.va.gov](mailto:VHAPOR-PublicAffairs@med.va.gov) or call (503) 808-1920.



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*Thank you Oregon Veteran's Home for hosting this event!*



**VA**



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NAMI Homefront is a free, six-week class for loved ones of Military Service Members and Veterans who experience symptoms of a mental health condition. The class is taught by specially trained volunteers with lived experience.

Topics include:

- PTSD, bipolar disorder, depression, anxiety, schizophrenia and more.
- Handling crisis and relapse.
- Navigating the VA medical system and DOD.
- Communication and empathy skills.
- Self-care, advocacy, and fighting stigma.

**February 18 - March 24, 2020**

**Tuesdays at 6:30 - 9:00 p.m.**

**Portland VA Medical Center**

More details at [www.namimultnomah.org/homefront](http://www.namimultnomah.org/homefront)

**Can't make this class? Classes begin twice a year.  
Please call 503-228-5692 to register.**

NAMI Multnomah  
[namimultnomah.org](http://namimultnomah.org) | 503-228-5692 | [info@namimultnomah.org](mailto:info@namimultnomah.org)

# *Health Care Planning Workshops Coming soon!*

Why is health care planning important for me?

What is an Advanced Directive? Living will?

Who will make medical decisions for me if I am unable to make them for myself?

Is there someone who can help me prepare to discuss this with my family



## *Have you thought about these questions?*

**We invite you to attend  
Health Care Planning workshops being offered  
this Fall & Winter at VA clinics in  
Hillsboro, Salem & Vancouver.**

The purpose; to help maintain control of your health care should you become unable to speak for yourself.

**For more information, please call the following:**

**Hillsboro; (503) 906-5018/5051**

**Salem; (971) 304-2226**

**Vancouver; (360) 935-1735/1736**

**VA**



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Veterans Health Administration  
VA Portland Health Care System

648PCA 0118c Oct2019



# Research Study

## Smokers Needed

IRB Approved: 11/14/2018

**Volunteers are needed for a research study comparing brain function in smokers who are alcohol dependent people to those who are not alcohol dependent.**

Study visits will include interviews, surveys, MRI brain scans, and tests of concentration, memory, and problem solving. Participation will last for 3 visits over about 1 month.

Participation is strictly voluntary and confidential  
Participants are paid about \$150 in gift cards over 3 study visits

For more information, contact Holly or Laura in Dr. William Hoffman's lab at **503-721-7964**

### To participate, you should:

- be between 18 and 55 years old
- have no history of alcohol dependence
- currently smoke cigarettes on a regular basis
- have no foreign metal objects in your body (except metal from medical procedures)

This study is for research purposes and is not treatment.  
This study is being conducted at the VA Portland Health Care System, 3710 SW US Veterans Hospital Road, Portland, OR 97239. You do NOT need to be a veteran to participate.

***VA Dementia Education Program Presents***

# **Family Caregiver Get-Together**

**Friday, December 6, 2019**

**9:30 – 11:30 a.m.**

**Portland VA Medical Center**



VA Portland Health Care System

3710 SW US Veterans Hospital Rd.

Portland, OR 97239

**VA**



**U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs**

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Enjoy refreshments!

Share stories and ideas with other dementia caregivers!

Admission: **FREE** (Please RSVP)

For more information and to RSVP, contact Kristi Ketchum:

(503) 220-8262 ext. 58594

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# Dementia 101: Introduction to Dementia



## What is dementia? How is it diagnosed? How does it affect my loved one?

In this workshop, you will learn:

- What dementia is and how it is diagnosed
- The different types of dementias including Alzheimer's disease, vascular dementia, Lewy body dementia, and frontotemporal dementia
- Eight ways dementia impacts thinking: memory, judgment, attention, perception, reasoning, organization, abstraction, and language
- Strategies to adapt to dementia related changes

<u>Class Location</u>	<u>Class Dates &amp; Times</u>
<b>Vancouver VA Clinic</b> 1601 E. 4 <sup>th</sup> Plain Blvd Vancouver, WA	Tuesday, November 19 <sup>th</sup> , 2019 9:30 – 11:30 a.m.

This class is free of charge and open to Veterans, caregivers, and staff!

## Signing up is easy!

Call Kristi Ketchum at (503) 220-8262 ext. 58594

# VA FARMS

**URBAN  
AGRICULTURE  
\*\*\*\*\*  
FOOD GARDEN**



## Interested in learning more about nature, plants, gardening, or urban farms?

- Get your hands in the soil and develop skills and experience for job opportunities in horticulture and agriculture
- Grow and maintain gardens at VA Vancouver, VA Portland, and Fairview CBOC
- Learn interior plantscaping
- Learn greenhouse gardening
- Get certified as a Master Gardener— teach other Veterans
- Requires 50 hour volunteer commitment, medical clearance, and qualification for work therapy program (see reverse side)

**Garden-based Therapeutic Horticulture & Farm-based Agricultural Training Program for Veterans enrolled in VA Health Care, not VA staff (paid part-time commitment required).**

**More information:** Contact Scott Hoffman, *Therapeutic Garden Program Coordinator*, VA Portland Health Care System, Whole Health, [scott.hoffman3@va.gov](mailto:scott.hoffman3@va.gov) or 360-737-1441.



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## Interested in teaching others how to garden, work in the industry, or start your own farm or business?

In the VA FARMS program, you will gain knowledge and skills for job opportunities in horticulture / agriculture. Learn more by speaking to a vocational specialist at a weekly employment walk-in or call (503) 220-8262, ext. 34130.

### Weekly Employment Walk-in Schedule:

Day	Time	Location	Bldg/Floor
Mondays	8 am—12pm	Vancouver Campus	Bldg 18
Thursdays	10 am—2 pm	CRRC— Portland	308 SW 1st Ave. Portland, OR 97204
Thursdays	11 am—2pm	VA Portland Medical Center	P3 Check-in at front desk

### Compensated Work Therapy (CWT): is a work therapy program at the VA

- 20-32 hours per week (minimum wage) for a maximum of 10 months
  - Time includes 50 hours of non-paid volunteer activities during program (required for OSU Master Gardener certification)
- Focus on gaining skills, experience, and references
- Resume classes available at the Vancouver campus

### Participation guidelines:

- Must have a medical clearance
- Motivation to find competitive employment at end of training
- Willingness to participate in a work therapy program for minimum wage
- Willingness to participate in case management
- Willingness to learn, accept feedback, and take direction
- Interview skills training
- Job development
- Ongoing support for job retention including job coaching
- Willingness to travel to various sites (some transportation provided)



Veterans Affairs Farming and Recovery Mental Health Services



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Veterans Health Administration  
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