



VA HEALTH CARE Defining EXCELLENCE in the 21st Century

Veteran Connection

VA Portland Health Care System Newsletter

Keeping the Promise - Advancing Excellence



October 2016

Volume 4, Issue 1

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

or call 503-402-2975

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.

Inside this issue:

Director's Message	1
MyHealtheVet	2
Caregiver Support Program	3
Vietnam Memorial Dedication in Vancouver	4
Taps for Babies event	5
Veterans Summit Event	5
Vancouver Volunteer highlight	6
Veterans Town Hall planned	6

For [VAPORHCS Events and](#)

Message from the Director



Michael W. Fisher
Director, VA Portland Health Care System

In an effort to improve the Veteran experience and patient

satisfaction, VAPORHCS, along with the entire VA, embarked on the largest access transformation to occur in VA history. As announced earlier this year, we call this the [MyVA Access initiative](#).

MyVA Access defined three specific goals for 2016 to provide timely care:

1. Provide same day access to primary care.
2. Deliver seamless care across all VA medical facilities and service networks
3. Increase same day access to mental health services.

We are not currently where we want to be on wait times at some of our facilities, but overall we have made some significant recent improvements. For example, average wait times for new Primary Care patients across our health care system dropped nearly 30% in September compared to the 2016 average, and Mental Health appointments for new patients dropped by more than 50% in the same period as well. Trends in many areas are improving and I expect this to continue as we implement a number of strategies to deal with our challenges.

Provider shortages has been one of the primary reasons for many of our access issues. The good news is right now we have five primary care providers selected

to join our team in the near future. We also have open and continuous recruitments, and we are looking at options to be more competitive in the market place to recruit and retain the best medical professionals possible.

In Mental Health we are currently providing same day access for Veterans with urgent needs; VAPORHCS was also recently approved to be part of a new Western Telemental Health Network that will include hiring nine new staff that will help improve access to mental health for our rural Veterans.

At VAPORHCS we aim to make each Veteran's experience with us an exceptional one; from the moment our Veterans walk through our doors, to the smiles that greet them from our Medical Support Assistant (MSA), receptionists, or volunteers. We expect this experience to carry through with our Veterans at each step of the way through their medical appointment, to their ancillary services, to medical tests, to dispensing pharmaceuticals or prosthetic items, and in their discharge process until we see them again.

I have been the director at VAPORHCS for three months now and I couldn't be more impressed and pleased with the professionalism and quality of our staff. We will continue to make positive strides to meet or exceed expectations and better meet the needs of our Veterans.

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

Michael Fisher



Technology is making managing YOUR health care easier at the VA

By Brian K. Miller
My HealthVet Coordinator



Changes are afoot on the technology front for Veterans utilizing the VA Healthcare System. First, the [My HealthVet Web site](#) is in the midst of a redesign to make it

more user friendly for both smartphone users and those using a regular desktop or laptop computer.

The first phase created a new

“dashboard” for users that hopefully will make site navigation easier. The second phase, the due date for which has not been set in stone, will further improve functionality and usability.

Currently, about 55 percent of the approximately 101,000 Veterans who utilize the VA Portland HCS are registered for My HealthVet and all but of a few of those patients have gone on to obtain the free Premium account that provides them full access to all available online services. Those numbers are well ahead of the national average and we are committed to remaining ahead of the curve.

So if you use My HealthVet and

like the remote, secure access it provides to your healthcare providers and your electronic health record, please talk to your fellow Veterans about it when the

opportunity presents itself. We do a tremendous amount of outreach to let our Veterans know about My HealthVet - every year we make thousands of

phone calls to patients and send out thousands of email and snail mail - but the most effective marketing is positive reviews from other Veterans.

In addition to My HealthVet, the VA is developing a [suite of apps](#) that patients can use on their smartphones or their laptops/desktops to do things like receive text reminders from their healthcare teams and to not only request but also select primary care appointments. The text reminder app is called [Annie](#) and the appointment app is called [Veteran Appointment Request \(VAR\)](#). Find out more at <http://mobile.va.gov/>.

 <p>Pharmacy</p> <p>Refill your VA prescriptions, track delivery, view a list of your VA medications with instructions and other details.</p> <p>Read More</p>	 <p>Appointments</p> <p>Keep track of your upcoming VA medical appointments and get email reminders.</p> <p>Read More</p>	 <p>Messages</p> <p>Communicate securely online with your VA health care team and other VA staff about non-emergency information or questions.</p> <p>Read More</p>	 <p>Health Records</p> <p>View, print, or download a copy of your VA medical record information, or enter your own health information.</p> <p>Read More</p>
--	---	---	---

My HealthVet
support at VAPORHCS

- **PVAMC Office:** located with Pharmacy on 1st floor; 503-721-7854
- **Vancouver Office:** Bldg. 15, down the hall from the canteen; 360-696-4061, Ext. 33307

[MyHealthVet Web page](#)



Caregiver support, resources and an upcoming conference for those who care for Veterans

By Leah Christensen
Caregiver Support Coordinator



The VAPORHCS Caregiver Support Program is available to Family Caregivers of Veterans of all eras.

Caregiver Support Program Mission Statement

To promote the health and well-being of family Caregivers who care for our nation's Veterans, through education, resources, support, and services.

Resources:

For more information or to enroll in the VAPORHCS Caregiver Support Program, please call 503-273-5210.

Caregiver Support Line: 1-855-260-3274

The Caregiver Support Line is a toll free number for Caregivers, Veterans and/or Community Partners to call for supportive counseling, information, education, referral to community local resources and/or Caregiver Support Coordinators.

Are YOU caring for a Veteran??? YOU are invited to the 5th Annual Family Caregiver Conference.

WHEN? Friday, Nov. 18, 2016, 9 a.m. – 3 p.m. Registration begins at 8:30 a.m.

WHERE? VAPORHCS Vancouver Campus, 1601 E. 4th Plain Blvd., & video tele-conferencing to the Bend and Salem Clinics

WHAT? Guest speakers on: Living with PTSD, crisis intervention & self-compassion, interactive caregiver discussions, Healing Touch, a resource fair, & more

Please sign up by calling the VA at 503-273-5210 by Nov. 7, 2016

Event is FREE!



Click below for more information about **VAPORHCS Caregiver Support Program** to see this and previous issues of the...



Fall 2016

Caregiver Quarterly Newsletter



Defining EXCELLENCE in the 21st Century

New Vietnam memorial is dedicated on Vancouver VA Campus

On October 15 in the VAPORHCS Vancouver gym, approximately 400 people attended a dedication ceremony of a new Vietnam memorial located across the street in the Vietnam Memorial Gardens. In addition to the memorial dedication, more than 150 Veterans were presented with Vietnam War Commemoration pins by local VA leadership. The event was co-hosted by VAPORHCS and the Community Military Appreciation Committee (CMAC). The memorial honors all Vietnam Veterans but is dedicated to the 58 Clark County Veterans who were killed in action in country during the war. The memorial construction was coordinated by CMAC and completed with 100 percent donated time and materials of Vancouver area businesses and citizens.

- VAPORHCS -

The dedication ceremony on Oct. 15 in the VAPORHCS Vancouver gym for the new Vietnam memorial on the VA Campus.



The new Vietnam memorial in the Vietnam Memorial Gardens on the Vancouver VA Campus. The Huey was placed in the garden about 10 years ago.



Upcoming Events

Taps for Babies -

Supporting Veteran Families after Pregnancy and Infant Loss



Oct. 28, 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Portland VA Medical Center, Auditorium, Building 100, 2nd floor

- Kayla Williams, Director of Women's Health for the VA will be there as well as other guest speakers.
- A chance to remember a special baby no longer with us by making a prayer flag.
- Information tables from agencies and non-profits that provide supportive services.
- Networking for local support agencies in the birthing and bereavement support community, as well as with agencies and programs supporting Veterans, to strengthen our community.
- Giveaways that support parents wishing to remember their baby in a special way, and items to support the grieving process for families or care providers.
- Families welcome, children's activities provided.
- Refreshments provided. Reservations not required of guests.

For more information, please contact the VAPORHCS Chaplain Services at (503) 220-8262, ext. 57025.



Questions?

Contact Terry Bentley at
terry.bentley@va.gov;
 (541) 440-1271

Veterans Summit 2016

Nov. 4, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Warm Springs Community Center,
 2200 Hollywood Blvd.
 Warm Springs, OR 97761



Staff will be available to assist Veterans and family members with Paperwork, Questions & Information with the following:

- VA Portland Health care System Services
- VA Portland Regional Office Services
- Native Wellness Institute
- Oregon State Department of Veterans Affairs
- Native Procurement Technical Assistance Center
- DOL / SAMSHA / SSA / CMS
- Oregon Veteran Home Lebanon/The Dalles
- V.E.T.S. Employment & Training Services
- Elizabeth Esterbrook-PDX VA/ Women's DIV
- CHAMPVA
- Bend Vet Center
- Domestic & Sexual Violence Prevention Program

Vancouver volunteer gets Veterans where they need to go

By Phillip Myers
Public Affairs Volunteer

VAPORHCS' Vancouver campus spans 50 acres. That's a lot of ground to cover, and, thanks to volunteer Rex Hopper and the shuttle carts he manages, getting around that number of acres has been made much easier for the thousands of Veterans and families who visit and/or reside at the Vancouver location.

Rex, who has amassed more than 9,700 hours as a VAPORHCS volunteer, originated and coordinates the Vancouver shuttle cart program. His chores include the scheduling and training of 34 volunteer shuttle cart drivers who man the two to four carts devoted to Vancouver.

"We drive our carts every day in all types of weather, and even provide an on-call service," says Rex. "Our drivers have two-way radios and they can be contacted by our radio dispatch center here on the campus."

Servicing and maintenance of the carts is an important aspect of the program. Thanks to Rex's efforts, the carts, when not in use, are parked in a covered garage, and maintenance is provided by the VA, along with the cart manufacturer, Yamaha, which also helps with vital maintenance services.

Rex is a U.S. Marine Corps Veteran. He joined the Marines in 1953, and was stationed aboard the battleship, USS Wisconsin. He is active in the Marine Corps League, and has served as Commandant of the Department of Washington Marine Corps League in a two-year term.

"Our cart drives are extremely dedicated folks," says Rex. "I like to call them our 'first greeters' when people visit the Vancouver campus. They are well regarded for their friendliness and their care of our Veterans. They are participating in an important function."

Rex Hopper is a self-effacing individual who is an outstanding VAPORHCS volunteer. He exemplifies the U.S. Marine Corps spirit and devotion to duty. Thank you Rex and all our VAPORHCS volunteers for your support.

- VAPORHCS -



USMC Veteran and VA volunteer (center front with brief case) Rex Hopper along with a number of other volunteer drivers and VA staff at the Vancouver VA Campus. Volunteers amass an estimated 4,000+ hours of volunteer time every year shuttling Veterans and guests around the 50-acre Vancouver Campus to their appointment locations.

Veteran Town Hall & VBA Claims Clinic planned

FOR WHO? Veterans, family members

WHEN? Saturday, Dec. 3, 2016, Claims clinic starts at 10 a.m., Town Hall is 10:30 a.m.—noon

WHERE? VAPORHCS Portland VA Medical Center, Auditorium, Building 100, 2nd floor and via [Facebook Live](#)

WHAT? Director, VAPORHCS, & Director, Portland Regional Office, share information, answer questions and address concerns. Claims specialists will be on hand to address claim questions.

If you have any questions, please contact the Public Affairs Office at VHAPOR-PublicAffairs@med.va.gov or (503)402-2975