The Salisbury Bulletin

W.G. (Bill) Hefner VA Medical Center, Salisbury, NC – April 2014

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Department of Veterans Affairs, Federal, State and local officials break ground in front of the future site of the Charlotte VA Health Care Center March 28. Once complete, the Charlotte HCC will provide significantly expanded outpatient services over the current Charlotte Community-Based Outpatient Clinic. (Photo by Luke Thompson, Salisbury VAMC Medical Media)

Groundbreaking complete for Charlotte Health Care Center

By Michael Maddox

Department of Veterans Affairs, federal and local government, and contracting officials ceremoniously kicked off the construction of the Charlotte Health Care Center (HCC) during a groundbreaking ceremony March 28.

Hundreds braved the threat of rain to turn out for the ceremony, which took place at the facility's future location at West Tyvola Road and Cascade Pointe Boulevard.

Once completed, the new Health Care Center will serve Veterans who currently receive care through the Charlotte Community-Based Outpatient Clinic (CBOC). Much like the Charlotte CBOC, the Charlotte HCC will only provide outpatient services, but with a significantly increased capacity for expansion of services in the future.

During the ceremony, Senator Richard Burr said the new Charlotte facility represents the nation's obligation to Veterans.

"We're opening facilities to keep our promise to provide the best health care possible to those who have given the most. Today you see the commitment to those who are here, who need these services. We will never forget our nation made a commitment that never ends to those who make the ultimate sacrifice," he said.

The new HCC is being built in response to, and for, the growing Veteran population in the Charlotte area, according to VA Mid-Atlantic Health Care Network Director Daniel F. Hoffmann.

"The Veteran population in this area continues to grow, and Veterans have made it clear they want and need greater access to VA health care. I am

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Members of Specialized Inpatient Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder Unit (SIPU) cohort 135 pose for a class photo with Kimberly and her new home. (Photo courtesy of Luke Thompson, Salisbury VAMC Medical Media)

Veterans donate special gift to service animal

By Michael Maddox

When most people think of a hospital, During the six weeks patients in the Specialized Inpatient Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder Unit (SIPU) spend at the W. G. (Bill) Hefner VA Medical Center as a cohort (group), learning to cope with PTSD, they sometimes develop long-lasting bonds with one another.

The most recent group was no exception, but some in the group also developed a special relationship with Kimberly, the service dog that works in the SIPU.

To commemorate their graduation, and the work Kimberly does, Group 135 donated a special gift to the hospital and Kimberly – a dog house decorated with a military theme.

Travis Robinson, a member of SIPU Group 135, said they decided to do something special for Kimberly for several reasons.

"Everyone generally makes a commemorative plaque to the staff for us to be remembered by. Mr. (Chad) Hightower and I both thought we needed to think outside of the box, after seeing these plaques – 134 of them," he said. "My mind was already on the dog when we started coming up with ideas. I didn't really see anything around that gave her credit. So I thought we should get her a dog house and make it a commemorative dog house."

Chad Hightower, another member of SIPU Group 135, said he was glad his group could give back something special, to someone who was very special to him.

"I started having some issues about 10 months into my last deployment, and so I went down to the combat stress section at the Forward Operating Base. You could check out a service dog there for the day. So I would go down and check out the dog every day other soldiers didn't have her," he said. "We spent a couple of nights in the bunkers – we went through some torment together, and I made a connection with that service dog in Iraq."

"When I came here, I connected with Kimberly. I don't know what it is about dogs, but to me they have a tendency to see the ones who are really wounded or really hurt," added Hightower. "There's no prejudice, there's no judgments, it's just pure healing. I don't think she gets enough credit - she never calls in sick, she never complains - all she wants is a little bit of attention."

Robinson said he's witnessed firsthand how the service dog takes care of those in need of a friend.

"I believe that dog knows her job and she knows who to go up to, who needs her the most. She's come up and put her head on my lap a few times when I wasn't feeling quite right," he said.

The group decided to decorate Kimberly's new house with camouflage netting, with some being jungle camo to represent Vietnam era Veterans and desert camo to represent eras of the Gulf Wars, OIF, and OEF. They also hung dog tags with the names of everyone in Group 135 on the house.

"We really just wanted to recognize Kimberly's significance here, and what she does for so many," said Robinson.

Salisbury VAMC doctors promoted to full professor

By Michael Maddox

Kenneth Snyder, D.O., Section Chief for Cardiology Services, (right) instructs third-year VCOM student Jamie Collard in reviewing an Echocardiogram. (Photo by Luke Thompson, Salisbury VAMC Medical Media).

The staff and leadership at the W.G. (Bill) Hefner VA Medical Center are always looking for ways to provide better care for patients, and that includes helping to mold future medical professionals through partnerships with various medical schools.

Dr. Frank Labagnara, director of Medical Education for Research and Education, takes great pride in being a part of this partnership, and his dedication was recently recognized as he was promoted to Full Professor in the Department of Family Medicine at the Edward Via College of Osteopathic Medicine at Virginia Tech in Blacksburg, Va.

Labagnara said all of the work he does with students is about more than being promoted to professor.

"I put a lot of time into teaching the students, and there's a lot of diversity in the work I've done with them," he said.

That work includes scheduling their didactic schedules of lectures, grading case presentations, and managing a journal club to review medical articles. Labagnara also does a workshop with students every fourth Friday.

"I also counsel the students if they have issues with their professional choices – we talk with them and try to help them sort things out or guide them in the right direction," said Labagnara. "It's an investment of a lot of time, but being able to train the next generation of physicians is a very rewarding experience."

"I always thought I would be a clinical physician; I wasn't interested in administrative type work. But being here, helping with the students, working with them, guiding them, knowing that you really made a difference in their career is the exciting part," he added.

Dr. Robin Hurley, Associate Chief of Staff for Research and Education at Salisbury, and Professor of Psychiatry and Radiology at Wake Forest School of Medicine, said Labagnara's promotion is well deserved.

"Dr. Labagnara is a tireless and extremely dedicated teacher. He truly emulates what the model physician should be. His residents and students always find him to be a great mentor and advocate for his patients' needs," she said. "He is a highly sought supervisor and consistently receives great evaluations from his students. Everyone at Salisbury VAMC is delighted that Dr. Labagnara has received this great honor and we are all excited about the talents that he brings to education and Veteran patient care."

> *"I think this validates us as an academic facility. It shows that we're dedicated to academic excellence, to teaching and producing the next generation of physicians."*
>
> - Dr. Frank Labagnara

Although Dr. Labagnara was the first VCOM clinical faculty to be promoted to full professor, Dr. Tushar Vachharanji, Section Chief for Nephrology, also recently received notification he has been promoted to Full Professor.

Labagnara said he is also glad to be a part of the Salisbury VAMC team, and his role in its future.

"I think this validates us as an academic facility. It shows that we're dedicated to academic excellence, to teaching and producing the next generation of physicians," he said.

"It shows that we take pride in what we do, and we want to provide the Veterans with the most up-to-date medical care by involving an educational component and having trainees here that stimulate us academically. All of that makes for a better facility, better care – I think everybody wins when you have these types of educational programs."

Words of thanks from our Veterans

I would like to brag on one of your employees, Dana Yelverton, in Salisbury. I can't say enough about how much she has helped my husband and I. I call her often about medicine and appointments and she is always helpful. I know there are lots of good people working at the VA, but she is the one we depend on!

I just want to take a moment to thank the entire staff at the Salisbury VAMC. I have been hospitalized several times and each time the medical staff and other employees have gone above and beyond to give me courteous, professional care.

I want to personally thank Dr. Patriarcho, John Gaffney, Donald Volkmer and Teresa Anderson as well as all of the other nursing staff for their kindness and care for maintaining my dignity throughout my hospital stay.

Dr. Nichole Arkfeld at the Charlotte CBOC is so wonderful. She always asks me if there is anything I need and tries to get it for me. She is very personable and concerned about my health.

Jennifer Kunonga in the Dental Clinic always makes me feel comfortable and at ease while in the Dental Clinic.

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extremely pleased and proud that so many existing Veterans have made our medical clinic their home," said Hoffmann. "I'm proud because by making our clinic their home, Veterans have demonstrated their trust in us to provide the best care anywhere."

"Today we're gathered to kick off construction of the state-of-art health care facility that will be the medical home for tens of thousands of area Veterans for many years to come. The time is right, the location is right, and when the day comes when we cut the ribbon, you'll know the design is right," added Hoffmann.

Salisbury VA Medical Center Director Kaye Green added that she's proud of the strides the Salisbury VAMC is making to meet the needs of local Veterans.

"I knew when I came to Salisbury that it was a growing facility, but I had no idea that projected growth would be sustained over time," she said. "It's because of that growth that we have the pleasure today to break ground on this new health care facility. It's been a long time coming and we are so blessed that the time is finally upon us."

"I truly believe that this is going to be one of the most advanced health care designs and one of the most patient-centered health care facilities, not only in all of VA, but in all of health care," added Green.

During the ceremony, Green said it's a honor to provide America's heroes with the services they need and earned.

"I want to make something very clear right now – this is going to be your health care center. I'm very privileged to be the custodian of that, but this is going to be your facility, and I am very proud of that," she said.

"As a learning organization, we take a lesson from every Veteran who took an oath to defend our nation – never give up. Here in the Salisbury system, I want to take that lesson one step further. I want to make a promise to you that we will never stop improving Veteran health care," she added. "My vision is that Veteran health care will be world-class and I think it's very close to that right now – but we will never stop improving. Our Veterans deserve nothing short of that."

Childress Klein-Cambridge Healthcare Solutions, LLC, based in Herndon, Va., is the contractor chosen to build the six-story Health Care Center, which will be located on a 35-acre site.

When completed, the Charlotte HCC will have 295,000 net usable square feet of space and 1,930 parking spaces. It is currently scheduled to be completed in Spring 2016.

From The History Books….

VA instrumental in TB research, treatment

A group of government nurses after their return from service in Europe — here assigned for special study & training in the field of Tuberculosis at New Haven, Conn. – U.S. Veterans Hospital No. 41 in 1923. (Photo courtesy of the Kansas State Historical Society)

World Tuberculosis Day was established by the World Health Organization (WHO) March 24, 1882. This annual event commemorates the date when Dr. Robert Koch announced his discovery of Mycobacterium tuberculosis, the bacillus that causes the disease.

Tuberculosis (TB) is now rare in the United States and other developed nations with ample access to antibiotics, but in poorer regions, it trails only HIV/AIDS as the greatest cause of death due to a single infectious agent.

In VA's history, specialized treatment and care for Veterans with tuberculosis began after the Civil War at the National Home for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers (NHDVS). Fifteen Union Veterans were treated for the disease during the homes' first year of operation.

As the disease spread, special wards or wings were established in NHDVS hospitals for TB patients.

Forty years later, in 1907, the NHDVS opened the Battle Mountain Sanitarium in Hot Springs, S.D., to provide short-term specialized care to Veterans with respiratory, lung, or rheumatic problems. Tuberculosis was referred to as "consumption" until the early 20th century.

In 1918, the Bureau of War Risk Insurance and Public Health Service (both part of the Treasury Department) were charged with providing hospitals and medical care to World War I Veterans. They worked with the American College of Surgeons and others to develop specialty hospitals to meet the needs of not only medical and surgical patients, but those suffering from tuberculosis, neurological, or psychiatric diseases, as well.

Public Health Service nurses received special training to work with patients who had tuberculosis. When the Public Health Service Veterans hospitals were transferred to the Veterans Bureau in 1922, Public Health Service nurses and medical staff, the corps of medical expertise at the time, were transferred as well.

The development of antibiotics during World War II helped bring about the disease's decline. VA was at the forefront as a research partner in several medical studies with DOD and others and helped bring TB under control.

The last "new" TB hospital built from the ground up by VA opened in Baltimore, Md., on Oct. 28, 1952.

The last VA tuberculosis hospital, located on Cold Spring Road, in Indianapolis, opened on Jan. 4, 1932 and was converted to a TB hospital in 1952. It ceased operations at the end of 1968.

Its conversion into a general hospital, effective on Jan. 1, 1969, closed a chapter in VA's history, while serving as a testament to the great strides made by modern medical research.

After 1969, TB patients were treated in pulmonary or respiratory care units at VA hospitals or on an outpatient basis.

Adaptive Sports Clinic scheduled for April 11

An Adaptive Sports Clinic is scheduled for April 11 in the Building 6 Gymnasium from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.

During our two-day sports clinic, you'll be able to take part in demonstrations as well as try a variety of adapted sports, including: wheelchair tennis, bowling, field events, table tennis, hand cycling, wheelchair basketball, billiards and bocce.

Hand cycling and tennis demonstrations will be from 9 a.m. until noon. Wheelchair basketball and bocce demonstrations will be from 1 to 3 p.m. All other events will be continuously demonstrated throughout the day.

For more infomation, contact DeMarcus Steele at (704) 638–9000, ext. 3041.

Veterans learn how to use a hand-bicycle during the last Adaptive Sports Clinic held at the Salisbury VAMC. Demonstrations on a wide variety of adaptive sports will be presented during the upcoming event. (Photo by Luke Thompson, Salisbury VAMC Medical Media)

April is Sexual Assault Awareness Month

VA's National theme for Sexual Assault Awareness Month 2014 is "You are not alone: VA supports survivors of military sexual trauma."

Both women and men can experience sexual assault and sexual harassment during their military service, and this can affect mental and physical health, even many years later. But recovery from military sexual trauma (MST) is possible, and VA offers free, confidential services that can help.

Visit www.mentalhealth.va.gov/msthome.asp or contact the MST Coordinator at the Salisbury VAMC to learn more, Dr. Amy Smith, at ext. 4230.

Salisbury VAMC will also host a Clothesline Display to encourage awareness and express the recovery process of survivors in Bldg. 2 Lobby during the week of April 14th.

The Salisbury Patient Advocates have been temporarily relocated due to the construction in Building 2. Their new location is on the first floor of Building 3, in the space previously occupied by AFGE, rooms 1056, 1035 and 1036.

Their phone numbers have not changed. You can reach Eladio Cintron, Lead Patient Advocate, at ext. 3981, Teresa Cress at ext. 3602, and Valerie Bennett at ext. 3747.

Take the **healthe**living assessment to find out

The healtheliving assessment (HLA) is a first step to understanding—and improving—your health. The HLA asks you questions about your lifestyle and health history, and provides you:

- **Your "health age,"** an estimate of how healthy you are compared with others your age, based on factors like your weight, diet, exercise, and health habits.
- **Personalized reports** on your overall health and risk of certain diseases.
- **Recommendations** on how to improve your health and lower your disease risk.

The HLA is available 24/7 through the My HealtheVet website. It's confidential and takes only about 20 minutes to complete!

My healthevet healthe living assessment

Ready to get on track to better health? It's easy with the HLA:

1. Log in to your online account at My HealtheVet (www.myhealth.va.gov). If you're new to My HealtheVet, just register for an online account at www.myhealth.va.gov.
2. Click on the healthe living assessment link.
3. Complete the assessment and find out about your health age today!