

# The Salisbury Bulletin

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

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## Small clinic staff provides large clinic patient service

*By Michael Maddox*

Battling a serious illness like cancer could seem overwhelming, but the Oncology staff at the Salisbury VA Medical Center is doing everything possible to be a partner to Veterans during treatment.

That partnership shows through in the attention to detail and caring spirit of the staff in the Oncology Department, said Norde Wilson, who receives care in the clinic. He and his wife appreciate the treatment Wilson receives, and the way staff treats patients.

“The people who work over here are just as upright and pleasant at the end of the day as they are when they start. They’re always ready to accommodate us in any way they can – they take good care of me – and we’ll miss it when we don’t come,” said Wilson.

Jimmy Ruiz, MD, chief of Oncology, said great customer service and compassion are a must for providing care to patients who are dealing with cancer diagnoses and treatment.

“The staff here is very different from other types of clinics and I think a lot of it has to do with the specialty care aspect of cancer care,” he said. “Those who work in hospice and palliative care are often a different breed of providers, and you also see that in can-



*Christy Mullinax, an oncology certified nurse in the Oncology Department, chats with Veteran Norde Wilson while taking his vital signs before his chemotherapy treatment. (Photo by Michael Maddox, Salisbury VAMC Public Affairs)*

cer care. People who gravitate to this field have specific characteristics. Everyone on our nursing staff is very conscientious, caring, always willing to go out of their way to make the experience the best that the Veteran can have.”

“Everyone here has this same sense of trying to make this experience the best that it can be for the Veteran, especially during troubling and difficult times that come with cancer diagnoses. It breeds an environment where patients feel at home,” he added.

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## Kaye's Corner

This month, I'm excited to talk about an initiative that has, and will continue to have, significant impact on the quality of our work environment and provide opportunities for improvement in our healthcare system.

You may have noticed a new energy is moving throughout our facility, or have heard staff talking about 6S, visual aids, huddles, process maps, Just In Time training, Waste Walks, Gemba, Voice of the Veteran/Customer, Affinity Diagrams, and Visual Management. What is this terminology and buzz about? These are tools used in our Continuous Improvement work with a focus on "Lean" management principles.

What is Lean? Simply put, Lean, like its name suggests, is streamlining a process to shorten the time between start and finish by eliminating sources of waste. Waste is anything that does not add value to the way we do things from the patient's perspective.

I want to challenge each of you to think of a way to improve one process today by minimizing or eliminating one of these eight forms of waste: defects, overproduction, waiting, not utilizing employees, transportation (i.e. unnecessary walking, retrieving, transporting patients), inventory, motion (i.e. trips to fax/copy machine), and extra processing.

So far in 2014, we have seen great outcomes from the Continuous Improvement work by engaged staff,



from frontline to leadership. However, 2015 and 2016 promise new training, development and application opportunities (i.e. Lean Belt Training, Leading Organizational Improvement Workshops, Rapid Process Improvement Events (RPIEs), All Employee Lean, Lean Roles and Responsibilities, Visual Management Implementation, and Project Theatres).

If you have any questions about Lean or want additional information, you can contact our Systems Redesign Manager, Bonnie Cauble, at extension 3895.

I appreciate your support as we look for new and innovative ways to provide the best service possible for our Veteran patients!

*Kaye Green*  
Medical Center Director

## Look out for pedestrians on campus!

When you are on the Salisbury VA Medical Center property, please be mindful of the following:

- Pedestrians have the "Right-of-Way"
- The speed limit on the campus is 20 miles per hour.
- Look both ways before entering into an intersection or crosswalk.
- It is illegal to Text & Drive.
- Use extreme caution when attempting to enter/depart the facility through the gates. The time change, line of sight, and lack of sidewalks and sig-

nals in those areas make them potentially dangerous.

- Use of cell phones while driving can be distracting and it would be wise to avoid using them while driving around campus or in high-traffic areas.

There are currently several other facility projects underway to improve Pedestrian & Motorist safety here on VAMC grounds including, but not limited to, Solar Powered Pedestrian Crosswalk signs and the installation of fixed location Radar "Speed" boards.



## Words of thanks from our Veterans

The Rural Health team does a great job! They were at American Legion Post 65 in Statesville in the Spring of this year, and the staff made this class so much fun while we were learning about ways to care for our bodies and exercise. I still see some of the students from the class. One of them has now lost 26 pounds and his wife is also still losing weight. He has gone down one size in pants and his goal is one or two more sizes. Thanks for the great programs!

Due to the dedication of Julia Merrick, Occupational Therapist, I was able to be discharged from Building 42 earlier than expected! Thank you!

Dr. Chitra Medda is the best doctor in town—she takes great care of me. My care is great and above what I could expect from any outside source.

I would like to express my appreciation for the great service from Dr. Amanda Heim and Jaqueline Walker in the Audiology Department. These two ladies represented your hospital with very high standards. They were respectful, caring, and knowledgeable. They should both be given an "Atta' Girl!"

## Grounds crew keeps campus beautiful

*By Michael Maddox*

Everyone knows the Salisbury VA Medical Center is full of various specialists who provide health care to patients on a daily basis, but there's one team that also provides health care and does intricate work that may go overlooked at times – the grounds crew.

This team is responsible for maintaining all of the trees, plants, grass and landscaping across the 100 acre campus – allowing visitors to the medical center to be greeted by a warm, yard-like setting, compared to a cold, clinical feel.

One of those who works on the grounds crew is Jimmy Cureton, who's been a gardener for the medical center for 10 years.

Cureton, a Navy Veteran, said he loves what he does because he helps mold the first impression a visitor gets when they visit the hospital.

"I love my work. Everybody wasn't born to do this kind of work, but it's something I really enjoy," he said. "I like the moment after you're done, when you can look back at the final product and say, 'I was a part of designing that.'"

Alvin Harvell, facilities operations specialist, said the grounds crew does more than trim bushes and plant flowers.

"We also take care of all the trees," he said. "We may have to hire a contractor to come in every once and a while to give us a hand with some of it, but as far as dead limbs and cutting them down when a tree is dying, we handle that too."

Another part of the grounds crew's job includes taking care of all of the many parking areas across the campus.

"You would think a parking lot



*Jimmy Cureton, who's been a gardener for the medical center for 10 years, trims hedges near the entrance to the medical center campus entrance.*

wouldn't be that much work, but a lot of the grounds are parking areas," Harvell explained. "With that, you've got extra weed cutting, extra edging, extra trash pickup, plus in the winter months you've got to scrape the snow and ice off the parking lots."

Harvell, an Army Veteran, said the key to taking care of all that the team is responsible for requires a lot of teamwork.

"Everybody pitches in and helps out wherever they're needed. We have to be a team because we have so much to do," he said.

Harvell added that all of the hard work his team puts in pays off when someone pays them a compliment.

"Every once and a while you get lucky and have someone come by and thank you for what you're doing, and it makes you feel good that people notice what we do," he said.



*Lisa Kester, a pharmacist with the Oncology clinic, prepares to mix a chemotherapy treatment for a patient.*

### ONCOLOGY, cont'd from Page 1

Something else that makes the department unique is that they try to provide as many services in one spot as possible. “Infusion, oral chemo, dedicated pharmacists; everything is handled here at this facility,” said Ruiz.

The Oncology clinic treats patients who have both blood cancers and benign hematological problems, as well as standard oncology treatment for cancer patients with solid tumors.

Maeghan Iddings, a clinical program specialist in Oncology, said one of the services the clinic provides is thoroughly explaining the treatment to Veterans.

“We have a nursing education clinic, where after a diagnosis they are taught about what kinds of medications they’re going to receive, and the plan of treatment – the nurses go over it with every new Veteran. It’s a huge component that makes the Veteran feel a little more at ease,” she said.

Ruiz added, his department strives to provide the most up to date treatments.

“One aspect that is very interesting and specific to our program is that we have specialization within the specialty, driven in large part by our academic affiliations with Wake Forest,” he explained. “Everyone here has an academic appointment at Wake Forest, and the majority of us have spent time at Wake Forest in an academic environment –

which gives us access to cutting edge technologies, and we are generally there to see when the field moves forward and implement those changes here.”

“We have a professor of medicine here who has more than 30 years of experience in lung cancer, which is probably uncommon for a lot of clinics – he sees all of our lung cancer patients,” added Ruiz. “We also have people who specialize in benign and malignant hematology. In the community, we usually see general hematologists and oncologists, so they pretty much treat everything.”

“We also have a thoracic oncology program, which is a special clinic that is truly multidisciplinary. When the patient comes in, usually with a diagnosis of lung cancer, the person gets to see a set of doctors – the medical oncologist, the surgical oncologist, and at times the pulmonary medicine physicians – all in one sitting,” said Ruiz. “This not only allows us to expedite their care, but to apply effective care. This type of clinic is very specific to large centers, so we are unique to be able to offer it here.”

Ruiz said as there are advancements in treating cancers and new cancers continue to emerge, it gets harder and harder to stay on the cutting edge of personalizing cancer care.

“Because of this, it’s very important for us to mimic a large cancer center in that we provide specialty care within the specialization, which leads to more personalized care for the Veteran,” he said.

## From The History Books....

# Great Depression spawns Bonus Army movement

Eighty-two years ago, on July 28, 1932, the months-long occupation of Washington, D.C., by thousands of out-of-work World War I Veterans - calling themselves the Bonus Expeditionary Force (BEF), and commonly referred to as the Bonus Army or Bonus marchers - escalated into a violent and tragic riot when President Hoover ordered federal troops to evict them.

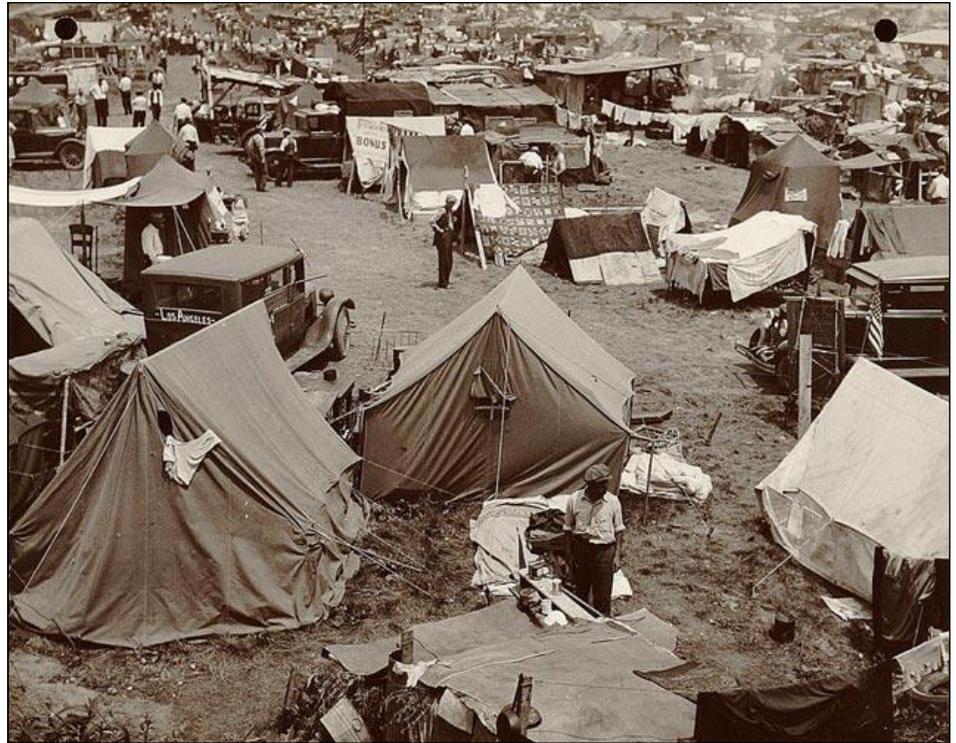
At 4:30 p.m. that day, D.C. police and federal troops armed with tear gas, bayonets, and guns made a show of force to run the Bonus Army out. Veterans defended themselves with bottles, rocks, iron bars, and anything they could get their hands on.

The makeshift camps were set on fire, people fled or fought, and the outrage felt by all devolved into utter mayhem. That night, two Veterans died and hundreds, including many Veterans' wives and children, were injured.

Six years earlier, in 1924, Congress authorized a tax-free bonus for World War I Veterans, payable in 20 years (1945), based on their military service during the war. Bonus amounts promised were \$1.25 per day for overseas service or \$1 per day for home service, for each day over 60 days that they served. The bonus was similar to an insurance policy: the Veteran obtained a certificate and was supposed to hold onto it for 20 years, as its value increased over time.

Five years later, the Great Depression followed the stock market crash of October 1929, leaving millions of Americans, including Veterans, unemployed and homeless. Tens of thousands of businesses closed their doors and unemployment soared to nearly 25 percent.

Veterans could no longer wait 20 years to receive their bonuses - they desperately needed the money to support their families. In 1931, Congress



*Photo of the Bonus Army camp. (Photo from the Library of Congress)*

overrode President Hoover's veto of a bill that gave Veterans the option of obtaining loans for up to half of the bonus value. But it wasn't enough — Veterans wanted and needed the full value.

In the spring of 1932 former World War I Army Sgt. Walter W. Waters, of Oregon, led a small caravan of Veterans across the country to Washington, D.C. to camp out at Congress's doorstep until they got the balance of their bonuses. By June 1932 more than 20,000 Veterans and their families from all over had converged in the nation's capital demanding that Congress pay their bonuses early or give them jobs.

The Bonus Army was a melting pot of America's veterans and included African Americans, Native Americans, and women Veterans. They occupied condemned buildings, vacant lots, and set up camp near the Anacostia River, awaiting a vote on Congressman

Wright Patman's bill to give them the rest of their bonus.

Unfortunately, the bill was defeated. The government offered to pay the Veterans' transportation back home, but most refused to leave.

For several weeks afterwards, reports reached President Hoover that Communists had infiltrated the Bonus Army, worsening his perception of the Bonus Army, their intentions, and causing him to label them as "radicals."

Tensions rose and finally reached a boiling point at the end of July when Hoover issued an eviction order to the Bonus Army and brought in armed police and federal troops to remove them. The situation escalated into a full-blown riot and parts of D.C. looked like a war zone the day after.

William J. Hushka and Eric Carlson, two World War I veterans, were killed during the riot; they were both buried in Arlington National Cemetery.

## Did you know there is one number to call for your healthcare needs and questions?

### The Veterans Call Support Center at (800) 706-9126

The call center is open Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. until 4:15 p.m. (excluding Federal holidays).

If you develop a medical problem and would like to see your doctor before your next appointment, please call the Veterans Call Support Line.

If you need to call outside of normal business hours, you can leave a voicemail message to cancel an appointment or to request a callback to schedule an appointment.

**For medical emergencies, dial 911.**

*You can also call the Veterans Crisis Line at (800) 273-TALK (8255) if you need someone to help you deal with a difficult time in your life.*

## Minority Veterans Program—serving all who served

Established under Public Law 103-446 on November 2, 1994, the Minority Veterans Program is a coordinated effort to increase awareness of minority Veteran related issues and to develop strategies for increasing their participation in existing VA benefits and health care services.

The Minority Veterans Program serves all Veterans regardless of race or ethnicity, with a primary

emphasis on minority Veterans in the local community. Veterans of minority groups include: Asian American, African American, Hispanic/Latino and Native American, including American Indian, Alaska Native, Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islander.

**For more information, you can contact Belinda Dublin, Minority Veterans Program Coordinator, at (704) 597-3500, ext. 7983.**

## Connect with the Salisbury VAMC through social media!

Stay up to date on the latest happenings including news, trivia and emergency information



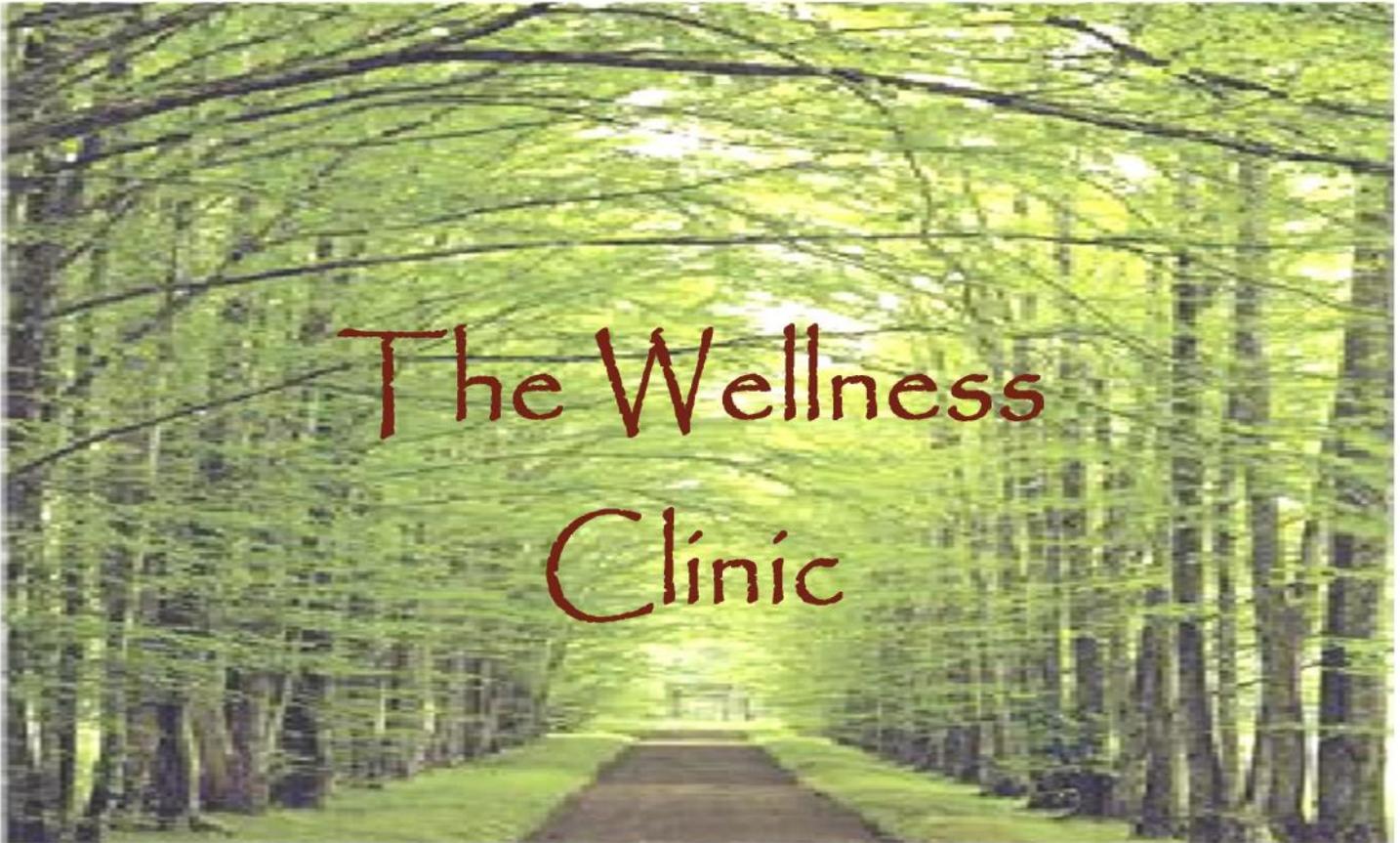
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[salisbury.va.gov](https://salisbury.va.gov)



# The Wellness Clinic

## Class topics include:

- *Finding your motivation*
- *Setting a SMART goal*
- *Developing your plan*
- *Building new habits*
- *Overcoming obstacles*
- *The role of support*
- *Managing stress*
- *Keeping it going*

- How can I live my life more fully?
- What really matters to me in my life?
- Why do I want my health?

**Classes are held in Building 3 Room 1029A**

**Mondays from 10 to 11 a.m.**

To get more information, contact Marc Castellani at (704) 638-9000, Ext. 4569, or by email at [Marc.Castellani@va.gov](mailto:Marc.Castellani@va.gov). You can also contact Jennifer Terndrup at Ext. 2554 or by email at [Jennifer.Terndrup@va.gov](mailto:Jennifer.Terndrup@va.gov)



**BETTER**  
Salisbury VA Wellness Program

**The Wellness Clinic helps you put behavior change into action.**