

The Salisbury Bulletin

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

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Department of Veterans Affairs, federal and local government officials ceremoniously open the new Mental Health Center for Excellence on the Salisbury VA Medical Center campus during a ribbon cutting ceremony June 11. (Photo by Luke Thompson, Salisbury VAMC Medical Media)

Mental Health Center for Excellence officially opens

By Michael Maddox

Department of Veterans Affairs, federal and local government officials ceremoniously opened the new Mental Health Center for Excellence on the Salisbury VA Medical Center campus during a ribbon cutting ceremony June 11.

The room was packed as Veterans, Salisbury staff members and other officials attended the ceremony which was held in the welcome center of the new facility in Building 8.

Prior to the ribbon cutting, speakers discussed the importance of the new center building and its role in the future of mental health care at Salisbury.

Salisbury VAMC Director, Kaye Green, took some time at the beginning of the ceremony to give special recognition to several groups, includ-

ing the staff at the Salisbury VAMC.

"I want to recognize that you are the people who take care of Veterans on a day to day basis, and without you, we wouldn't be here - just like without our Veterans who we serve, we would not be here," she said. "I appreciate the work each of you does each and every day, and I thank you for that."

Green went on to share how the new facility will impact mental health care and provide a milestone in the history of Salisbury VAMC.

"This new building will help promote a healing environment for our Veterans," she said. "So many Veterans come back, whether it's from current or past conflicts, and they have visible wounds. These wounds are often not visible from the outside, but that doesn't make them any less hurt-

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Kaye's Corner

As we continue to see VA in the national news, I wanted to share with you what we are doing locally in our Salisbury VA system to improve access. We are fortunate to be ahead of the curve in many areas because we developed a comprehensive plan to improve access over a year ago in April 2013.

Several weeks ago, VA Central Office in Washington D.C. asked each facility to submit any resource needs they have to ensure they can see patients within 30 days. We analyzed data regarding all patients who were waiting more than 30 days and made decisions about where we needed to build in-house capacity and where we needed to purchase care for Veterans in the community.

I'm very pleased to share with you that our system received what we requested – just under \$22 million. We also received more than any other facility in the country. Part of the reason our request was that high is that we have a three-fold challenge here in Salisbury: we treat a huge number of Veterans (approximately 91,000 unique patients in 2013); we continue to experience growth in the number of patients we see year after year; and lastly, we have been on a journey to provide a full continuum of care - strategically increasing the variety and complexity of services we provide so our Veterans can receive care locally, as opposed to having to long travel distances to other VA facilities.

Now the challenge is to invest these additional funds wisely so we can sustain access, not just at this point in time, but also in the future. I know many of our employees are working very hard and long hours to make that happen, and I want to thank each of you!

I have briefed our congressional staff and our Veteran Service Organizations and they are all very supportive of our efforts to date, and continue to receive more compliments than complaints from Salisbury-area Veterans. Garrett



Schreier and I also recently visited with more than 50 Veterans over “coffee therapy” at a local establishment. They shared few complaints and much gratitude about our employees and the care they provide.

This week, I also started conducting “listening sessions” to hear how many employees feel we are doing as a system, and to get your open and honest feedback. I plan to conduct these “listening sessions” at all of our sites of care over the next several weeks. I have already gained excellent input about our challenges along with great suggestions for improvement from many of you, and we will be working to put those into place.

I know we are not perfect as an organization and we have opportunities for improvement, but I also know that we are on our way to being an even better healthcare system and I appreciate your support and your continued focus on our Veteran patients! Thank you again.

Thank you for all that you do every day,
Kaye Green
 Medical Center Director
 Salisbury VA Health Care System

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

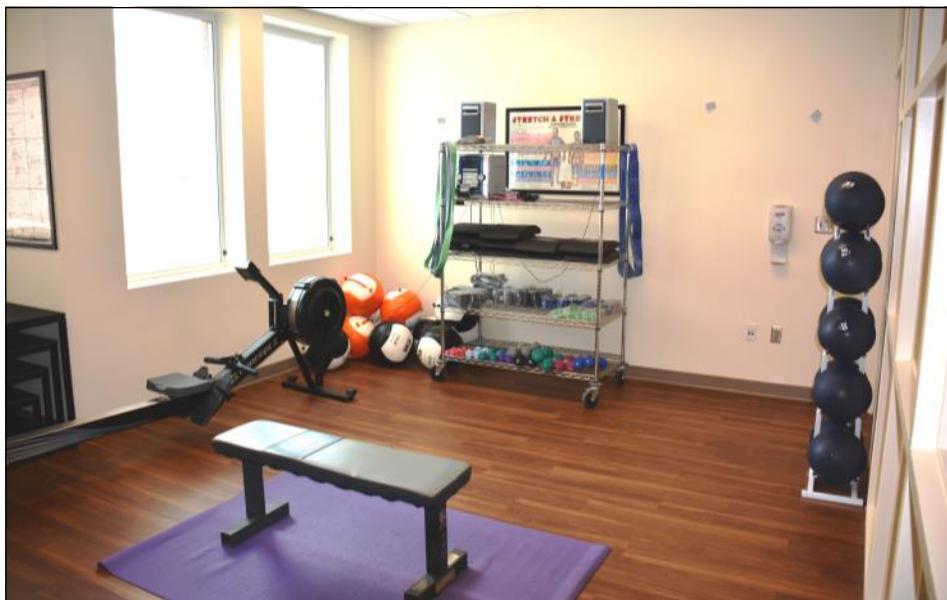
Words of thanks from our Veterans

I would like to thank Dr. Michael Wilson at the Winston-Salem Clinic for me with my foot problems so that I can now enjoy life even with my medical problems. By working with me, and talking to me, we are working together as a team. He makes me feel like I'm the most important patient he has, and his approach to treatment is outstanding.

Dr. Tameka Felton in the Dermatology Clinic is always kind and friendly. I could tell that she really cared about me. She did a great job and went above and beyond the call of duty.

I would like to compliment Rebecca Green for doing a wonderful job. She assisted me with getting appointments scheduled and showed me how to check my blood pressure. Great job Ms. Green!!

Thank you so much Dr. Amara Amarasinghe for your caring. Because of your professional healthcare, a discovery was made about my health which I feel helped to save my life. You have been a wonderful doctor and I am so thankful for you and the services you provide for me and many others.



Each floor includes treatment areas, rooms for patients, as well as recreational areas like a television room and exercise rooms.

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ful. We have to treat the entire person.”

“We believe in a recovery model here and are strongly committed to getting every Veteran to their highest level of functioning and comfort. I'm proud that we can, and do, help people get their lives back on track,” Green added.

The keynote speaker for the event, Ted Thomas, a Veteran and Certified Peer Support Specialist at the Salisbury VA Medical Center, shared his enthusiasm for the improvements in mental health care for Veterans, to include the peer support program.

“Sometimes a Veteran has been ill for so long that it becomes their identity, and the role of the peer support specialist is to model and mentor a new identity,” he said. “That identity is one of wellness, an identity of high quality living and being able to go back to work - having a life of meaning and purpose. We will continue to have a learning environment here – learning between the peer specialists, the Veterans, the clinicians – and the outcomes will be absolutely wonderful.”

Dr. Mark Shelhorse, Chief Medical Officer for the VA Mid-Atlantic Health Care Network (VISN 6), said

he considers the new mental health facility as more than walls, floors and treatment rooms.

“For those who seek out help, it will provide an environment that will create the opportunity for them to be back on course, or for some to set a new course or entirely different course for their lives,” he said. “Our goal here at Salisbury, and throughout the VISN, is to help Veterans move beyond their injuries with a goal of successful and satisfying lives within their communities and with their families. During the course of inpatient visits, Veterans will be wrapped in comfort, safety and dignity.”

“I'm confident that many, many Veterans will benefit from the care provided here and that all of that care will be the absolute best it can be,” added Shelhorse.

After the official ceremony, guests toured the building to see what treatment and living areas are like for Specialized Inpatient Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder Unit (SIPU) patients.

The facility, which cost \$16 million, has a total of 79,000 square feet of space.

This includes treatment areas, rooms for patients, as well as recreational areas like a television room and exercise rooms.

Program provides care, guidance for caregivers

By Michael Maddox

Being a caregiver can sometimes be an incredibly demanding job, but the Salisbury VAMC is providing care and guidance for those who care for Veterans through the Caregiver Support program.

The Caregiver Support program provides a number of services, resources and support for caregivers, that are available both in and out of the home.

Some of those services include adult day health care, home-based primary care, skilled home care, homemaker and home health aide programs, respite care and home hospice care.

The program offers certain services and benefits to caregivers, depending on the service era and level of care needed, said Tara Zollicoffer, a caregiver support coordinator.

“We have two components to our program – one is a comprehensive program that is particularly for Veterans who have a post-9/11 discharge, who are seriously injured and require the need of a caregiver,” she explained. “The comprehensive program provides a stipend and benefits to our caregivers of post-9/11 Veterans. We provide them a stipend because the Veteran is seriously injured and requires that daily contact from a caregiver. A lot of those caregivers are not able to work outside the home, so we provide that benefit to them as well as health insurance, individual counseling, expanded respite services, etc., to help them.”

“The other component of the program is for all other era Veterans where we provide supportive services,” added Zollicoffer. “We have caregiver support groups, monthly education calls, online workshops, so we are like a clearing house for any caregiver that needs additional supportive services.”

Zollicoffer said applicants for services go through an assessment process to see what they are eligible for.

“First we do an initial screening assessment to see if they are administratively eligible. We determine if they have a post-9/11 discharge, if they are service-connected for an injury that requires the aid of a caregiver, if the caregiver lives in the home and is providing daily care, and assess what care they are providing on a daily basis,” she said.

The program also has a clinical team that reviews and discusses every application.

Cathy Lingle, another caregiver support coordinator with the program, said after the initial assessment, the Veteran and their caregiver come in to discuss their particular situation.

“We mainly look at the service connections, what they are service-connected for, and what does that caregiver



have to do each and every day so that Veteran can stay at home and have a more active, better life,” she said. “It all comes back to what does the caregiver do to assist that Veteran.”

“We talk about their daily activities like bathing, grooming, mobility problems, memory problems - it really gives us an idea of what that caregiver has to provide for them,” she added. “We look at things like does the Veteran drive, can they get to appointments by themselves, how do you manage their medications – it’s very in-depth with each individual case.”

Lingle said if someone doesn’t qualify for the comprehensive program, they are automatically considered for the general family caregiver program.

Once a caregiver is accepted for services in the program, an initial home visit is done and repeated every three months. Lingle said the visits help the program coordinators get a better feel for how they can help the Veteran and their caregiver.

“You really get a different perspective when you go into the Veterans’ homes, when you get to see them in their environment,” she said. “A lot of times, once you are in their home and they feel comfortable with you, they really open up and talk to us.”

Zollicoffer said providing care and support for those who care for Veterans is a huge reward for the Caregiver Support team.

“It makes you feel good when you get a call from a caregiver who is just so appreciative of getting some support they didn’t even know was available,” Zollicoffer said. “They are so grateful just knowing there is someone they can contact when they are going through a difficult time. It’s great when they start to get involved and connect in the program because they see other people who are going through the same things that they are, which helps them a lot.”

For more information about the Caregiver Support program, call (704) 638-9000, ext. 4072/4580 or visit www.caregiver.va.gov/support/support_services.asp.



PTSD Art Show

The W.G. (Bill) Hefner VA Medical Center presented an art show June 27 for victims of trauma, including combat, sexual assault, violence, natural disasters, accidents, and other events, to help raise awareness of PTSD by displaying the art related to their personal struggles with PTSD.

From The History Books....

Environmental Management keeps VA clean, safe

Ever since the 1850s, when Florence Nightingale saved the lives of countless Crimean War soldiers through use of soap and water, and other healthy practices, science and society have come to equate cleanliness with godliness and for good reason.

In the 1870s germ theory evolved out of numerous scientific studies which proved that germs caused diseases, heat (pasteurization) killed microbes, and sterile surgical techniques saved lives.

These were new theories, at the time, so it took many more studies and years of practice to prove their validity and infiltrate them into American culture.

When VHA's ancestor, the National Home for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers, first opened its doors to veterans in the fall of 1866, there was no housekeeping, sterile processes, or sanitation department in place. Veterans living at the home were required to bathe at least once a week, but very little mention of cleaning, otherwise, was mentioned in official reports.

For the first 20 years, the washing of thousands of bed linens, employee and veteran uniforms, and cleaning of other items fell under the realm of the Home's matron, who put able-bodied veterans to work assisting her.

Veterans who lived at the National Homes were paid small amounts to help with laundry, farming, fixing food, keeping the grounds neat, clean, mowed, etc. As the Civil War veteran population aged, civilian staff were hired to do the work.

VHA's World War I predecessors, the Public Health Service and Bureau of War Risk Insurance, took cleanliness in hospitals very seriously. Public Health Service had an Industrial Hygiene and Sanitation department that not only supervised the cleaning of medical and surgical facilities, but



"Laundry group, U.S. V.A.H., Wood, Wis., May 1938," courtesy Milwaukee VAMC medical library.

studied practices and was a leading consultant to industry on standards.

When Public Health Service veterans' hospitals, the Bureau of War Risk Insurance and another bureau were merged in 1921 to form the Veterans Bureau, an Industrial Medical Service Section responsible for building sanitation, was established as part of the Veterans Bureau Executive Office.

On June 24, 1954, VA established the first division devoted entirely to cleaning and maintaining sanitary conditions in its hospitals. By June 30, 1955, 81 VA hospitals had a division headed by an expert housekeeper on-site.

At the time, the division was part of the Engineering, Maintenance, and Operation program under VA's Department of Medicine and Surgery. By 1960 the program had become a model for others including the Canadian government, which sent representatives to VA Central Office to study the program with a view of setting up a similar department in their veterans hospitals.

By 1968 the division had responsibility for pest management, maintaining hospital grounds, sanitation, laun-

dry, bed service, employee uniforms, painting, signage, and interior design.

Over the past 149 years the responsibility for maintaining a clean and safe environment in U.S. veterans hospitals has grown and adapted in step with advances in scientific theories and discovery.

Scientific studies since the 1950s have discovered that germs adapt and become more virulent and resistant, and that many materials once considered safe to use were, in fact, toxic — making the work of creating and maintaining a healthful environment more challenging than ever before.

Today's Environmental Management Programs originated after the Civil War as a small, simple, informal operation in the hands of a few women and veterans and has since grown into a large dedicated service managing multiple complex functions and aspects of cleanliness to maintain a safe environment for veterans, visitors, and VA employees.

Please thank an EMS employee today for their dedicated, yet quiet, behind-the-scenes work that is so vital for the healthful existence of all who come into a VA facility!

Coping with Cancer Support Group

A support group for Veterans and their family members whose lives have been touched by cancer meets the third Monday of every month from 1:30 to 2:30 p.m. at the Salisbury VA Medical Center, Bldg. 21, Oncology Clinic Conference Room.

For more Information, contact Susan Cooley at 704-638-9000, Ext. 5036.



Did you know that those who eat breakfast typically consume less calories through the day?

To learn more about how you can lose weight and become more active, please call to apply for our MOVE! Weight Management Program at 1-800-469-8262.

- **Salisbury VAMC, July 7, from 11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m., Bldg. 11 Room 234**
 - **Hickory VA Outpatient Clinic, July 7, from 11:30 to 12:30 p.m.**
 - **Winston-Salem VA Outpatient Clinic, July 10, from 9 to 10 a.m.**
- **Charlotte VA Outpatient Clinic, July 17, from 11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.**