

The Salisbury Bulletin

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

Inside this Issue

- 2 Kaye's Corner
- 3 Words of thanks
from our Veterans
- 5 From the History
Books
- 10 Links and Important
Information

September 2014 Observances

- Healthy Aging Month
- Ovarian Cancer
Awareness Month
- Cholesterol Educa-
tion Month
- National Alcohol
and Drug Addiction
Recovery Month

Quick Links

[Salisbury homepage](#)

[Salisbury Calendar](#)

[Facebook](#)

[Twitter](#)



Veterans can take advantage of the Teleretinal Imaging clinics at the Salisbury VAMC and its Community Based Outpatient Clinics to save time when being screened for diabetic retinopathy. (File photo, Salisbury VAMC Public Affairs)

Telehealth technologies making care more convenient

By Michael Maddox

Making time to travel to a medical appointment is one thing any patient has to consider when planning to receive care – that is unless the care is available in your home.

Thanks to modern innovation, some services, clinics and classes are available to Veterans in their homes, or in clinics that are closer to their homes, through the use of Telehealth technologies.

The Salisbury VA Medical Center is using Telehealth to help ensure Veteran patients get the right care, in the right place, at the right time, whenever possible, said Zena Thompson, Telehealth coordinator for the Salisbury VAMC.

Telehealth is currently used in three ways at the Salisbury VAMC: Home

Telehealth, “Store and Forward” Telehealth, and Clinical Video Telehealth (CVT).

“With Home Telehealth, we can serve Veterans who have chronic diseases like diabetes, hypertension, congestive heart failure, and some with depression or PTSD,” said Thompson. “We provide them with a messaging device, like an in home monitor, in which they’re able to answer questions daily about any symptoms they’re having.”

“There are registered nurses here who receive that information and do follow ups if needed. If there’s something the nurse is concerned about, and they feel it’s something the doctor needs to be aware of, they are able to send that information to the provider,” she added. “The goal is to help the

[See TELEHEALTH, Page 4](#)

Kaye's Corner

For two years, our Health Care System has been on a journey to adopt, practice and live the I-CARE Values of Integrity, Commitment, Advocacy, Respect and Excellence. We have demonstrated our understanding through our actions when interacting with Veterans, their families, staff and visitors.

We are in the process of installing additional I-CARE drop boxes throughout our organization so Veterans, families and co-workers can complete an I-CARE Card to recognize staff that go above and beyond in demonstrating our I-CARE Values. Our recently appointed Secretary, The Honorable Robert McDonald, has also personally committed himself to the I-CARE values and has asked that the staff at each Medical Center attest to their commitment to these values.

I feel confident that staff members believe and understand these values along with the commitment to the mission to honor America's Veterans by providing exceptional health care that improves their health and well-being.

Secretary McDonald has asked us to take our commitment to the I-CARE values one step further by remembering the following principles:

- I care about those who have served.
- I care about my fellow VA employees.



- I care about choosing "the harder right instead of the easier wrong."
- I care about performing my duties to the very best of my abilities.

I am asking every employee to take a moment to reflect on our I-CARE Values and the Secretary's statements, and consider what they mean to you personally. I sincerely ask that staff let themselves continue to be guided by these Values every day.

Thank you for all you have done and continue to do for our Nation's Veterans!

Kaye Green
 Medical Center Director
 Salisbury VA Health Care System

September is Suicide Prevention Month

One small act can make a difference in the life of a Veteran or Service member in crisis. That's the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA) message this September in observance of Suicide Prevention Month.

Join VA and individuals across the country in spreading this message and showing how one act can encourage Veterans, Service members, and their loved ones to seek confidential support from the Veterans Crisis Line.

The Veterans Crisis Line connects Veterans and Service members in crisis and their families and friends with

qualified, caring VA responders through a toll-free hotline, online chat, or text-messaging service. Call 1-800-273-8255 and Press 1, chat online at VeteransCrisisLine.net/Chat, or text to 838255 for free, confidential support 24/7/365. If a Veteran or Service member you know is showing signs of crisis, you can open the door to Veterans Crisis Line support.

This Suicide Prevention Month, help raise awareness of the Veterans Crisis Line. Learn how you can help by visiting VeteransCrisisLine.net/ThePowerOf1.

SEPTEMBER IS SUICIDE PREVENTION MONTH

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

CONVERSATION
 can open the door to support.

Veterans Crisis Line
 1-800-273-8255 PRESS 1

Words of thanks from our Veterans

The staff in the Physical Therapy Department are very professional, concerned, caring and make all of my visits very pleasant. I can tell they enjoy their work and I can feel the compassion they have for the Veterans they serve.

For over 10 years, I have been a patient of one of the most thorough and conscientious doctors that I have ever met—Dr. Michael Smith at the Podiatry clinic in Winston-Salem.

Not only is he very thorough when he is performing his duties, but he also personally greets you in the waiting area, shaking your hand and thanking you for your service to our country.

I love the VA and appreciate the care I've received. The staff at the Hatteras clinic are like a little family and I know them and they know me by first name. I can feel genuine friendliness from all of the staff when I'm there.

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

Program helps those battling substance abuse

By Michael Maddox

Overcoming an addiction can be a monumental task without support, but substance abuse services at the Salisbury VA Medical Center offers Veterans a helping hand on the journey to recovery.

The medical center offers several levels of treatment options for Veterans depending on the amount of support they need, said Tom Stagg, substance abuse services coordinator.

"The first thing we do is talk to the Veteran to see exactly what they need and what they are seeking in treatment," he said. Stagg said they will then make a recommendation for an appropriate level of care.

"Our first option is to offer outpatient services, which is when patients come and take part in one or two groups a week," he said. "Those are for people who may need a little extra support, who may have finished another level of care and it can be considered part of their aftercare plan, or people who just need support who haven't been through a program."

The next level of possible treatment is an intensive outpatient program where Veterans take part in three, three-hour group sessions per week for 12 weeks.

"Intensive outpatient is for people for whom our regular outpatient service isn't enough, but they haven't reached the level of need to come into a residential program," Stagg explained.

He added, along with more regular sessions, those in the intensive outpatient program are also able to be prescribed medication to help them with certain drug addictions.

"We can offer suboxone, which is an opioid replacement therapeutic regimen, on an outpatient basis. It's for people who are addicted to pain medications like oxycontin, oxycodone, lortab or heroin," said Stagg.

The medical center also offers the Substance Abuse Recovery and Rehabilitation Treatment Program (SARRTP), an intensive 35-day residential program where Veterans are treated seven days a week.

Stagg said that SARRTP is a level of treatment for those who haven't been able to stay sober at the other levels of care, or have barriers that make it impossible for them to participate in the lower levels of care.

No matter which level of treatment Veterans are in, therapy plays a major role in the healing process.

"We use a lot of cognitive behavioral therapy, where through motivational interviewing, you allow them to challenge their old beliefs about their addiction or substance abuse," Stagg said. "They may say, 'My problem's not that bad,' yet when you look at their history, it's affected their family or work life."

"By challenging that, we allow them to see that these things are connected to their drug or alcohol use, and that maybe they need to eliminate that from their life. It lets them buy into participating in their own treatment, rather than us just telling them how it's been a problem," he added.

Every Veteran who seeks help through substance abuse services also has access to a multi-disciplinary team including psychiatrists, physicians' assistants, a social worker, psychologists, addiction therapists and a peer specialist.

Stagg said patients can count on his team being there for the long-haul.

"Our biggest job is to give them hope that things can be better, and that's what we do," he said.

Patients can talk to their physician to get a referral for substance abuse treatment or stop in at the clinic on the fourth floor of Building 4, Tuesdays or Thursdays, between 8 and 11 a.m. for a walk-in clinic.

Congrats!

Dr. Christopher Watson, Product Manager, General Psychological Services for Mental Health, was awarded 2014 Professional Service Award by the Association of VA Psychology Leaders during the American Psychological Association's national conference in Washington, D.C., Aug. 8. Watson was nominated for the award because of his work mentoring a fellow psychologist in a different Veterans Integrated Service Network.

About the award, Watson said, "I feel elated and honored to be an award recipient because I was nominated by a psychologist (from another VISN) who I mentor. Mentoring/coaching is so important for morale and retention, and it's also the right thing to do!"



TELEHEALTH, cont'd from Page 1

Veteran manage their care in the home with a little bit of guidance from a professional.”

“Store and Forward” Telehealth is being used by the Salisbury VAMC to screen Veterans for diabetic retinopathy.

“When a Veteran comes into one of our Teleretinal imaging clinics, an image of their retina is taken and stored in their record. Then an optometrist can go into that patient’s record and look at the image from another location,” explained Thompson. “We can make recommendations on how to treat them if there are signs of diabetic retinopathy by referring them to the eye clinic for a face-to-face visit if they need further intervention.”

Veterans can go to any of the Teleretinal clinics on a walk-in clinic or they can schedule an appointment. The newest and quickest growing Telehealth service offered at Salisbury is Clinical Video Telehealth.

“With CVT, a patient and a provider can be at two different locations during appointments. For example, if a Veteran lives closer to a Charlotte, but our Hepatology providers are here at Salisbury, most of the time they would have to travel Salisbury because there is no provider in Charlotte,” explained Thompson. “But with the way CVT works, a patient can go to Charlotte and a Telehealth clinical technician can have them come to a room with a video camera, and the provider can do a video visit in real time.”

CVT is used to deliver care in a variety of specialties, with Mental Health being one of the main services using the technology to treat patients in individual and group therapy sessions.

The technology is allowing Salisbury to serve as the Veterans Integrated Service Network (VISN) 6 Telemental Health Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) Hub, treating patients across for 13 locations in three states.

Dr. Jessica Walker, who serves as the hub coordinator, said there are several reasons CVT is beneficial to mental health services.

“Research shows us that therapy over CVT is just as effective as therapy face to face. It also reduces travel time and cost for the Veteran because we are not asking them to come to us, we are meeting them where they are,” she said. “This is specifically true for our tele-to-home technologies. If a Veteran works fulltime or is a fulltime student, he or she may not be able to take the time off both for their appointments and travel.”

Walker said compressed and alternative work schedules for therapists also allows her team to schedule appointments that are more convenient for patients.

“We can see Veterans as early at 7 a.m., have them complete their therapy appointment in their home, and then they can leave for work. This way they don’t have to take time off from work, or disclose the reason for their appointment to their employer,” she said.

From The History Books....

Purple Heart has long, distinguished history

Last month marked the 232nd anniversary of America's first military medal — the Badge of Military Merit — which was authorized by General George Washington, along with ribbons of distinction, during the Revolutionary War on Aug. 7, 1782. Today that medal is known as the Purple Heart.

According to Washington's original order: "noncommissioned officers and soldiers of the army who have served more than three years with bravery, fidelity, and good conduct" would wear a "piece of white cloth of an angular form to be fixed on the left arm on the uniform coat."

Those who "served with equal reputation [for] more than six years" were to be "distinguished by two pieces of cloth parallel to each other in a similar form."

"The General, ever desirous to cherish virtuous ambition in his soldiers, as well as to foster and encourage every species of Military merit, directs that whenever any singularly meritorious action is performed, the author of it shall be permitted to wear on his facings over the left breast, the figure of a heart in purple cloth, or silk, edged with narrow lace or binding. Not only instances of unusual gallantry, but also of extraordinary fidelity and essential service in any way shall meet with a due reward. Before this favor can be conferred on any man, the particular fact, or facts, on which it is grounded must be set forth to the Commander in Chief accompanied with certificates from the Commanding officers of the regiment. . . or other incontestable proofs, and upon granting it, the name and regiment of the person so certified are to be enrolled in the book of merit."

This was known as the Badge of Military Merit and only three sergeants from Connecticut are known to have



received it at that time. The Badge of Military Merit was never abolished, but fell out of use until the Civil War when a new form of recognition for valor in war was authorized in December 1861: the Medal of Honor.

The Badge of Military Merit was brought back into use and changed in the early 20th century. In 1932, nearly 150 years after Washington's original order was written, President Herbert Hoover and Army Chief of Staff, General Douglas MacArthur, reinstated the Badge of Military Merit to honor the bicentennial anniversary of Washington's birth.

Elizabeth Will, an Army heraldic specialist in the Quartermaster General's office, was selected to redesign the revived medal which was renamed at that time as the Purple Heart. Her design included a profile of George Washington to honor the medal's creator.

New criteria for issuing the Purple Heart was announced in a War Department circular on Feb. 22, 1932, the 200th anniversary of Washington's birthday, which extended the award to soldiers with meritorious service and

those who were wounded or died from wounds inflicted during their service as well.

In 1942 the Legion of Merit, a new military award for exceptional meritorious conduct was established, so the meritorious component of the Purple Heart's criteria was removed. President Franklin D. Roosevelt's Executive Order No. 9277, issued on Dec. 3, 1942, extended the Purple Heart to all military services, not just Army, and certain civilians.

Since World War II, Purple Heart criteria has been updated to reflect the times and now includes those injured in terrorist attacks, peacekeeping forces, former prisoners of war wounded before April 25, 1962, those wounded as a result of friendly fire, or traumatic brain injuries.

In 1997, President Clinton limited Purple Heart awards exclusively to military personnel.

In order to qualify for a Purple Heart, a service members' wound must have been treated, not merely examined, by a military medical officer or other medical professional and noted in their service record. Purple Hearts may be awarded multiple times for separate incidents.

To date, Marine Sgt. Albert L. Ireland holds the record for the most Purple Hearts awarded to one individual: he received a total of nine - five during World War II (Guadalcanal and Okinawa) and four more in the Korean War. With his last injuries in Korea, he wanted to continue fighting, but the Marine Corps would not allow it.

He spent the following year receiving care in a VA hospital, most likely the Montrose facility located near to his home in Cold Spring. He died in 1997 and is buried in Cold Spring Cemetery, New York.

Nearly two million Purple Hearts have been awarded since 1932.

Local Veterans place in national arts competition

Winners for the National Veterans Creative Arts Festival (NVCAF) were recently announced and four local Veterans were among the winners.

One of those winners was Daniel Huneycutt, a 89-year-old Navy Veteran, who warmed hearts at the local Creative Arts Festival held in March 2014 with his humorous personal experience essay, "If You Want to Marry a Girl Why Don't You Ask Her?" His reflection of how he popped the question to his wife of now 70 years impressed the NVCAF judges, and he was awarded first place.

Krickit Shoemaker, who represented the Salisbury VA Medical Center at the 2013 National Creative Arts Festival, was a contender again this year, winning two national titles. Shoemaker

earned a second place medal for her flute instrumental jazz/rhythm and blues solo of "Bouree," and third place for the inspirational instrumental solo, "God of Our Fathers."

Jessica House earned third place recognition for her inspirational poem, "Fading Love," which depicts the emotional ties that survive the challenges presented when a loved one encounters dementia.

In the musical performances, Diana Stine secured a third place win with her mountain dulcimer folk/bluegrass instrumental solo, "Old Joe Clark."

The NVCAF is a talent competition in art, creative writing, dance, drama and music for Veterans treated in the Department of Veterans Affairs national health care system.

VA medical facilities incorporate creative arts into their recreation therapy programs to further the rehabilitation for both inpatients and outpatients. This annual competition recognizes the progress and recovery made through that therapy, and raises the visibility of the creative achievements of Veterans after disease, disability or life crisis.

The Recreation Therapy Department, together with the North Carolina American Legion Auxiliary, invites all Veterans receiving inpatient or outpatient care to compete in the 2015 local creative arts festival, scheduled for March 14, 2015.

For more information about the next local creative arts festival, contact Terri Gilbeau at (704) 638-9000, ext. 3575 or Jenny Taylor at ext. 3065.

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.



Connect with the Salisbury VAMC through social media!

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