

FOCUS VA

Winter 2013

RALPH H. JOHNSON MEDICAL CENTER

www.charleston.va.gov

Sports for Stress Coping

One VAMC Veteran employee shares experience at the Summer Sports Clinic

The Golden Age

VAMC seeks to bring Golden Age Games to Charleston

March On!

Charleston's 2012 Veteran's Day Parade Honors our Nations Heroes.



director's letter



A new year has begun and what better way to mark it than to let you, our readers, know about some of the new ways we are providing care at your VA.

In 2012 we went into full swing with our Patient Aligned Care Teams that work closely with you to make sure you receive the care you need when you need it in the way you want your care delivered. Each Veteran patient has a Primary Care team consisting of his or her provider, Registered Nurse, Licensed Practical Nurse and Administrative Assistant. Patients can now communicate directly with their team through secure messaging.

Shared medical appointments that bring groups of Veterans dealing with the same health issue together for evaluation, education and support were implemented in recent months.

These appointments are proving very successful

for such health issues as diabetes and hypertension management as Veterans and providers share ideas and encourage each other to live healthier.

We are researching motivational interviewing (read more on page 6 of this issue) and its effectiveness for improving patient compliance with their mental health treatment plan. We have expanded our telemental health services across South Carolina, Georgia and Alabama providing access to Veterans in rural areas for specialized care for such issues as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). And through our partnership with Ft. Stewart, we are one of the first VA medical centers to provide telemental health care directly to active duty troops at their Department of Defense medical facility.

Why are we doing all of this? Because we understand the face of Veteran health care is changing and we want to do everything possible to address the health issues you experience in the best way possible to maximize your health outcomes. At the Ralph H. Johnson VA Medical Center it's all about you. And we are proud to be

Today's VA ... *Discovering. Changing. Healing.*

Sincerely,

Carolyn L. Adams, Director



on the cover

Lorrie Lollar-Ray, Veteran and Homeless Veterans Supported Employment Specialist at the VAMC, was a member of the first all-female team at the Veteran Summer Sports Clinic last summer.



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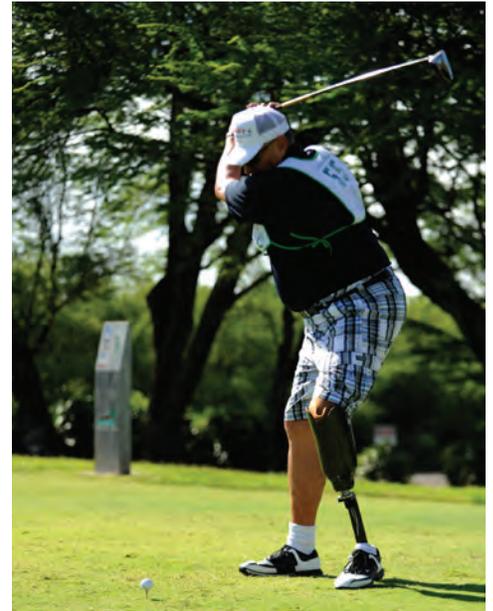


Ralph H. Johnson VAMC seeks to bring

Golden Age Games

to Charleston in 2014





By Tonya C. Lobbestael, Public Affairs Officer

The Ralph H. Johnson VA Medical Center submitted a bid to host the world's largest all Veteran senior athletic competition in Charleston in 2014. If selected, Charleston will host the 28th annual National Veterans Golden Age Games bringing approximately 750 Veteran athletes to the area to compete in more than a dozen sport events. The 2014 event will also be a qualifying year for Veteran athletes to continue on to the National Senior Games, formerly known as the Senior Olympics.

"We are thrilled at the possibility of hosting the Golden Age Games," said Charleston VAMC Director Carolyn Adams. "This is a wonderful opportunity for our Veterans, our medical center and our community.

"Charleston offers a wealth of venues, hotels, attractions, restaurants, history and charm to thrill and delight our Veteran athletes," she added. "It will be an excellent host city that will embrace our heroes and their love of sport."

Veteran athletes age 55 and up will compete in track and field events including discus, javelin and shot put, swimming, cycling, shuffleboard, air rifle, table tennis and horse shoes. New events such as speed walking and a cycling three mile road race may also be added in 2014.

The North Charleston Convention Center will be the likely hub for the Games

providing venues for indoor events. Area colleges and Parks and Recreation facilities are being considered for track and field and swimming facilities.

"There are two things we really need to make the 2014 Games a success," said Adams, "community support and a team of Charleston athletes!" She added she is confident the community will provide volunteers, donations and sponsorships to bring the Games to Charleston.

But Charleston VAMC has never fielded a team of Veteran athletes for the Golden Age Games. Adams hopes to change that beginning this year. Veterans who are interested in training and competing should contact Voluntary Service to begin the process. The VAMC is currently recruiting a coach from its staff to train Veteran athletes for the 2013 competition.

"The Golden Age Games offer athletes outstanding competition with a focus on rehabilitation," concluded Adams. "The friendships that are forged and the memories made in each host city are the real rewards, though. I know that in Charleston our Veteran athletes will find the Southern hospitality that will enrich both their camaraderie and competitive spirit."

Photos courtesy of National Veterans Golden Age Games

Be a Veteran Athlete in the 2013

Golden Age Games

Veterans interested in competing in the 2013 Golden Age Games are needed! Charleston VAMC is currently putting its team of athletes together for the largest all Veteran senior athletic competition in the world to be held in Buffalo, NY May 30 – June 4. Competition events include:

- Golf
- Bowling
- Swimming
- Cycling
- Shot Put
- Discus
- Javelin
- Table Tennis
- 9-ball
- Horseshoes
- Shuffleboard
- Croquet
- Checkers
- Sled Hockey (Exhibition Sport)

For more information or to download your athlete registration package go to <http://www.va.gov/opa/speceven/gag/index.asp>.



Dr. Steve LaRowe is one of several clinicians using the Group Motivational Interviewing method for patient therapy at the Ralph H. Johnson VA Medical Center. GMI is a method of communication that helps patients change problem behaviors such as alcohol use, drug use, overeating or smoking.

Photo by Jenny Stripling

GROUP MOTIVATIONAL *Interviewing* VALUABLE IN ADDICTION TREATMENT

By Jenny Stripling, Public Affairs Specialist

Scenario: A Veteran patient meets with their clinician about the patient's alcohol addiction and has made it clear they have no desire to stop abusing alcohol, but made the appointment because their spouse asked them to.

The patient's clinician says they respect the decision and that only the patient can want to change. The patient later admits that their alcohol use does have a negative effect in their life. Over time a bond develops between patient and clinician.

This strategy the clinician used with the patient is called motivational interviewing, or MI.

MI is a method of communication that helps patients change problem behaviors such as alcohol use, drug use, overeating or smoking. MI evokes the patient's reasons for wanting to make a change rather than tell them why they should.

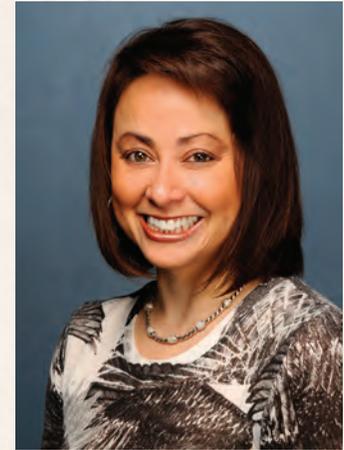
Dr. Elizabeth Santa Ana, clinical psychologist at VAMC, came to the Ralph H. Johnson VA Medical Center in 2009 with a specific goal for helping patients. She received a VA Clinical Science Research & Development Career Development Award for her role as a principal investigator on a study that investigated the impact of MI in a group setting. These groups are known as

Group Motivational Interviewing, or GMI.

"The patients that we see in GMI are dually diagnosed patients meaning they have both an addictive disorder and another coexisting psychiatric problem such as depression or bipolar disorder," said Santa Ana. "The dually-diagnosed patients tend to be patients that have one issue that drives the other and create a vicious cycle if not treated properly."

According to Santa Ana, in 2000 there was not a protocol for GMI. Santa Ana's mentor at the time suggested she design a model to be used in GMI. Through her readings she saw there was a high demand for

“ Through the process of engaging and talking about values you start to see a shift in attitude from the patient ”
— Santa Ana



Elizabeth Santa Ana, PhD, received a VA Clinical Science Research & Development Career Development Award for her role as a principal investigator on a study that investigated the impact of GMI. Courtesy photo.

MI in a group setting. Santa Ana embarked on understanding how to best design group therapy involving MI. She began researching what makes group therapy work and then adding MI into the mix.

“We try to help patients make a change in behavior by exploring their own arguments for change,” said Santa Ana. “GMI makes the assumption that the patient already has the skills needed to make a change. They just need some motivation to actually make that change. GMI is very collaborative where clinicians don’t act as the expert; they act as a team with the patient.”

“Through the process of engaging and talking about values you start to see a shift in attitude from the patient,” said Santa Ana. “This is when you sense that they now might be ready to start making a plan for change.”

In GMI, the clinician talks about how they are going to interact with the group, usually made up of three to six patients. Having a small number of patients allows for more individual time.

Group MI consist of four sessions lasting 75 minutes. The staff volunteers during their lunch hour to conduct these groups.

Santa Ana said that the staff at VAMC has been very successful in GMI and the feedback received from participants is quite

amazing. Patients have told the clinicians GMI is the best intervention treatment they have ever received.

Santa Ana felt that the staff was very eager to incorporate GMI into their treatment processes and that she had a home for her research project here at VAMC. Most of the staff was trained on GMI immediately.

“The beauty of GMI is the collaboration. The providers don’t tell the veterans what to do. Instead, the group works together towards recovery,” said Kathryn A. Bottonari, PhD, SATC Psychologist.

Santa Ana said she would eventually like to see GMI move to the national level.

“We’ve had the funding and resources to move forward with GMI therapy. If we can show that it works in Charleston we can move forward to other VA hospitals in the VISN and hopefully nationally,” said Santa Ana.

The granted research period will be ending June 2013, but the staff has adopted GMI as a permanent part of patient care.

Today's VA women's health care



Photo by Vicki Johnson

Women Veteran baby shower events are part of a strategic plan to enhance services to the women Veteran population and to encourage women Veterans to utilize services at the VA.

For many years, some women Veterans may have felt uneasy and unwelcome in Veteran hospitals and clinics.

Thanks to the VA's commitment to improving women's health services this is now changing rapidly.

By Jenny Stripling, Public Affairs Specialist

According to Pat Hancox, Women Veterans Program Manager at the Ralph H. Johnson VA Medical Center, only four or five years ago, many female veterans visited VA clinics and were referred to larger hospitals, requiring them to travel to get basic primary care for things like birth control or mammograms. Today, women can get full primary care services at 90 percent of VA's larger hospitals and medical centers and almost 75 percent at community-based outpatient clinics (CBOCs).

"We offer comprehensive women's health care at the VAMC," said Hancox. "A female Veteran can come see us for their pap smears, mammograms, blood pressure monitoring and just about anything they might need."

Women continue to serve in the military in growing numbers, representing about 14 percent of active duty forces and 20 percent of new military recruits. Of the 27 million Veterans in the U.S., women comprise approximately two million.

Hancox and her staff have studies and data showing significant increases of the enrollment of women Veterans using the VA for their primary care needs.

"This year we have 8,000 women Veterans enrolled for their health care at the VAMC and surrounding CBOCs," said Hancox. "When I started we had about 6,000 enrolled, so that's an increase in about 1,000 each year. This number is expected to increase since there are more and more women in the military and more and more coming out of the military."

According to Hancox, not only is the VAMC seeing OEF/OIF women Veterans utilizing the health care but so are Vietnam Veterans and post-Vietnam Veterans. These women never realized they had these benefits at the VA

before, but because of economic hardships, they started looking into using the VA for their primary healthcare.

Despite the gains, Hancox said some women Veterans still have misconceptions about the quality of VA health care. Many still believe, for example, that only combat vets can gain access. However, women Veterans who do know of the services that VA can provide tend to stay with the VA system of health care.

Adriel Brown is an Air Force Veteran and volunteer at the VAMC who receives her health care from VA. She admits she had no idea of any of the comprehensive health services available to her and other women Veterans until she started volunteering at the hospital in 2010. Brown, who receives her health care from the Goose Creek clinic, finds VA care to be both excellent and convenient.

"I was seeing a doctor, but I didn't know I could get more than just primary care at the VA," said Brown. "Being able to go to one place for everything is great and so many women don't know they can take advantage of these services. My twin sister didn't even know."

VA is continually improving services and encouraging staff and the public to understand the unique needs of women Veterans. Events like women Veteran baby showers and The Go Red Campaign are part of a strategic plan to enhance services to the women Veteran population and to encourage women Veterans to utilize the services at the VA.

"We want our Veterans to know that this is a new VA," said Hancox. "We are offering more comprehensive exams and care for our women Veterans in 2012 than ever before."

Go Red For Women Campaign

Heart disease claims the lives of nearly 500,000 American women each year, but is often overlooked as being a man's disease. To dispel the myths and raise awareness of heart disease as the number one killer of women, the American Heart Association created Go Red For Women in 2004 – a passionate social initiative designed to empower women to take charge of their heart health.

The National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute introduced the red dress as a national symbol for women and heart disease awareness and the American Heart Association adopted this symbol to create synergy among everyone committed to fighting this cause.

National Wear Red Day takes place February 1. Wear red to show your support for women fighting heart disease and join the challenge by visiting the official website of the Go Red For Women campaign at www.goredforwomen.org.



MOVE!

Biggest Loser competition motivates Veterans



MOVE! participant Steve Jones weighs in during his monthly group meeting. Jones has lost a total of 60 pounds since December 2009 as part of MOVE! and the Biggest Loser competition.

Story and photos by Jenny Stripling, Public Affairs Specialist

The Ralph H. Johnson VA Medical Center began its Biggest Loser contest last year for all Veterans enrolled in the MOVE! program and there's still time to walk down the path of healthy living and eating.

MOVE! is a national weight management program designed by the VA National Center for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention (NCP), a part of the Office of Patient Care Services, to help Veterans lose weight, keep it off and improve their health.

The Biggest Loser contest encourages participation, improves enrollment and increases retention in MOVE! Last year's contest participants lost over 700 pounds.

Steve Jones, 64, lost 60.5 pounds since joining MOVE! in 2009. He also started leading a healthier lifestyle thanks to the program.

Jones is a Veteran receiving his health care here at the Ralph H. Johnson VA Medical Center. During his first check-up at the VA in 2009, his doctor suggested he consider the MOVE! program. The VA serves over six million veterans and about 77 percent are overweight. Approximately 38 percent are obese. MOVE! is the largest and most comprehensive weight management and physical activity program associated with a medical care system in the United States.

Jones said he knew he was extremely overweight and needed to change. He said he felt terrible physically and wasn't eating food that was good for him. Without much hesitation Jones decided to join the program. After about 12 weeks he saw a great deal of success.

As part of his exercise routine, Jones started out walking 1.5 miles every day and eventually worked his way up to walking twice a day. Along with the physical activity change, he also changed how he ate.

"The program educated me in nutrition and the psychology of eating and weight loss," said Jones. "Being in a group of people who had the same goal really motivated me. The biggest motivator, however, was that my first-born grandchild was on the way and I wanted to be able to be fit enough to keep up with my grandchild."



As part of their group meetings, MOVE! participants do physical activities such as light yoga or group walks to the marina.

According to Becci Luhrs, MOVE! Coordinator, there are several MOVE! groups held monthly and each one is specifically designed for the participant's personal weight-loss journey.

"Mr. Jones is now part of one of the monthly maintenance groups along with several other participants," said Luhrs. "Each monthly meeting is a time to reinforce the good changes they are making and encourages them to keep going."

During group meetings, participants weigh-in and are given presentations and guidance on everything from nutrition to exercise.

Any Veteran patient can join the MOVE! program and The Biggest Loser Challenge.

"Primary Care teams annually discuss weight management and the MOVE! program with Veterans at their primary care appointments," said Mary Walker, Clinical Nutrition Manager. "If the Veteran is interested an alert is sent to the MOVE! clinicians at each clinic."

Clinicians are either a dietitian or the MOVE! Coordinator-Nurse Practitioner. The clinician discusses the program with the Veteran, their goals and plans for weight management and sets up an appointment if the Veteran desires to enroll in MOVE!

Any participant in the program enrolled from Aug. 1 through Jan. 31 is entered into the Biggest Loser contest. For those just beginning, their weight is taken during their first class. The total weight loss will be calculated during a four month period of time. There are prizes given away each month for each clinic location. The grand prize for The Biggest Loser is a

bike, which is awarded to the overall weight loss winner from all clinics combined after four months.

"We will use percentage of weight loss and not pounds so that everyone participating is on an even playing field," said Walker.

To sign up for the Biggest Loser contest talk to your dietitian or Becci Luhrs at (843) 789-6676. You must come to MOVE! individual appointments, MOVE! classes or TeleMOVE! to participate.

For more information on the MOVE! program visit online at vaww.move.med.va.gov/Default.asp

Monthly Weight Loss Clinic Winners

August Winners

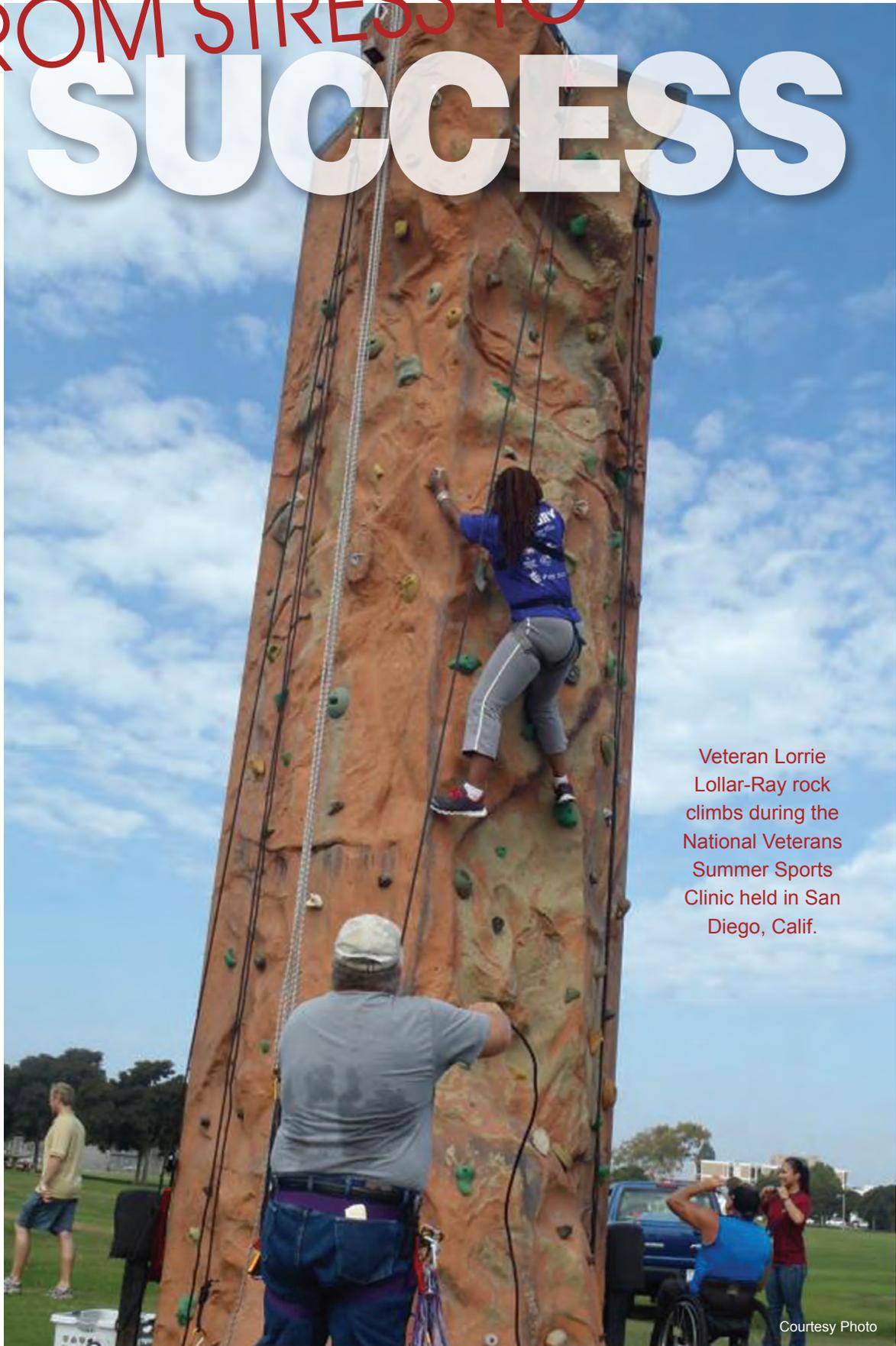
Beaufort - William Wade
 Charleston VAMC - Benjamin Fludd
 Trident - Douglas Martin
 Goose Creek - Leon Florence
 Myrtle Beach - Robert Scott
 Savannah - Eugene Tremble

September Winners

Beaufort - Alvin Legree
 Charleston VAMC - Anthony Forlano
 Trident - Paul Taylor
 Goose Creek - Arthur McBride
 Myrtle Beach - John Stepling
 Savannah - Jimmie Scott



FROM STRESS TO SUCCESS



Veteran Lorrie Lollar-Ray rock climbs during the National Veterans Summer Sports Clinic held in San Diego, Calif.

Courtesy Photo

VETERAN MAKES STRESS WORK AT SUMMER SPORTS CLINIC

By Laura Lythgoe, Public Affairs Specialist

Each year the Department of Veterans Affairs sponsors rehabilitative events for disabled Veterans in recovery. One of Ralph H. Johnson VA Medical Center's Air Force Veterans, Lorrie Lollar-Ray, recently attended the National Veterans Summer Sports Clinic (NVSSC) in San Diego, California.

NVSSC gives eligible Veterans the opportunity to compete in sports like sailing, surfing, track and field events, kayaking and hand and tandem cycling. The goal of this program is to provide Veterans recovering from injuries, such as traumatic brain injury and polytrauma, spinal cord injury, loss of limb, or mental health disabilities, a chance to participate in exciting and fun activities designed to help them adapt to their new challenges. VA continues to heal the entire person from both the visible and invisible scars of combat and other traumatic events.

Lollar-Ray's uncle, who is a Vietnam Veteran, first brought her to the VAMC for care a few years ago. Lollar-Ray's health care providers determined she was suffering from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Now instead of referring to her disability as something she's suffering from, she says she's learning to live with it.

Part of Lollar-Ray's recovery at the VAMC was sailing each Friday with Veterans on Deck, a program started by Ron Acierno, PhD, psychologist at Charleston VAMC. Veterans on Deck give to help Veterans suffering from PTSD, Military Sexual Trauma or other mental health disabilities a unique opportunity to interact socially with fellow Veterans and others outside the walls of the Medical Center.

"Reintegration into society is a key element to successfully treating our wounded warriors, especially those suffering from PTSD or Military Sexual Trauma," said Acierno.

"Sailing with Dr. Ron Acierno and Veterans on Deck was the gateway to my recovery," said Lollar-Ray. "I went from almost complete isolation in my spare time to an adventure across the country to compete in sailing."

Earlier this year, Lollar-Ray was approached about the competition with the Summer Sports Clinic. She filled out the application and was selected. Army National Guardsman, Sgt 1st Class Gene Weirick, volunteered to help her prepare for the competition and Short Stay Joint Base Charleston Navy Marina, in Moncks Corner, SC, provided the facilities to practice. Short Stay is operated by Joint Base Charleston-Weapons Morale, Welfare and Recreation Department and provides military, DoD employees and military retirees maritime-leisure activities and accommodations to promote mental and physical wellbeing.



Lollar-Ray was placed with the all-female Team Mercury at the Clinic. Along with sailing, they also competed in surfing and rock climbing. Courtesy Photo

"Training was overwhelming, to say the least. I went from a 26 to 30 foot sailboat with crewmembers, just outside the Harborage Marina in the Cooper River, to a seven-foot boat in the Pacific Ocean that I manned by myself. Sgt. 1st Class Weirick helped a lot to get me ready," Lollar-Ray said.

Lollar-Ray was placed with an all-female team at the Clinic called Team Mercury. Along with sailing, they also competed in surfing and rock climbing. She said surfing was her favorite activity and also what she was most afraid to try.

Lollar-Ray battled anxiety and fear of the competition before she headed west and called upon Acierno for advice. Acierno explained good and bad anxiety to her and helped her find the strength within herself to get out there and try.

"Needless to say, I had nothing to worry about. The adventure was so much more than just a sailing competition," said Lollar-Ray. "I came back home with a new sense of empowerment and it restored my can-do attitude."

Lollar-Ray said everyone should consider signing up and jumping in.

"There are so many people who have been through so much and participating in events like this can provide you with inspiration, motivation, satisfaction, and overall just a great feeling of overcoming your fears," she said.

The National Veterans Summer Sports Clinic is held each September in San Diego, Calif. Today's VA is committed to healing the entire person and rehabilitation events like the Summer Sports Clinic offer Veterans a unique chance to gain confidence and inspire positive change in their lives after an injury. Visit www.summersportsclinic.va.gov for information about this and other rehabilitation events sponsored by the Department of Veteran Affairs.

“I came back home with a new sense of empowerment and it restored my can-do attitude.”

Today's VA
STANDS DOWN
Against Homelessness



More than 500 Veterans were served during Stand Down 2012, providing them with the opportunity to enroll for VA benefits and learn about services available such as healthcare, employment and housing assistance. Photo by Jenny Stripling



From set up to break down, volunteers from around the Lowcountry assisted during Stand Down 2012. Haircuts were one of the most needed services provided. Photo by Jenny Stripling

Visit www.charleston.va.gov/giving for more information about the VA's Voluntary Service program.

By: Laura Lythgoe, Public Affairs Specialist

The Ralph H. Johnson VA Medical Center and Goodwill Industries of Lower South Carolina's helped nearly 1,700 homeless and citizens in need at the 13th Annual Stand Down Against Homelessness.

The two-day event, which also served more than 500 Veterans, provided them an opportunity to enroll for their VA benefits and healthcare. Attendees found a range of services at the event including employment and job training, housing assistance, flu shots, basic medical and dental screenings and haircuts.

The local community helped to make this event a success. Veteran Service Organizations like the Knights of Columbus, Elks Lodge, Disabled American Veterans of America (DAV), Marine Corps League and American Legion, provided volunteers and donated funds which helped feed attendees.

"We had so many people volunteer this year that we had to turn some away," said Edmund (Fred) Lesinski, Chief of Voluntary Services. "It's a wonderful feeling to know so many people want to help our Veterans."

DAV provided vans and drivers to shuttle Veterans to and from the event. The U.S. Coast Guard, Air Force and Navy, including SPAWAR, Naval Consolidated Brig and Naval Health Clinic Charleston provided most of the volunteers that assisted during the event. VAMC employees were also on hand to provide valuable information about available services for Veterans.

Marine Corps Veteran Barney Bostick volunteers almost daily at the VAMC. He and many other regular VA volunteers helped at Stand Down. Bostick may have never been homeless, but he's struggled through hard times in the past.

"Just helping even one person get off the street and make them feel more human again means a lot to me. I know what it's like to feel like a second-rate citizen so I do my best to make others feel like they are number one. Stand Down gave me the opportunity to do that," said Bostick.

Stand Down provides a great example of the generosity within our local community. Ralph H. Johnson VAMC currently has more than 550 loyal volunteers, like Bostick, who donate a combined 60,400 hours each year. This translates into approximately 1.2 million dollars-worth of manpower that help VA provide needed services and programs to help our Veterans.

"Without the tremendous support we receive from the community, we couldn't serve our Veterans, during events like Stand Down, to the full capacity necessary to properly welcome and enroll them," said Lesinski.



CHARLESTON

Celebrates Veterans Day with Parade

By Jenny Stripling, Public Affairs Specialist, Photos By Dave Lobbestael

Charleston held the 2012 Veterans Day Parade on Nov. 10 in the Market District to honor and thank Lowcountry heroes of every generation who selflessly served in our nation's military during times of peace or war.

Multiple motorcycle groups, historic military vehicles and Veterans Service Organization floats were among the 31 participants in this year's parade. The Lowcountry Star motorcycle group led the procession carrying each state's flag and military service flags on more than 50 motorcycles.

The parade featured Capt. Mary Kim Kenney-Gutshall, Commanding Officer at Naval Health Clinic Charleston, served as grand marshal. Distinguished guests included Veterans from World War II, Korea, Vietnam, Desert Storm, and Operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom.

Ralph H. Johnson VA Medical Center would like to thank everyone who participated in the Veterans Day Parade for an excellent and successful event.



Photos counter-clockwise: 1) More than 70 motorcycles from Lowcountry Star, Vietnam Veterans and Buffalo Soldiers Cavalry Scouts rode in the Parade carrying flags from every state in the union. 2) Family and friends remember their loved ones who served in the armed forces for our great nation. 3.) Linda Catlin and company, from the Lost Creek Ranch, entertained the crowd with horses during the Veterans Day Parade. 4.) Capt. Mary Kim Kenney-Gutshall, Commanding Officer at Naval Health Clinic Charleston, served as grand marshal.





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IMPORTANT VA PHONE NUMBERS

Charleston VA Medical Center

843-577-5011 or toll free 1-888-878-6884 or TTY: 843-789-6888

Telephone Advice Line

843-789-6400 or toll free at 1-888-878-6884

Veterans who need medical advice from their Primary Care provider or have questions about their medications can call the TAP line Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Scheduling an Appointment

843-789-6500 or toll free at 1-888-878-6884

Veterans who need to schedule, cancel or reschedule an appointment for all Primary Care Clinics including Myrtle Beach, Savannah, Beaufort, Trident and Goose Creek can call Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Automated Prescription Refill Line

843-577-5011 or toll free at 1-888-878-6884

Veterans who need to request a refill of a prescription or check the status of refills can call 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Have your social security number and prescription numbers ready when calling.

VA Benefits (other than health care)

1-800-827-1000

Veterans who need information on VA benefits including VA pension and compensation, home loans, and education can call the VA Regional Office.

Billing Questions

1-866-258-2772

Veterans who have questions about a bill received from the Charleston VA Medical Center can call the VA Revenue Center.

Veterans Crisis Line

1-800-273-TALK (8255) Press 1 for Veterans

Veterans can call the Veterans Crisis Line to talk to trained professionals 24 hours a day, seven days a week or visit www.veteranscrisisline.com.

My HealtheVet

www.myhealth.va.gov

Veterans can manage their health by logging onto My HealtheVet, which offers access to Veteran health benefits and services.

For more information on VA related topics visit www.charleston.va.gov. Follow us on Facebook and Twitter.

