

# FOCUS VA

Summer 2012

RALPH H. JOHNSON MEDICAL CENTER

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Ralph H. Johnson  
VA Medical Center

◆ Charleston, S.C.



## Run for the Wall

*Cross-country motorcycle ride  
brings healing, honor to Veterans*

## New Parking Deck Approved

*Parking structure to provide 500 –  
700 spaces for patients, employees*

## GI Bill opens many doors

*GI Bill offers opportunities for  
continuing education*



One of the greatest thrills at the VA is seeing Veterans make successful transitions from the military to civilian status. And there is hardly a greater reward than helping a homeless Veteran find his way off the streets and into a productive life. This year at Welcome Home we had the privilege of witnessing both. We hosted more than 450 Veterans who were searching for jobs and VA benefits aboard the USS Yorktown and for the first time in the history of the event we had four of those Veterans hired on the spot, one of whom was homeless. Several more walked away with appointments for job interviews and completed enrollment for VA health care.

It's events like these, announcements like our new parking deck that will provide more than 650 additional spaces, and openings of facilities like the Hinesville VA Primary Care Clinic that bring more Veterans into the best healthcare system in

the world. Our goal is to continually enhance our services and access so you have the care you need where and when you need it.

As we continue to grow our partnerships with the Department of Defense become even more important. By working together we can bring new technologies like the mobile MRI that will soon be placed at Beaufort Naval Hospital, and expanded services like the VA-DoD Optometry Clinic in Goose Creek to serve Veterans and DoD beneficiaries improving the continuity of care while managing valuable resources.

In this issue of *Focus VA* you'll find out more about our new partnership with Ft. Stewart, one of the largest military mobilization and demobilization sites in the country. There we are providing tele-mental health services to service members dealing with the stresses of war, traumatic brain injuries and post traumatic stress disorder in four clinics. By providing earlier intervention from what I know is the best VA mental health team in the country we hope to make sure these future Veterans do not suffer in silence as generations before them did.

Finally, let me simply say thank you to our readers and supporters. Your efforts to remain involved and share the stories of our heroes keep them in the forefront of our nation's heart. Thank you for all you do for our Veterans and for our medical center.

Sincerely,

Carolyn L. Adams  
Director



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*Focus VA* is a quarterly publication designed for Ralph H. Johnson VA Medical Center stakeholders. Its purpose is to inform, educate, entertain and generate new ideas. An official publication, *Focus VA* is printed using appropriated funds in compliance with federal regulations. Contents of *Focus VA* are not necessarily the official views of, or endorsed by, the U.S. Government, the Department of Veterans Affairs, the Veterans Health Administration or the Ralph H. Johnson VA Medical Center. To contact the editor, email charlestonpao@va.gov

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*Veteran Allen James found friendship and healing decades after serving in Vietnam by crossing the country on a motorcycle with more than 800 Veterans. The annual Run for the Wall, which ends at the Vietnam Wall in Washington, D.C., honors those who made it home and those who did not.*



# NEW PARKING DECK

## Approved for Charleston VA

By Tonya C. Lobbestael, Public Affairs Officer

The Ralph H. Johnson VA Medical Center received approval by the Department of Veterans Affairs to design and build a \$9.9 million multi-story parking structure on its grounds providing approximately 500 – 700 additional parking spaces for Veteran patients, visitors and staff in April.

“We are very excited about the new parking deck because parking has been our number one patient issue for several years,” said Carolyn Adams, director of the Ralph H. Johnson VA Medical Center. “We provide the very best health care at this facility for our nation’s heroes, and it is very important that they have the parking they need to get to their appointments and that our staff have ample parking to provide that care for them.”

Design of the project will begin immediately with construction planned to commence in 2013. The construction project will be managed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Charleston District.

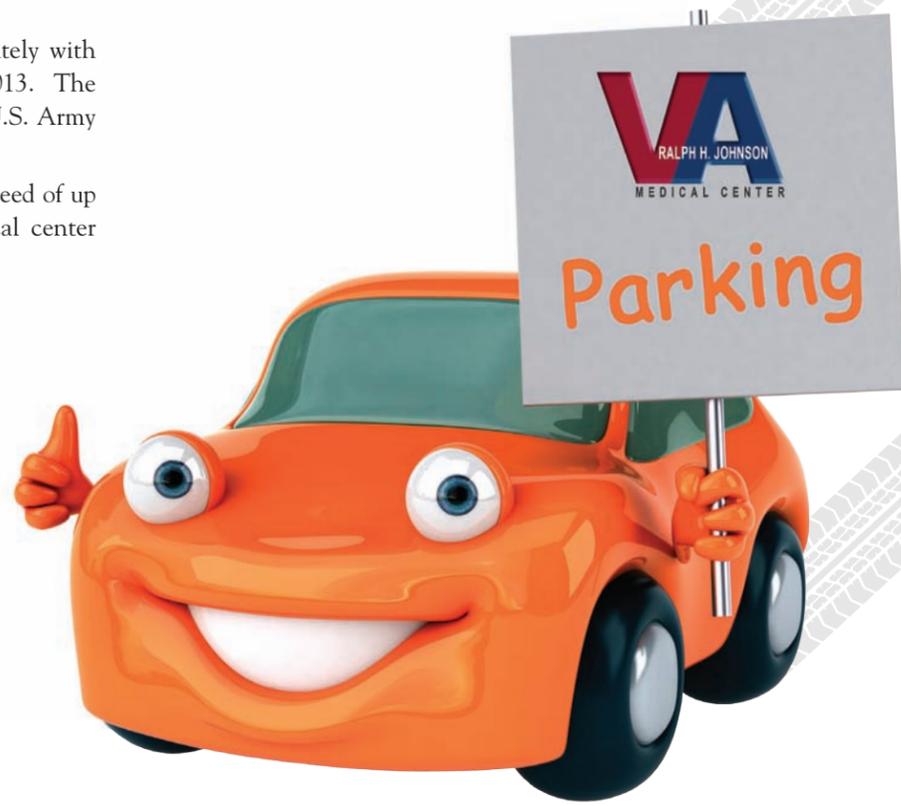
A recent study indicated the VA was in need of up to 700 additional parking spaces. The medical center

implemented a complimentary valet parking service in 2009 and leased an additional 99 offsite parking spaces for employees. These efforts provided some relief but the parking deck is the solution that will position the medical center to solve its parking problems.

The parking deck, which will likely be five to six stories high, will be constructed on the left side of the employee parking lot and will include energy efficient features such as solar panels.

“We look forward to sharing plans for the deck with our staff as they are developed,” added Adams. “This is a great thing for our Veterans and our employees and I can’t wait to see it completed.”

Parking structure to provide 500 – 700 spaces for patients, employees



The POW Table of Honor ceremony was a poignant reminder of the sacrifice of Veterans and of the readjustment challenges many who came home still face today.

# Myrtle Beach Vet Center Opens

By Lisa Nashton, Management Analyst

Photos By Chris Baroody

The Myrtle Beach Vet Center opened in its permanent home on Corporate Centre Drive to rave reviews from more than 250 Veterans and guests on April 25.

The Horry County Vet Center provides readjustment counseling for combat Veterans and their families. Many Veterans come to the Vet Center for help with PTSD symptoms, but readjustment involves many different elements including group therapy and workshops, individual and family counseling, Military Sexual Trauma (MST) counseling and bereavement counseling. MST counseling is available for all Veterans regardless if they are considered to be combat Veterans. Bereavement counseling is provided to family members whose service members died in combat overseas or stateside due to an accident. Vet center services are available to Veterans or all eras.

The diverse staff at the Vet Center includes a variety of experiences that help serve its growing Veteran population. Team Leader James Gordon is a bronze

star decorated Vietnam Army Veteran; Social Worker Wanda Ellis served in the Navy, Marriage and Family Therapist Susan Toth is a former drill sergeant that served in Desert Storm, Panama and Iraq, and Office Manager Chris Aranda served in the Army for 20 years and also deployed to Iraq before he decided to retire in the Myrtle Beach area.

The grand opening ceremony featured the POW Table of Honor Ceremony presented by the Myrtle Beach Chapter of Rolling Thunder. Charleston VAMC Director Carolyn Adams and Myrtle Beach Mayor pro tem Wayne Gray gave remarks, followed by keynote speaker Sarita Figueroa, Southeastern Regional Manager for Readjustment Counseling Service.

“It is our Vet Centers and community based outpatient clinics that most often touch our Veterans lives,” said Adams. “Our medical center is privileged to partner with the Myrtle Beach Vet Center and to have our wonderful clinic in this community to serve our Veterans.”



Charleston VAMC Director Carolyn Adams (left), Myrtle Beach Mayor Pro Tem Wayne Gray, Southeastern Regional Manager for Readjustment Counseling Service Sarita Figueroa, Mrs. James Gordon, and Myrtle Beach Vet Center Team Leader James Gordon cut the ribbon to open the new Vet Center.



Photo by Jenny Stripling

# Army Veteran finds path as VA nurse

*Registered nurse and VA Nursing Academy graduate, Cheryl Wallingford, offers care to fellow veterans daily such as veteran Louis Allison, pictured above.*

**By Jenny Stripling, Public Affairs Specialist**

The time a veteran spends in military service can help mold future life experiences. For some, this means having the opportunity to give back to those who also served.

When Cheryl Wallingford, registered nurse at the Ralph H. Johnson VA Medical Center and army veteran, steps through the doors for work every morning she knows she will be caring for veterans who appreciate and relate to having nurses who respect their health issues. After spending 8 years in the Army Medical Corp Wallingford knew she wanted to continue her career path in the medical field.

She was pleasantly surprised when she learned about the Veteran's Affairs Nursing Academy, or VANA. Wallingford began nursing school at the Medical University of South Carolina in August 2010 and her first clinical experience was with

the VA Medical Center through the VANA program.

"The Army molded who I am today and I have lifelong friends from being in the military," said Wallingford. "It offered me discipline. I knew I wanted to continue working in the medical field, but wasn't sure which path I wanted to take."

The VA Nursing Academy is a five-year, \$40 million initiative introduced in 2007, connecting the VA's world-class health care system with some of the country's top nursing schools to produce highly educated nurses who provide premium health care to veterans.

The Medical University of South Carolina was designated a VA Nursing Academy by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Office of Academic Affiliation in 2008. The designation allowed the school and the VA Medical Center to work together

to expand learning opportunities for nursing students at the VA facility.

The VANA program at MUSC and Ralph H. Johnson VA Medical Center is one of only 15 programs of its kind in the country and the MUSC/VA Medical Center recently were awarded another grant to extend the program for another year.

Under the supervision of VA Medical Center Clinical Nurse Specialists and other licensed nurses, the program educates MUSC nursing students on how to look after the health care needs of the nation's veterans.

"Getting to come to the VA as part of my first clinical experience was great. It really opened my eyes to what you can do at the VA and who you can care for," said Wallingford. "The program opens nursing students' eyes in general to all of the nursing jobs that exist."

## Army and Nursing for Life

Wallingford graduated nursing school in 2011 and applied to the VA Medical Center not only because of her past military experiences but because of her education with the VA Nursing Academy. She was, in fact, one of the first nursing students to be hired by the VA medical Center after going through the VANA program.

"The best thing about the academy is that the instructors have had the experience of having gone through the academy themselves," said Wallingford. "The instructors are all very knowledgeable and experienced nurses. I felt as though we were in good hands with any of the instructors that we worked with."

Amy Joseph is an associate nurse executive at the VA Medical Center here and a VANA instructor.

"The purpose of VANA is to increase the number of students that can be admitted to nursing schools, increase the number of new graduate nurses at the VA hospitals and retain them once they're there," said Joseph. "We

have added 20 extra students each year the grant has been awarded. That is a total of 80 additional graduates that have come through this program."

The VANA program consists of four consecutive semesters according to Joseph. During the nursing student's first semester they come to the VA for their clinical rotations. During the second semester, there are two clinical courses, one for mental health and one the latter half of the semester for adult health.

"Half of the students come back for adult health in second semester and about 20-30 students come for mental health," said Amy Joseph, associate nurse executive and VANA instructor.

Joseph said the number of students depends on resources. In the student's third semester, there are two clinical courses, community health and maternal-child health.

"Fourth semester students have used the VA sparingly," said Joseph. "The students have an extensive clinical program that is their

capstone program where they are supposed to be putting all the pieces together. We are trying to accommodate more student requests here for fourth semester. Many students want to come back to the VA, but we haven't fully explored this option yet."

VANA is an exceptional program for nursing schools, VA hospitals and nursing students, but the main goal is to improve care for veterans.

"The instructors with VANA are a great team and work together to help train, educate and prepare nursing students for a future in caring for veterans," said Joseph.

"The patients here are heroes and they all have amazing stories to tell," said Wallingford. "I have never met patients that are so grateful for the care they receive. This is a very rewarding place to work."

*For more information about the VA Nursing Academy, visit [www.va.gov/oa/vana](http://www.va.gov/oa/vana).*

*Veteran's Affairs Nursing Academy instructors help train, educate and prepare nursing students for a future in caring for veterans.*



Courtesy photo

# Come Sail Away with Fellow Veterans



*Dr. Ron Acierno established Veterans on Deck, a community based therapeutic opportunity, to decrease social withdrawal and isolation amongst Veterans completing PTSD treatment.*

**By Laura Lythgoe, Public Affairs Specialist Photos by Chris Baroody**

Rain or shine, any Veteran can meet at The Harborage at Ashley Marina and go sailing every Friday. So why is the VA Medical Center doing this? Dr. Ronald (Ron) Acierno, Director of the Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) Team and Executive Director of Veterans on Deck, started this program to help Veterans overcome social obstacles they experience during recovery from combat-related or Military Sexual traumas or serious Mental Illness.

“It [sailing] is an activity that will be novel for many, is at times stressful, and, most importantly, requires working as a team to make the boat go,” said Acierno.

The Friday afternoon event is open to all Veterans and there is even one sail specifically for women.

“We wanted to make sure that every Veteran could benefit from the sail with the understanding that not all women are comfortable around men. We don’t want to leave anyone out,” Acierno said.

Acierno said they could have come up with other ways for Veterans in the PTSD program to socialize, but sailing provides a unique, controlled environment that also builds confidence.

“Sailing puts you in a position with no way out except to solve the problem at hand. It enhances team building by pushing Veterans to ask each other and rely on each other for help. It sounds terrible, but the feeling of accomplishment after the sail outweighs the feelings someone may have in the moment,” Acierno said.

### VOD Rises with the Tide

Acierno and several Veteran civic leaders in Charleston recognized that Veterans finishing PTSD treatment were still suffering from social withdrawal and isolation. Acierno knew the best way to help these Veterans was to get them to participate in socially stressful situations that could be controlled and ultimately mastered.

Sailing provided exactly such a venue: it is novel for many, is at times stressful and requires working as a team. The requirement for a clinician familiar with Veteran issues to be on board at all times further supports VOD as a therapeutic community based activity that is now recognized by VA. More than three-fourths of the board is comprised of Veterans for this non-profit organization.

Recently, Acierno and the Veterans showed off the program to Country Superstar Trace Adkins during taping of a segment for Great American Country (GAC) TV that will air this fall. Adkins, who invited Acierno and his family on stage during his May 3 Charleston concert thanked him for his work with Veterans recovering from PTSD.



*Veterans of all ages find community, acceptance as they sail together.*



*Veteran Joe Blake has benefited from the team building and peace he finds on the water.*

## Get on Board!

*Acierno's team has three boats and has at least two members from his staff on each sail. Normally there are only enough participants to take one of the sail boats, but Acierno said they are prepared to sail all three if a large crowd shows up.*

*This program is open to any Veteran that shows up. Even if you're not part of the mental health program, you could still help our Veterans during his or her recovery. Women can sail at 12:00 p.m. Friday's and all Veterans can sail at 2:00 p.m. Friday's. Acierno asks that everyone please arrive five minutes early to The Harborage at Ashley Marina (across the street from the VA Hospital, next to the Courtyard Marriot).*

*Learn more about the program and its sponsors at: [www.veteransondeck.org](http://www.veteransondeck.org).*

# VA Psychiatrist, Veteran treats Ft. Stewart Soldiers through telemedicine

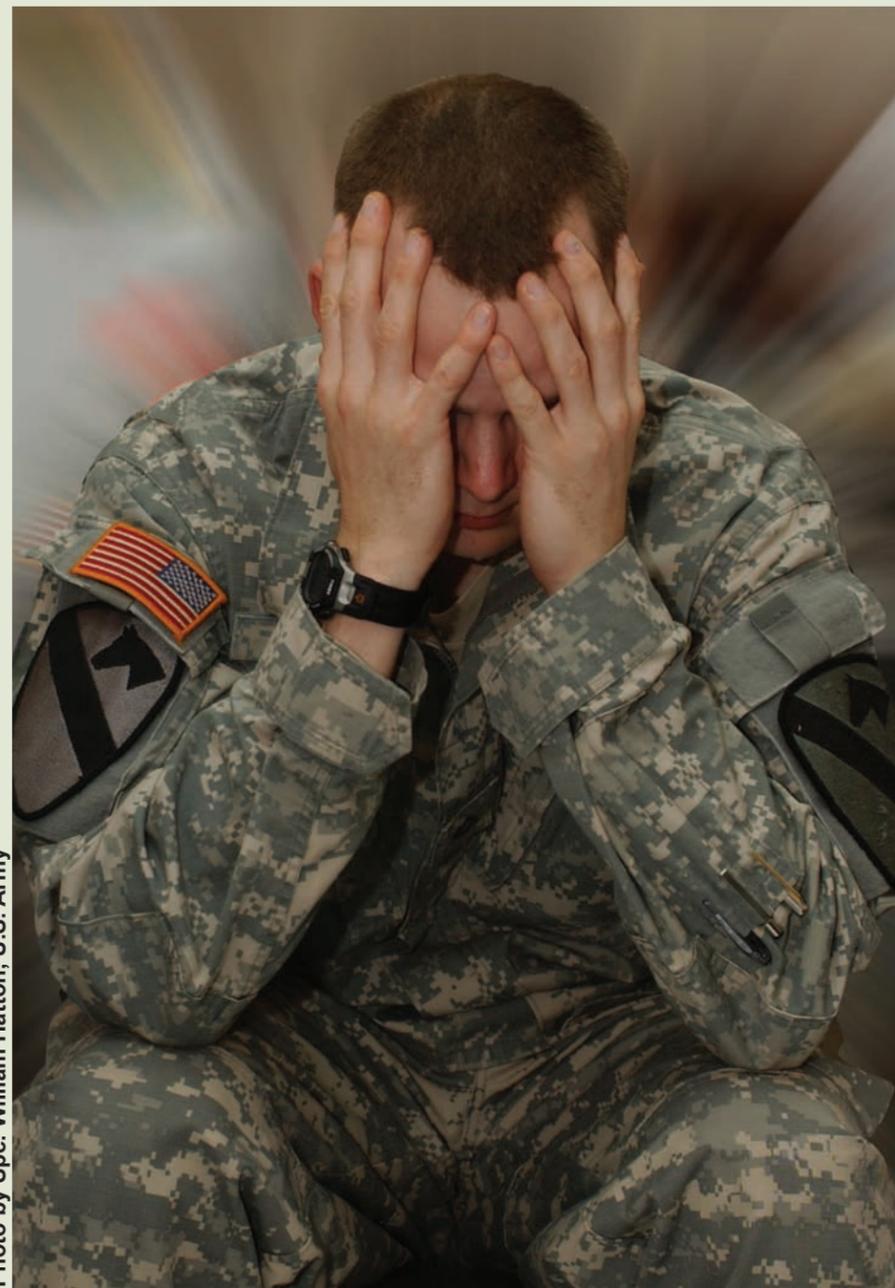


Photo by Spc. William Hatton, U.S. Army

Service members at Ft. Stewart are learning to cope with their combat experiences through tele-mental health services provided by Charleston VAMC.

By Tonya C. Lobbetael, Public Affairs Officer

When Air Force Psychiatrist Ken Coll, MD left the military after deploying to Iraq with the Army in 2007 he may have thought his active duty days were over. Not so. Today he is treating service members at four Ft. Stewart clinics via tele-mental health and serving as a psychiatric consultant to their primary care behavioral health initiative to ensure service members returning from combat get the best mental health care possible.

“All active duty personnel are future Veterans,” Coll says of the arrangement between the Charleston VA Medical Center and Ft. Stewart’s Winn Army Community Hospital. “By collaborating with DoD (Department of Defense), VA providers have the opportunity to treat our Veterans even before they are officially Veterans. The sooner we can treat them, the more likely we will be able to have a significant positive impact on their lives.”

Research proves that early intervention for service members suffering from post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is key to successful treatment. It has also shown that service members find treatment via tele-mental health or video teleconferencing to be just as effective as in-person treatment and today’s service members are very comfortable with the format.

The tele-mental health sharing agreement between Charleston VAMC and Ft. Stewart is the first VA-DoD clinical partnership for the two organizations. Charleston VAMC hopes to add more shared services in the future with Ft. Stewart. The facility also enjoys a robust VA-DoD partnership with the Navy and Air Force in the Charleston and Beaufort communities.

The top reason for such partnerships is clear to Coll, who hopes that one day these services can be delivered to troops on the front lines.

“The VA and DoD service the same population ... just at different times in their life,” he explained. “VA mental health professionals are the nation’s experts in treating PTSD and traumatic brain injury. These skills are exactly what is required of providers caring for the active duty populations.”

“Our service members are paying a high price to support our country,” he concluded. “We owe it to them to provide the best support and care possible.”



Sgt. 1st Class Wesley Murray, Sr.

## Family Traditions & Tributes

By Laura Lythgoe, Public Affairs Specialist

We join the military for a variety of reasons—the G.I. Bill, job security, specialized training and so on. Many join to follow in their Mother or Father’s footsteps. For Wesley M. Cutler Jr., the choice to follow his father’s path was an easy decision, but a rough road ahead.

Wesley Murray Sr. first enlisted in 1942. During this time, it wasn’t unusual for a healthy male to enlist. What separated Murray from other able-bodied men was the color of his skin. In 1942, the Armed Forces still segregated blacks from whites. Murray joined the Navy anyway because jobs were hard to come by in rural South Carolina, where he was born and raised.

Murray served as a Ship’s Cook Third Class after completing his training at Great Lakes, Illinois. He was placed in an all-black Company with a white Training officer. In 1945, he separated from the Navy and enlisted into the Regular Army where he served until he retired. The Army also placed him in an all-black platoon for his Basic Combat Training where he learned skills that would later save his life.

In June of 1950, the United States deployed troops to help South Korea fend against North Korea’s push to take over

the southern half. Murray’s Company also deployed and were over run. He and many from his Company were taken as Prisoners of War. Over 7,000 troops were held captive, but only 3,800 returned alive. Murray finally came home in 1954 and continued to serve a full military career, retiring as a Sgt 1st Class.

Cutler, out of respect and admiration for his father, decided to join the military, despite the racial problems which still existed in 1959 and 1960. He wanted to share a special bond with his father by serving his country. African-Americans have been serving our country since the Revolutionary War. Skin color has no effect on personal commitment to one’s country.

“Serving my country and making my father proud has always been more important to me than problems I may face because of the color of skin,” Cutler said.

Today, the choice to serve the United States through a military commitment is solely up to each one of us. People from all walks of life, gender or race, join together and work or fight side-by-side in today’s military to get the job done and protect our interests. Cutler’s story today still serves as a reminder of how far we have come as a Nation because of men like his father.

“Serving my country and making my father proud has always been more important to me than problems I may face because of the color of skin”

# Run for the Wall

## a meaningful ride for Vietnam Veteran

By Tonya C. Lobbestael, Public Affairs Officer



Photos by Melanie James

*Veteran Allen "A.J." James joins others at a memorial commemorating Vietnam Veterans during Run for the Wall.*

Veteran Allen James chose to forget the two years he spent in Vietnam. It was easier than dealing with the horrors and the losses the self-described "field rat" experienced more than 40 years ago.

"We basically just threw our stuff in the closet – our gear and our emotions – and tried to get on with life," James, better known as A.J., said. That worked for several years until he joined the American Legion and made his first Run for the Wall cross-country motorcycle ride three years ago.

The annual event, which includes 800 – 1,000 riders traveling from Rancho Cucamonga, Calif. to the Vietnam Wall in Washington, D.C., brings together Veterans

of all eras to remember the sacrifices and contributions made by all Veterans who have served our country.

Run for the Wall was started in 1989 by Charleston Vietnam Veterans of America President James Gregory and Veteran Bill Evans. They rode across America's heartland talking to local media along the way about the thousands of men and women who were still unaccounted for from all wars in response to the government's statement that all missing personnel from Vietnam were accounted for.

Participants range in age from eight to eighty and include Veterans, family members and friends. Along the way they



*Clockwise from left: Spectators lend support to Veterans on Run for the Wall cross-country ride; Remembering those who fell in Vietnam; Run for the Wall riders at the Vietnam Wall in Washington, D.C.*

stop at various memorials, VA hospitals and schools to share their mission of promoting healing among all Veterans, calling for an account of all Prisoners of War and those Missing in Action (POW/MIA), and honoring the memory of all service members killed in action.

For A.J., the run made him realize his own need for dealing with the traumas he experienced in Vietnam. So 40 years later he entered therapy at the Ralph H. Johnson VA Medical Center and has since learned to deal successfully with his post traumatic stress disorder.

"The Run actually changed my life," A.J. said. "You're hooking up with 800 dysfunctional Veterans and you realize you're not alone. Then you start hearing people say 'Welcome home!' Lots of us

waited over 40 years to hear those words."

The trip takes 10 days to reach the Vietnam Veterans Memorial where the Run officially ends on Sunday evening before Memorial Day. Most riders also participate in the Rolling Thunder Parade in Washington, D.C. on that same day.

A.J. said the most memorable part of the rides before reaching the Wall are the people who come out to line the streets waving flags and holding banners along their route. Most often there are crowds on the roadside but he also remembered a lone man holding a U.S. flag in the middle of the desert as they rode through.

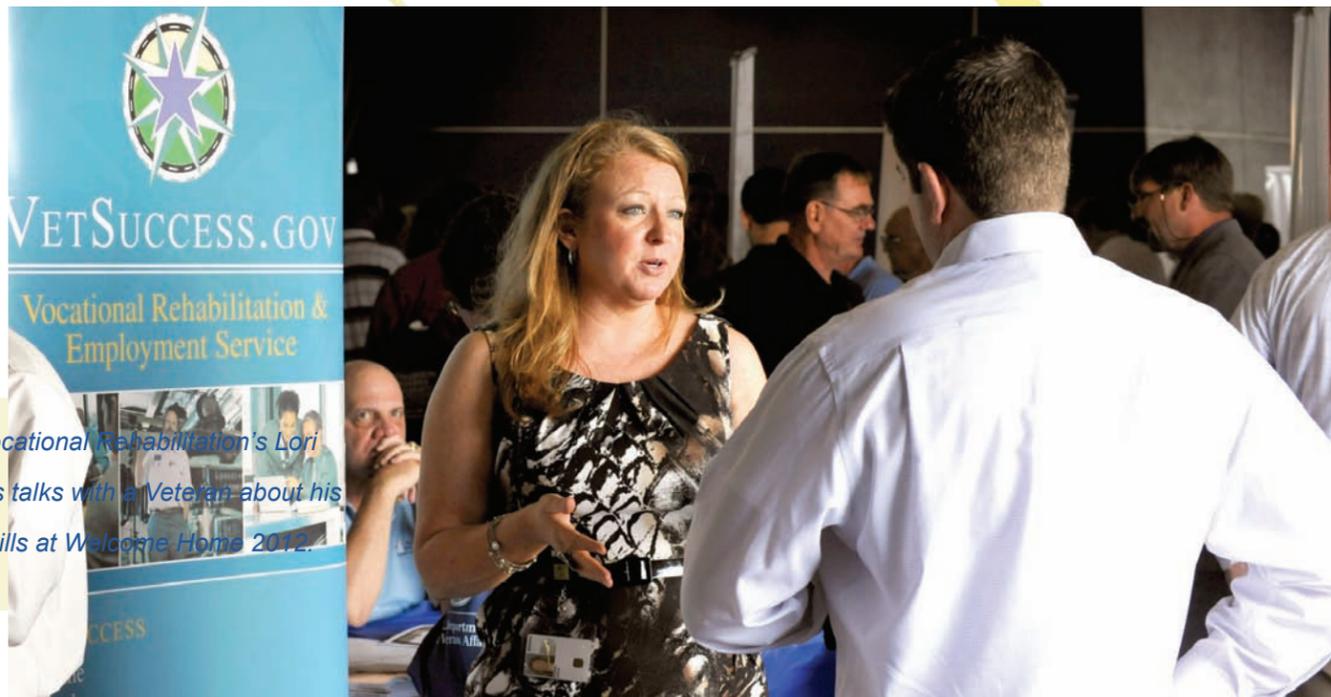
"You forget this country gives a hoot sometimes," he said, "but then you see something like that and you know you're not forgotten."

Three years into his Run for the Wall experience, A.J. now helps event founder James Gregory plan as many of the details as possible. He also works in the Charleston area to raise awareness of Veterans who did not make it home and to honor all who have served.

"As we bring those remains home from Southeast Asia, those Veterans are getting their Welcome Home," he concluded. "This whole country owes it to every single Vet who has served in any conflict. That's the first thing we (the riders) say to each other – Welcome Home. It's what every Veteran deserves to hear."

# Welcome HOME

provides benefits, job opportunities for record crowd



VA Vocational Rehabilitation's Lori Ehlers talks with a Veteran about his job skills at Welcome Home 2012.

By Tonya C. Lobbestael, Public Affairs Officer, Photos by Chris Baroody

More than 450 Veterans looking for jobs and benefits came to meet the 100 employers and VA staff at Welcome Home 2012 held aboard the USS Yorktown on May 17. The event, which was attended by 661 total Veterans and family members, was the largest and most successful in its five-year history according to organizers.

"We had a record number of Veterans, but it is so much more than that. The quality of the employers and the jobs they have available is just tremendous," said Welcome Home Chairperson and Seamless Transition Program Manager Jan Bolger. "We had four Veterans hired on the spot and others who arranged interviews over the next couple of weeks. Best of all, I see folks leaving here with hope."

One of those hired at Welcome Home was a homeless Veteran.

Employers across the board praised the caliber of jobseekers stating repeatedly that this was one of the best job fairs they had participated in. Companies such as SPAWAR, Booz, Allen, Hamilton, Ikon Financial Services, multiple police and fire departments, and Alcoa were there looking for talent to fill their vacancies.

Veterans also received a wealth of VA health information, learned about Vocational Rehabilitation opportunities, the GI Bill, and how to enroll for VA benefits. The theme for the 2012 event was "The jobs you need ... the benefits you deserve."

"It's been such a great day," concluded Bolger, "and the best part was when I met this Vietnam Vet. I said welcome home to him and he burst into tears saying no one ever said that to him before. That's what this is all about - helping them transition and honoring their service."



Welcome Home Chairperson and Seamless Transition Program Manager Jan Bolger (center) walks through the crowd at the event ensuring Veterans find the services they need.



Photo by Jenny Stripling

## GI BILL OPENS MANY DOORS

Air Force Veteran and VA intern Kelly Ameduri and Oliver Burns, Chief of Eligibility, discuss Veterans' benefits at the Charleston VAMC.

By Vicki Johnson, Public Affairs Specialist

If you ask 10 Veterans their reason for joining the military, you're likely to get 10 different answers. Some people join for the experience, for some it's a family tradition, for others it's the opportunity to travel or the educational benefits.

Air Force Veteran Kelly Ameduri joined for the medical experience her job would provide and for the educational opportunities available. Originally from Erie, Pennsylvania she is currently using GI Bill benefits to complete a Master's Degree in Health Administration at the Medical University of South Carolina.

"I initially joined the Air Force to take advantage of the GI Bill benefits. I had always wanted to join the military

and wondered what it would be like but never thought I'd actually go through with it," said Ameduri. "But when I found out more about the education benefits, I realized that joining the military presented me with an incredible opportunity. Not only would I be able to get my education paid for entirely but while I was in the military I would get great entry level experience working in my career field - health administration."

As part of the requirements for completing her degree, she is participating in a 10-week internship program here at the Ralph H. Johnson VA Medical Center. She is working on process improvement plans in the Release of Information office.

Kelly's familiarity with Tricare and working knowledge of the military medical system made this project a logical match for her, said Scott Isaacks, Associate Director, Ralph H. Johnson VA Medical Center.

"This program is a great opportunity for participants to apply classroom knowledge in a hospital setting. It allows the interns to learn about the VA in a real healthcare environment," said Isaacks.

Ameduri's advice for anyone going back to school or setting goals is simple: The most important thing if you are undecided about what you want to do is to go with what you like, do something you enjoy, something you are passionate about. Always have a plan and be flexible.



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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.

### **Suicide Prevention**

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

Veterans can call the VA Suicide Prevention Lifeline to talk to trained professionals 24 hours a day, seven days a week or visit [www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org](http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org).

### **My HealtheVet**

[www.myhealth.va.gov](http://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](http://www.charleston.va.gov). Follow us on Facebook and Twitter.

