Dear Veteran,

June 2015

Scott R. Isaacks, FACHE
Medical Center Director

Earlier this month, I had the privilege of meeting three very special Veterans. Joe Towles, Moniquic Eazel and Scott Evans all served their country proudly only to find themselves homeless after they left the military. But each one found their way home again thanks to the services and care they received at the Ralph H. Johnson VA Medical Center, and today they are all making a difference in the lives of those around them and in our community. Joe, who served in Vietnam, is now a case manager helping other homeless Veterans at Vet Villas – a shelter that provides transitional housing. Moniquic is raising three beautiful children and completing her education to provide a better life for her family. Scott is a Peer Support Specialist working in our VA's Homeless Program and he recently purchased his first home. Each of these Veterans has overcome many obstacles to move forward in life.

Their success is our success – and it is that success that inspires us and our community to keep working together to help more Veterans find their way home. That is why we, along with our partner Palmetto Goodwill, opened the VA Community Resource and Referral Center in North Charleston on June 5. This center is designed to help Veterans who are experiencing homelessness or who are at risk of becoming homeless by providing housing first and then the wrap-around services the Veteran needs to succeed. This one-stop service location brings VA, Goodwill and many other community partners together to provide everything from case management to housing to job training and more. The CRRC, located at 2424 City Hall Drive in North Charleston, includes 12 workstations, seven private offices, an exam room, two group meeting rooms, and men and women locker rooms equipped with showers. Our VA team is on-hand every Monday – Friday, 8:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m. to care for Veterans in need.

We were also privileged to have VA Deputy Secretary Sloan Gibson and Senator Tim Scott with us for the grand opening ceremony of the CRRC. As Sen. Scott said, "This new center is how we will honor our promise to our Veterans. This is a place where they can come and find help in a time of desperate need." I encourage us all to take this message to heart. If you know of a Veteran in need, please get them to the CRRC or to the VA. We have a 'No Wrong Door' policy and will immediately bring them into the VA for care and services.

At the Ralph H. Johnson VA Medical Center we endeavor daily to improve the care and service that you receive here at *your* VA.

VA | Ralph H. Johnson VA Medical Center

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Thank you for choosing the

Ralph H. Johnson
VA Medical Center

as your healthcare provider of choice. We look forward to serving you for many years to come.

CRRC Ribbon Cutting Ceremony

WEZL's Party in the Park

Veteran Forum, VA Summer of Service and VA Claims Assistance

VA's Summer of Service, a new nationwide initiative to grow community partnerships and volunteers to serve alongside VA as we meet the needs of our Veterans, is now underway. Here at the Charleston VAMC, we long ago realized the importance of fostering good working relationships within our community in order to provide our Veterans with the comprehensive services they need to live healthy and productive lives. Additionally, our volunteer program has been flourishing, with our numbers of volunteers tripling in the last few years. The Summer of Service campaign will allow us to strengthen these bonds, building galvanized coalitions of service support. On June 29 our VA joined other VAs across the country to hold an Open House event for Veterans in our community. We were excited to offer onsite enrollment for VA health care, opportunities for Veterans to talk with leadership, information on Veterans Choice, VA eligibility, wellness, My Healthe Vet, volunteering, VA jobs, and much more. Our friends from Veterans Benefits Administration and VA's National Cemetery Administration joined us to provide claims assistance and to educate Veterans on cemetery benefits. We also welcomed Veterans Service Organizations and County VA Service Officers to participate in the event, which was free and open to the public.

Access to Care

Our VA continues to experience rapid growth in our Veteran patient population. This year we expect to grow by approximately 10 percent more patients which will top last year's 7.44 percent growth that made us the 6th fastest growing VA in the country. To meet the needs of all the Veterans coming to us for care we have added more than 250 positions including more than 100 new clinical positions. Despite the fact that average wait times for appointments for Primary Care, Specialty Care and Mental Health remain low, Primary Care clinics at both the Charleston campus and the Trident Annex have temporarily reached capacity and are unable to accept new patients. We are currently recruiting more providers and working to expand clinical space for these locations. In the meantime, we are offering new patients who would normally be assigned to our Charleston campus or our Trident Annex appointments at our Goose Creek Outpatient Clinic, which offers excellent care and abundant parking. We will transfer new patients to their location of choice as soon as additional clinical staff members are on board. We sincerely appreciate your patience as we work to accommodate all Veterans seeking care within our health care system.

Party in the Park

We have had a lot of fun during the month of June hosting the Military Appreciation Area at WEZL's Party in the Park free community concert series. Each Tuesday night, listeners have come out in droves, toting beach chairs and blankets, to enjoy live music from up-and-coming country music artists at Memorial Waterfront Park in Mount Pleasant, South Carolina. VA staff and volunteers were on hand to answer eligibility and benefits questions and to hand out summer fun promotional items like beach balls, sunscreen care kits and insulated cups. We hope you have enjoyed the concert series and that we will see you next year as we continue to honor our nation's military in partnership with WEZL!