

VISION

for Excellence

FALL | 2012



INTRODUCING

VISN 4 FACES *and* PROGRAMS

★★★

While each of their stories are different, each of these people share a common goal:

A commitment to improving Veterans' lives.

STORY ON
PAGE 8

Director's Vision



Dear Veterans, fellow employees, volunteers and friends of VISN 4:

One of my major goals as your Network Director is to enhance positive relationships among Veterans and VISN 4 staff. To do this successfully, we need to get to know each other better. By building these crucial relationships, we create an environment throughout our Network that enables us to provide the best care anywhere and improves the lives of Veterans throughout our area.

All of the dedicated employees who make up VISN 4 are unique, and bring their special skills to serving Veterans. In this issue of *Vision for Excellence*, we'll introduce you to just a few of our Network office's outstanding people. Each offers his or her dedication, sound professional knowledge, energy, and enthusiasm to our Network to ensure we provide extraordinary care to Veterans and their families every single day.

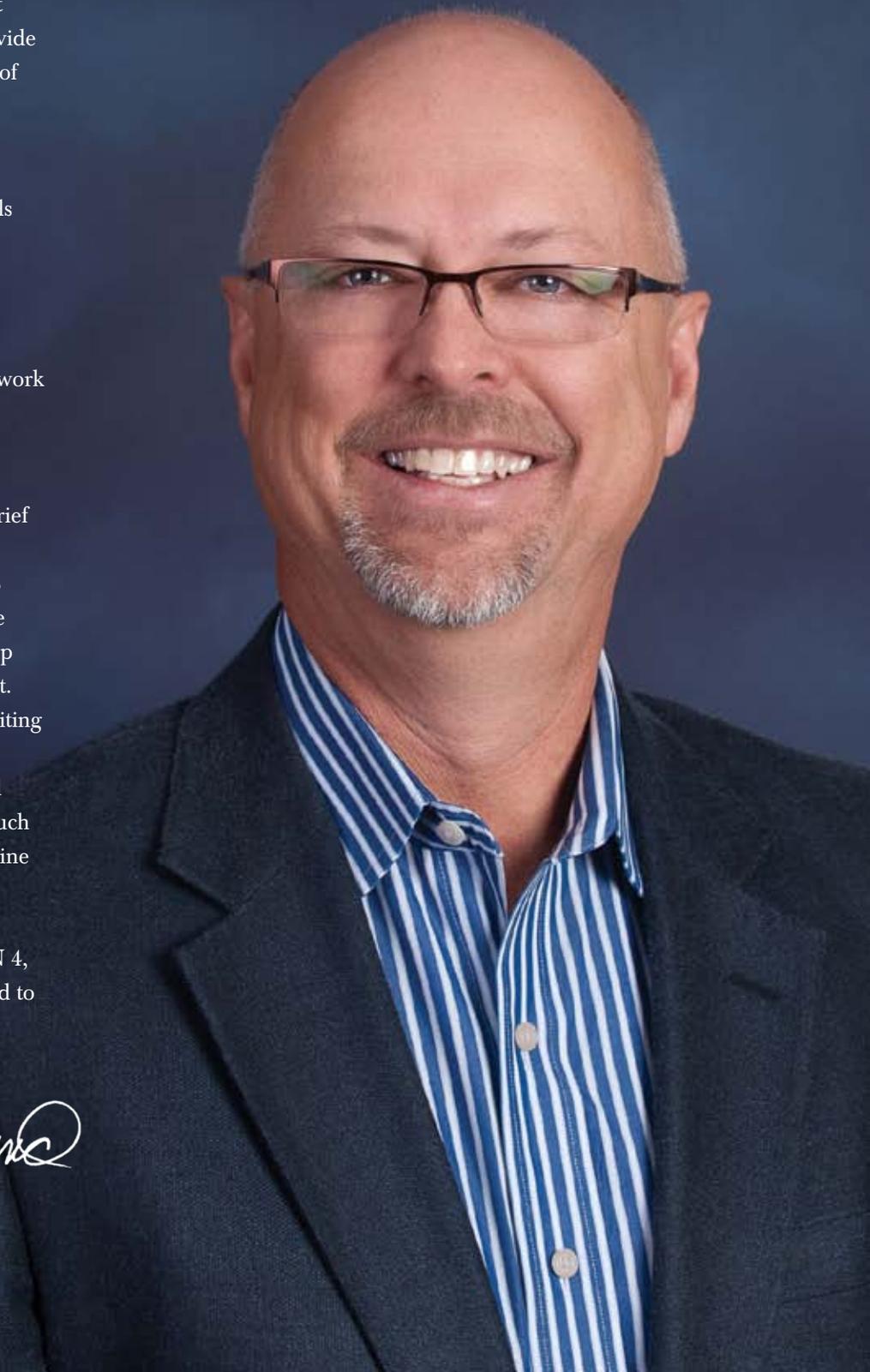
Our presentations begin on page 3 with very brief introductions of a few members of our VISN's senior leadership team – and of me. On page 8 we'll offer more in-depth looks at the rest of the senior leadership team as well as some other top VISN 4 leaders who we would like you to meet. We'll also provide a glimpse at some of the exciting things happening right now in VISN 4. I hope you'll find this issue to be both informative and interesting. Don't forget – it's easy to stay in touch with VISN 4 all the time, just by visiting us online at www.visn4.va.gov.

Thank you for your continued interest in VISN 4, and in the health care services we are privileged to provide to our Nation's heroes.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael E. Moreland". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, sweeping flourish at the end.

**MICHAEL E. MORELAND, FACHE
NETWORK DIRECTOR**



★★★ TOTAL TEAM EFFORT ★★★



Dr. David S. MacPherson, MPH
Chief Medical Officer since June 2007

Dr. Macpherson oversees all clinical programs in the inpatient and outpatient settings along with research and education activities in VISN 4.

Began VA career:

In 1981 at the Minneapolis VA Medical Center

Describe VISN 4 in one word.

"High-Achieving"

Top accomplishment for FY12:

"Advancing patient-aligned care team implementation."

#1 goal for FY13:

"To improve Veteran trust and satisfaction with VA care."



Michael E. Moreland, FACHE
Network Director since December 2006

Mike directs the operations, finances and clinical programs for the 10 medical centers and 43 outpatient clinics that comprise VISN 4.

Began VA career:

In 1980 as a clinical social worker

Describe VISN 4 in one word.

"Top-Quality"

Top accomplishment for FY12:

"Achieving top-quality, great access, patient and employee satisfaction all within budget."

#1 goal for FY13:

"Achieve industry leading customer satisfaction rankings."



James F. Baker
Chief Financial Officer since December 2009

Jim directs all financial management activities within VISN 4 to ensure compliance with departmental and Veterans Health Administration financial policies.

Began VA career:

In 1981 in Pittsburgh

Describe VISN 4 in one word.

"Committed"

Top accomplishment for FY12:

"Successfully obligating \$2.5 billion while navigating through restrictive policy issues."

#1 goal for FY13:

"To focus on financial planning and prepare to ease end-of-year processing."



CARLA ACRE SIVEK, MSW
Deputy Network Director since July 2009

Began VA career:

In 1987 as a social work resident

Top accomplishment for FY12:

"Investing more than \$270 million in construction and equipment for our facilities."

Describe VISN 4 in one word.

"Veteran-Centered"

#1 goal for FY13:

"Delivering outstanding customer service."

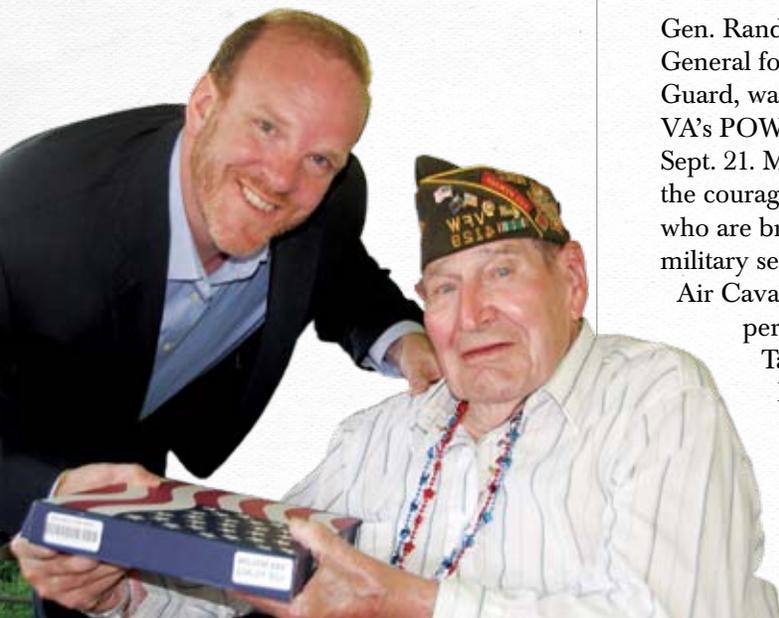


AROUND the NETWORK



Veteran is at Home in Altoona Community Living Center

A representative from U.S. Congressman Bill Shuster's office recently presented World War II Veteran Jack Weaver with a United States flag at an Armed Forces Day ceremony. Weaver, 87, makes his home in the James E. Van Zandt VA Medical Center's Community Living Center (CLC). The recently-remodeled CLC is an open, homelike space creating a comfortable, community-oriented living area for our Nation's heroes. Weaver also sang the National Anthem at a medical center ribbon-cutting ceremony earlier this year.



VA Butler Health Care Center to Begin Construction



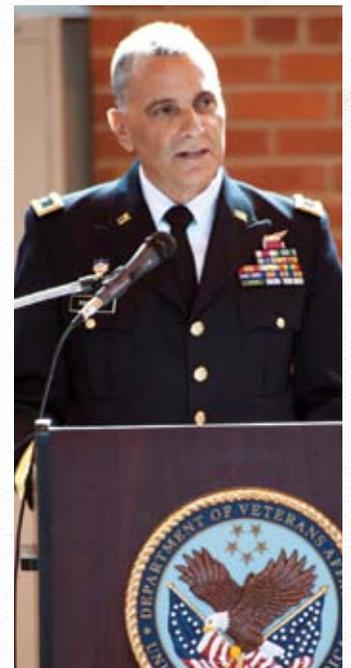
VA Butler Healthcare will break ground soon for a new state-of-the-art Health Care Center. The three-story facility will be Veteran-centric and will be built using the latest environmentally-responsible techniques. Veterans will receive services without interruption at the current facility while the Health Care Center is under construction.

This is an exciting milestone that preserves VA's established presence as a valued asset for Veterans in the Butler community.

John Gennaro, VA Butler Director

POW/MIA Recognition Day at VA Lebanon

Gen. Randall R. Marchi, Deputy Adjutant General for the Pennsylvania National Guard, was the featured speaker at Lebanon VA's POW/MIA recognition ceremony on Sept. 21. Marchi spoke poignantly about the courage and sacrifice shown by those who are brave enough to enlist in our military service. Members from the First Air Cavalry Division Field Cross Detail performed a solemn POW/MIA Table Setting ceremony and a Field Cross ceremony to honor all Servicemembers listed by the Department of Defense as Prisoner of War (POW) or Missing in Action (MIA).



Healthy Teaching Kitchen Helps Veterans Plan and Make Healthy Meals

Dietitian Christie Rossick is using a new Healthy Teaching Kitchen to demonstrate healthy cooking techniques to Pittsburgh-area Veterans.

Statistics show that 76% of Veterans are either overweight or obese. "A big part of the problem is that we have so many easy and quick convenience foods available that people have gotten away from cooking for themselves," says Rossick.

The mobile kitchen includes a small oven, two countertop burners, a shelf for food preparation and an overhead mirror so an audience can watch the meal being made without leaving their seats. Rossick often invites Veterans to participate in hands-on demonstrations.

The dietitian has worked with cancer survivors, gastric bypass surgery recipients, and others who are interested in learning how to prepare more holistic food.

A big part of the problem is that we have so many easy and quick convenience foods available that people have gotten away from cooking for themselves.



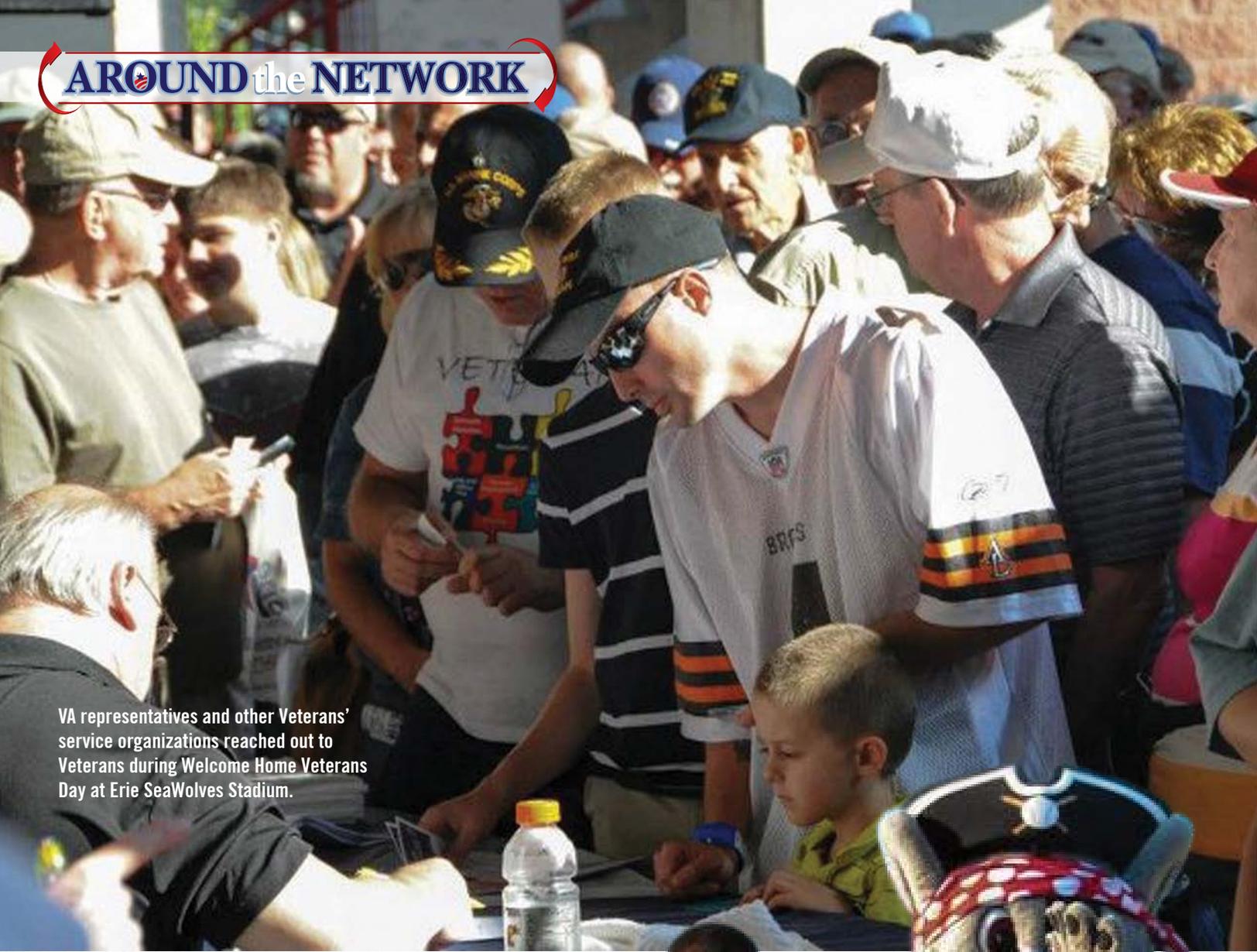
Wilkes-Barre VA's Visual Impairment Services Support Leads Veteran to Prestigious Award

Army Veteran Henry Malmquist recently received the coveted National Student of the Year award from the Hadley School for the Blind in Chicago. The 73-year-old Vietnam era Veteran from Lansford, Pa., lost most of his sight after a stroke several years ago. After participating in a ten-day Visual Impairment Services Outpatient Rehabilitation program at the Wilkes-Barre VA in 2005, Malmquist needed to learn touch-typing, in order to receive a specially-adapted computer from VA. Through the Hadley School's correspondence course, Malmquist mastered the skill, and then continued to improve his ability to function as a visually impaired person by taking 25 additional Hadley courses over the next five years.

I truly feel that my therapist, Maria, and the VA gave me a reason to live.

Henry Malmquist, Army Veteran





VA representatives and other Veterans' service organizations reached out to Veterans during Welcome Home Veterans Day at Erie SeaWolves Stadium.

Erie VA and SeaWolves co-host Welcome Home Veterans Appreciation Day

More than 1,600 people, including Veterans and their family members, filled Erie SeaWolves Stadium for the annual Welcome Home Veterans Appreciation Event. This fun-filled family event kicked off with a picnic dinner, was followed by a SeaWolves minor league baseball game, and ended with fireworks.

The event not only thanked Veterans for their service, but also provided them with information about available VA benefits and services.

The Erie SeaWolves wore camouflage uniforms on Welcome Home Veterans Day to show their support for local Veterans.





VISN 4 Selects New Leaders

The growth and development of people is the highest calling of leadership.

Harvey S. Firestone (1868-1938)

American businessman and founder of the Firestone Tire and Rubber Company

Philadelphia

Elizabeth (Betsy) Helsel

Associate Director for Clinical Operations since July 29

Previously served as VISN 4 Program Manager for Systems Redesign and Telehealth

I think the leadership team at Philadelphia is outstanding, and have found the employees to be friendly and welcoming," says Helsel. "My husband and I love Philadelphia, and we welcome the opportunity to become a part of the Philadelphia VA family and the community.

Clarksburg

Judy T. Finley

Associate Director since August 26

Previously served as VISN 17's Quality Management Officer

The Veteran is the beginning and end point of all of our work," says Finley. "The end goal for me is improved quality, safety, efficiency and improved performance as we meet the hourly, daily and ongoing needs of our Veterans.

Wilmington

Daniel D. Hendee

Director since July 15, 2012

Previously served as director of VA Northern Indiana Health Care System

Hendee says that getting to know his team was his first priority upon arriving in Wilmington.

"One of the most important things to me is getting to know the staff throughout the facility and at our outpatient clinics in Delaware and New Jersey," Hendee says. "Together we will improve operations, increase efficiencies, and provide the best possible health care to our Veterans."

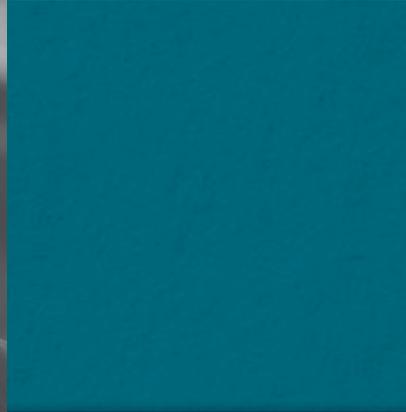
Hendee now manages a VA medical center with an operating budget of more than \$126 million and close to 900 employees.

I have had the privilege of being a VA employee for many years, and have served in various roles. As it has for so many others, VA has provided me with many opportunities to learn and grow in my career.



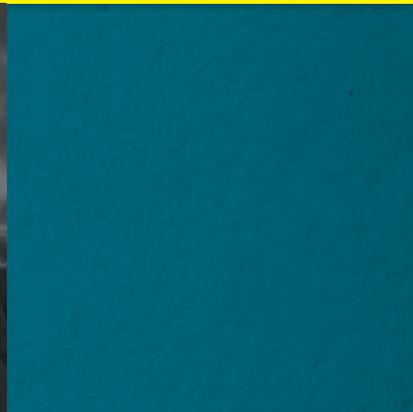
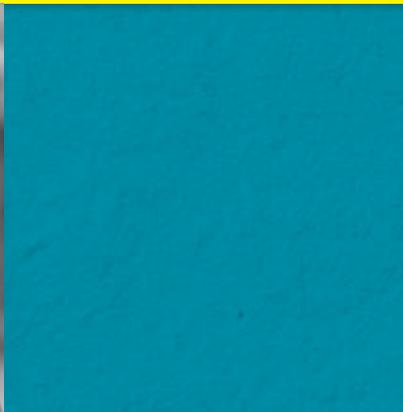


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 VISN 4
FACES
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PROGRAMS
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Every VISN 4 employee is unique – from our senior leaders to our managers to our front-line staff.

The 10 leaders you are about to meet bring a wide variety of experience and knowledge to our Network office. From Dewaine Beard, who began his career as a temporary secretary, to Desmarie DeCuir's 25 years of bedside nursing, these leaders – and their stories – offer a glimpse into the lives of the amazing individuals who enable our Network to provide exceptional care to Veterans and their families, each and every day. And while all of their stories are different, each of these people share a common goal: a commitment to improving Veterans' lives.



Prosthetics Manager

DOUG HILLIARD

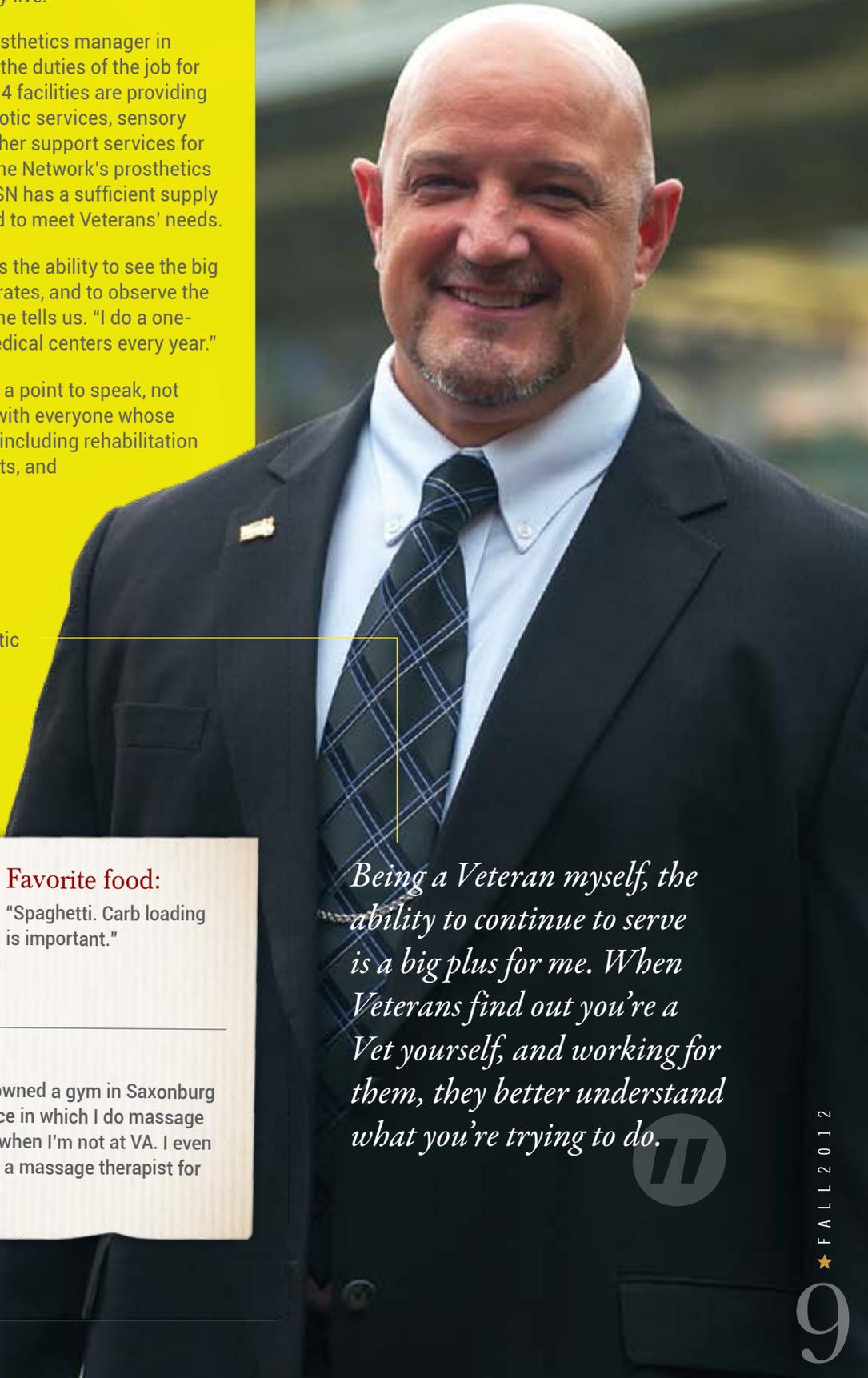
"I like to look for new and improved ways to do things," says Doug Hilliard, VISN 4's prosthetics manager. "I'm especially interested in how we can better serve Veterans in the communities in which they live."

Doug, who officially became prosthetics manager in August 2012 but has performed the duties of the job for two years, ensures that all VISN 4 facilities are providing outstanding prosthetic and orthotic services, sensory aids, medical equipment, and other support services for eligible Veterans. He manages the Network's prosthetics budget, and ensures that the VISN has a sufficient supply of prosthetic equipment on hand to meet Veterans' needs.

"What I like most about my job is the ability to see the big picture of how our Network operates, and to observe the differences between facilities," he tells us. "I do a one-week site visit to each of our medical centers every year."

On his site visits, Doug makes it a point to speak, not only with prosthetics staff, but with everyone whose work is touched by prosthetics, including rehabilitation specialists, low-vision specialists, and those who work with Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans.

To meet his goal of improving service to Veterans in their communities, he's working on finding ways to provide prosthetic items to community-based outpatient clinics, thereby reducing the need for many Veterans to travel long distances to their nearest medical centers.



Last book read:

"'The Secret,' by Rhonda Byrne. It tells you that what you think about, you bring about."

Favorite food:

"Spaghetti. Carb loading is important."

Favorite exercise:

"Definitely weightlifting. I've owned a gym in Saxonburg since 1993, and I have an office in which I do massage therapy right next to the gym when I'm not at VA. I even went to the 1996 Olympics as a massage therapist for the British Olympic team!"

Being a Veteran myself, the ability to continue to serve is a big plus for me. When Veterans find out you're a Vet yourself, and working for them, they better understand what you're trying to do.



Chief Information Officer

DEWAIN BEARD

Dewaine Beard oversees Information Technology (IT) service delivery at all 10 VISN 4 medical centers. "As the chief information officer, everything from dial tone to computers, as well as printers, cell phones, and BlackBerries is my responsibility." Dewaine works with about 200 other VA employees at VISN 4's 10 facilities to accomplish this daunting task.

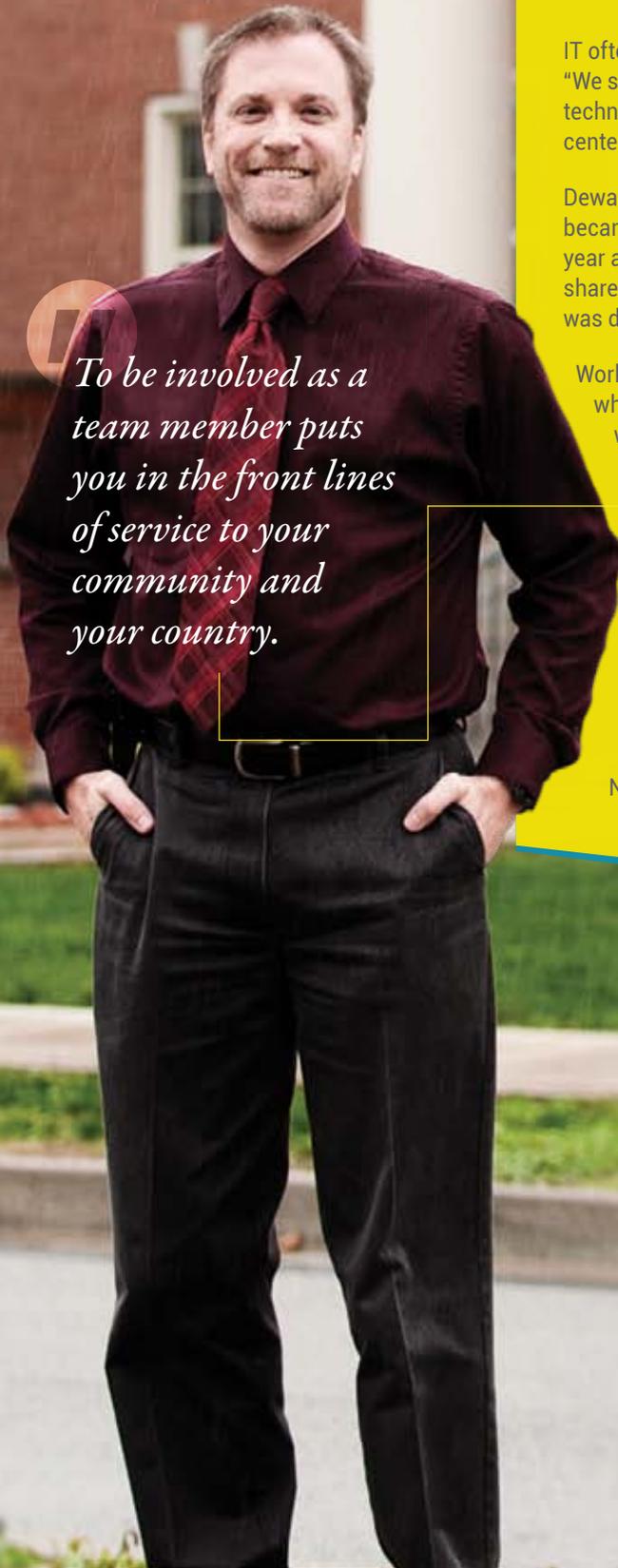
IT often has a direct impact on the care that Veterans receive, Dewaine explains. "We support pretty much anything that goes on in our Network that involves technology or plugs in to a cable," he says. "We work very closely with medical center directors and clinical staff to support ongoing projects."

Dewaine began his VA career in Chicago in 1995 as a temporary secretary. He became a full-time clinical applications coordinator in September of the same year at Chicago's Jesse Brown VA Medical Center. "I loved VA's mission," he shares. "I loved the Veterans we were serving. I loved everything about what VA was doing."

Working at VA is special for Dewaine on another level as well. "I have an uncle who served in Vietnam," he said. "He was in the Army. I had another uncle who was in the Air Force. That makes it personal."

One challenge of Dewaine's job is to develop ways to keep IT equipment functioning and create solutions to problems that arise. "We recently deployed our satellite truck to Butler when they lost all Internet connectivity," he explains. "We deployed up there to get them emergency connectivity. We respond in the same way when disasters occur."

Dewaine's early experiences at VA led him to truly appreciate his job. "I had to walk through primary care to get to my office every day. So I walked through and saw Veterans and talked to them every day," he recalls. "It really struck me that VA was serving a critical need for our Nation's Veterans and it made me feel great to come to work every day."



To be involved as a team member puts you in the front lines of service to your community and your country.

Most played song on my iPod:

"It's a Juanes song. It's called 'Te Guardian.' It means 'your guardian.' It's a lullaby, and Juanes is a Columbian rock singer. I play that a lot."

Celebrity I would like to spend the day with:

"I really think Madeleine Albright. It would be fun to spend the day with her."

The hardest thing I have ever done:

"A 50-mile ultramarathon. That was hard. It was here in Pennsylvania on the Baker Trail. Actually I'm the volunteer trail manager for the Baker Trail. I support the trail and bring awareness to the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy and the Rachel Carson Trails Conservancy."

Women Veterans Program Manager

DESMARIE DECUIR

Dr. Desmarie DeCuir spent 25 years as a registered nurse. Hoping to someday become a nurse educator, she obtained varied experience in areas including public health, burns and trauma care, neonatal intensive care, public school nursing, and home health care. Then she and her husband owned and operated several McDonald's franchises in north Alabama and middle Tennessee.

When their franchising journey concluded, her husband was ready for a break, and Desmarie was ready to go back to school. After earning a master's degree in nursing and achieving accreditation as a family nurse practitioner, Desmarie entered the fast track into a Doctor of Philosophy program at the University of Tennessee Health Science Center in Memphis. Even while in class, she continued to work with patients.

Proud to be from a family full of Veterans, Desmarie's father, a U.S. Army Veteran, received care at the New Orleans VA. Visiting him, Desmarie was impressed with the quality of care he received, and was inspired by the VA mission. Since she never saw women Veterans at the hospital, Desmarie did not realize that women were even eligible for VA care. It was not until February 2007, when she saw a job opening at the Memphis, Tenn., VA that she answered a call to provide health care for women Veterans. She applied for the job, got it, and began her VA career.

In October 2008, she joined VISN 4 as the Network's lead women Veterans program manager. Since then, Desmarie has added the jobs of VISN 4 preventive health program manager and VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System women's health comprehensive primary care provider to her portfolio of responsibilities.

Desmarie works closely with both the women's health and preventive health programs facility managers at all VISN 4 medical centers to ensure that each program meets all national guidelines and has the best continuing education programs available for primary care providers. She conducts regular overviews and site visits, and makes recommendations for improvement.

Favorite quote:

"My favorite quote is from Luke 6:31: 'Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.' If you do that, you can't go wrong."

Favorite hobby:

"I have many, but just to name a few: growing orchids, flower gardening, knitting, and cooking."

Hidden talents:

"My husband tells me that I have resilience and determination. When you are knocked down, you just must get up and start over. Sometimes a good knockdown is good for you."

Taking care of women Veterans on the front line allows me to keep a hand on the pulse of what's going on and gives me an extra knowledge base to really help women Veterans.

11 Our patient satisfaction scores are very high, and our performance metrics throughout the Network are also outstanding.

Quality Manager

BARB FORSHA

Recently, VISN 4 used statistics collected from various sources to compare our performance metrics with the Nation's four finest health care facilities, as ranked in U.S. News and World Report's "Best Hospitals" survey. In every measure of health care quality, VISN 4 matched or surpassed their achievements, allowing our Network to proudly call ourselves "Better than the Best."

Barb Forsha, VISN 4's quality manager since 2008, pulled the data that enabled our Network to compare our performance to our competition. "What we've achieved is really something to be proud of," she says – and her own work helped to develop the tools to support the doctors and nurses who made it happen.

Barb and her staff monitor all of the VISN's internal and external performance metrics, providing leadership with important information on the quality of care the Network's facilities provide. They ensure VISN 4 facilities use their bed capacity and resources efficiently by enhancing and seeking opportunities to improve flow in the organization; ensuring that facilities maintain their accreditation status; monitoring patient safety incidents; and conducting patient satisfaction surveys and reviewing their results.

Under Barb's leadership, the Network has led the way in its use of data to improve patient care. VISN 4 clinicians are given regular reports on the health status of each of their patients. This enables them to identify and concentrate on those who are not doing well, and to better prepare for upcoming appointments. VISN 4 is a leader in providing their clinicians with this level of data.

Barb graduated from nursing school in 1981, and came to VA in 1998. She assumed her first role in quality management as the patient safety manager for VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System in 2001. "I don't think there's ever been a finer mission than VA's," she concludes. "Veterans really deserve the excellent care they're getting. They're just so appreciative – and it makes you feel important just to help them."

Last time I was nervous:

"Day in and day out in my job, I don't get nervous. I get nervous for my children – for the events in their lives, and their futures."

Last self-strengthening experience:

"I often thought about losing my parents. I thought it would be better if they went quickly when it was their time. But my father had a six-year cancer battle, and we savored and cherished every moment we had with Dad. Out of a very bad experience came many wonderful gifts."

Favorite hobby:

"I spend the great majority of my spare time with my kids and my husband. Every possible spare moment I have, I try to spend time with them."

Capital Asset Manager

JOE DELANKO

For Joe Delanko, VISN 4's capital asset manager, working for the Department of Veterans Affairs is a family affair. "My mother, my father, my sister, and my brother-in-law all worked for VA," he explains. "And my wife, Valarie, and I carpool together. She's the VISN's accreditation specialist!"

As capital asset manager, Joe is responsible for planning for and acquiring land, buildings, major pieces of medical equipment and other large assets VISN 4 uses to serve Veterans. He's had that job since 2004. Joe has been with VA since 1988 when, at his parents' suggestion, he interviewed for an engineering position at the Department's Durham, N.C., VA Medical Center.

Since coming to VA, Joe has seen firsthand the way in which VA care, and his own work, has been transformed. "At first," he says, "just about all of the items and land we were purchasing were for our medical centers. Then, our emphasis shifted from inpatient to outpatient care. We began acquiring land, buildings, and equipment for our community-based outpatient clinics."

Today, Joe sees VA care transforming again. "Right into the home," he explains. "Telemedicine and home-based care are reaching out to Veterans in their own environment. People just don't have to come to our hospitals, and even our clinics, very often to be properly cared for."

Joe, who has a degree in mechanical engineering, was the chief engineer at the Erie VA Medical Center before coming to the VISN office. Besides working at Erie and Durham, he also has worked at the Clarksburg, W. Va., and Fort Howard, Md., VA Medical Centers. He isn't afraid that VA's new emphasis on home-based care will put him out of work anytime soon, though.

We've still got a lot of land and a lot of buildings in this VISN. And somebody's got to turn the lights off!



Last vacation:

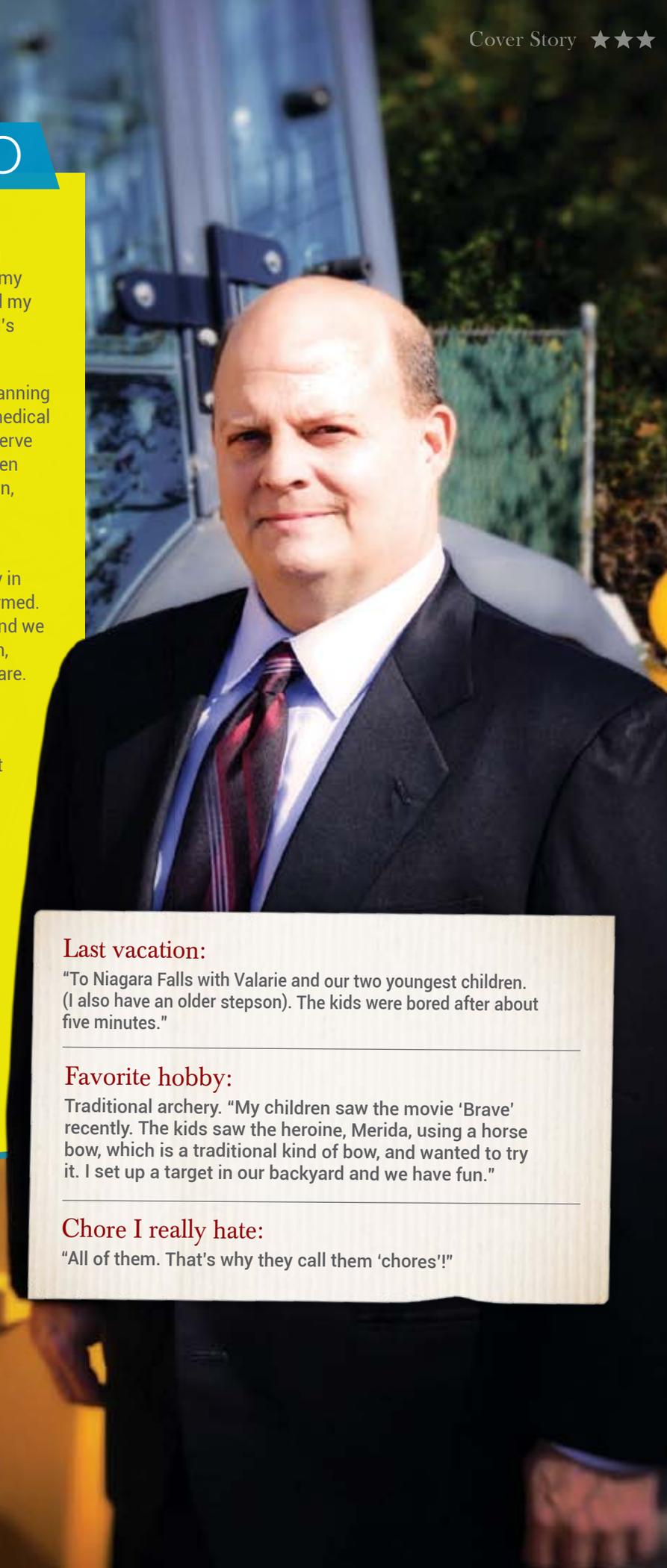
"To Niagara Falls with Valarie and our two youngest children. (I also have an older stepson). The kids were bored after about five minutes."

Favorite hobby:

Traditional archery. "My children saw the movie 'Brave' recently. The kids saw the heroine, Merida, using a horse bow, which is a traditional kind of bow, and wanted to try it. I set up a target in our backyard and we have fun."

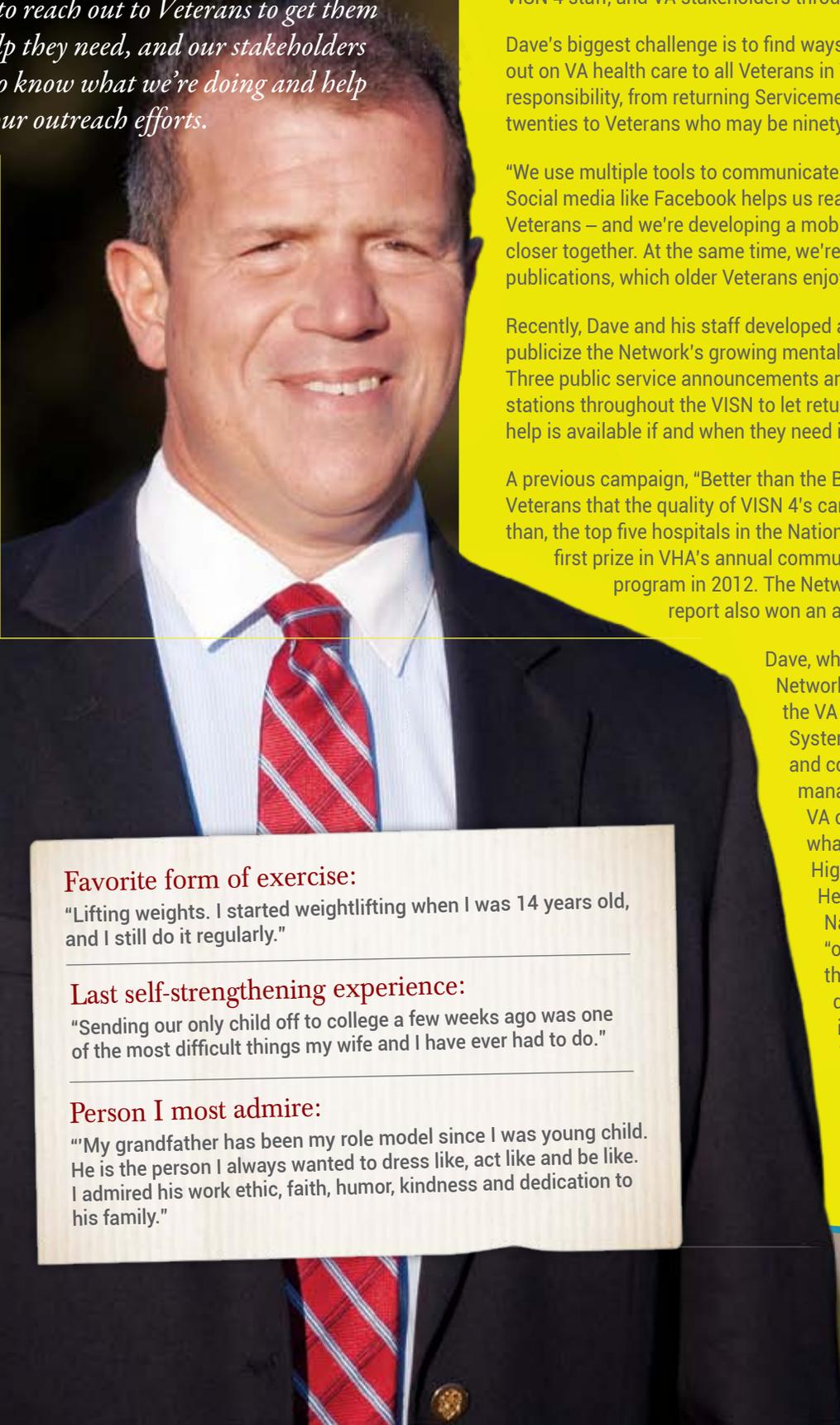
Chore I really hate:

"All of them. That's why they call them 'chores!'"



DAVE COWGILL

Veterans and their families need to know about the quality of VISN 4's health care and the services we provide. Our staff needs to reach out to Veterans to get them the help they need, and our stakeholders need to know what we're doing and help us in our outreach efforts.



As VISN 4's public and community relations manager, Dave Cowgill's job is to communicate key information to Veterans, VISN 4 staff, and VA stakeholders throughout the Network.

Dave's biggest challenge is to find ways to get the word out on VA health care to all Veterans in VISN 4's area of responsibility, from returning Servicemembers in their early twenties to Veterans who may be ninety or older.

"We use multiple tools to communicate with each group. Social media like Facebook helps us reach our newest Veterans – and we're developing a mobile app to bring us closer together. At the same time, we're continuing our print publications, which older Veterans enjoy reading," he explains.

Recently, Dave and his staff developed a campaign to publicize the Network's growing mental health programs. Three public service announcements are airing on television stations throughout the VISN to let returning Veterans know help is available if and when they need it.

A previous campaign, "Better than the Best," informed Veterans that the quality of VISN 4's care is equal to, or better than, the top five hospitals in the Nation. This campaign won first prize in VHA's annual communications awards program in 2012. The Network's 2011 annual report also won an award this year.

Dave, who's been with the Network since 2007, is also the VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System's (VAPHS) public and community relations manager. He began his VA career in 1988 at what is now VAPHS's Highland Drive campus. He believes serving our Nation in uniform is "one of the most noble things anyone can do. Everything we do is designed to help Veterans learn about the outstanding health care services and programs we have for them in VISN 4!"

Favorite form of exercise:

"Lifting weights. I started weightlifting when I was 14 years old, and I still do it regularly."

Last self-strengthening experience:

"Sending our only child off to college a few weeks ago was one of the most difficult things my wife and I have ever had to do."

Person I most admire:

"My grandfather has been my role model since I was young child. He is the person I always wanted to dress like, act like and be like. I admired his work ethic, faith, humor, kindness and dedication to his family."

Patient Safety/Risk Manager

MOIRA HUGHES

"My job is to prevent harm before it happens," says Moira Hughes. "As the VISN's patient safety officer, I work with staff, especially patient safety managers, throughout the Network to minimize any chance of adverse outcomes as a result of our care – and as the risk manager, I work to ensure that our high standards of care have been met for all of our patients. I love my job. Every day is different!"

VISN 4, Moira explains, takes patient safety issues seriously. "Nurturing a culture of safety is important in all our medical centers and is a priority for all employees," she tells us. Every VISN employee has the responsibility for confidentially filling out patient event reports, not only when patients are harmed, but also when close calls occur.

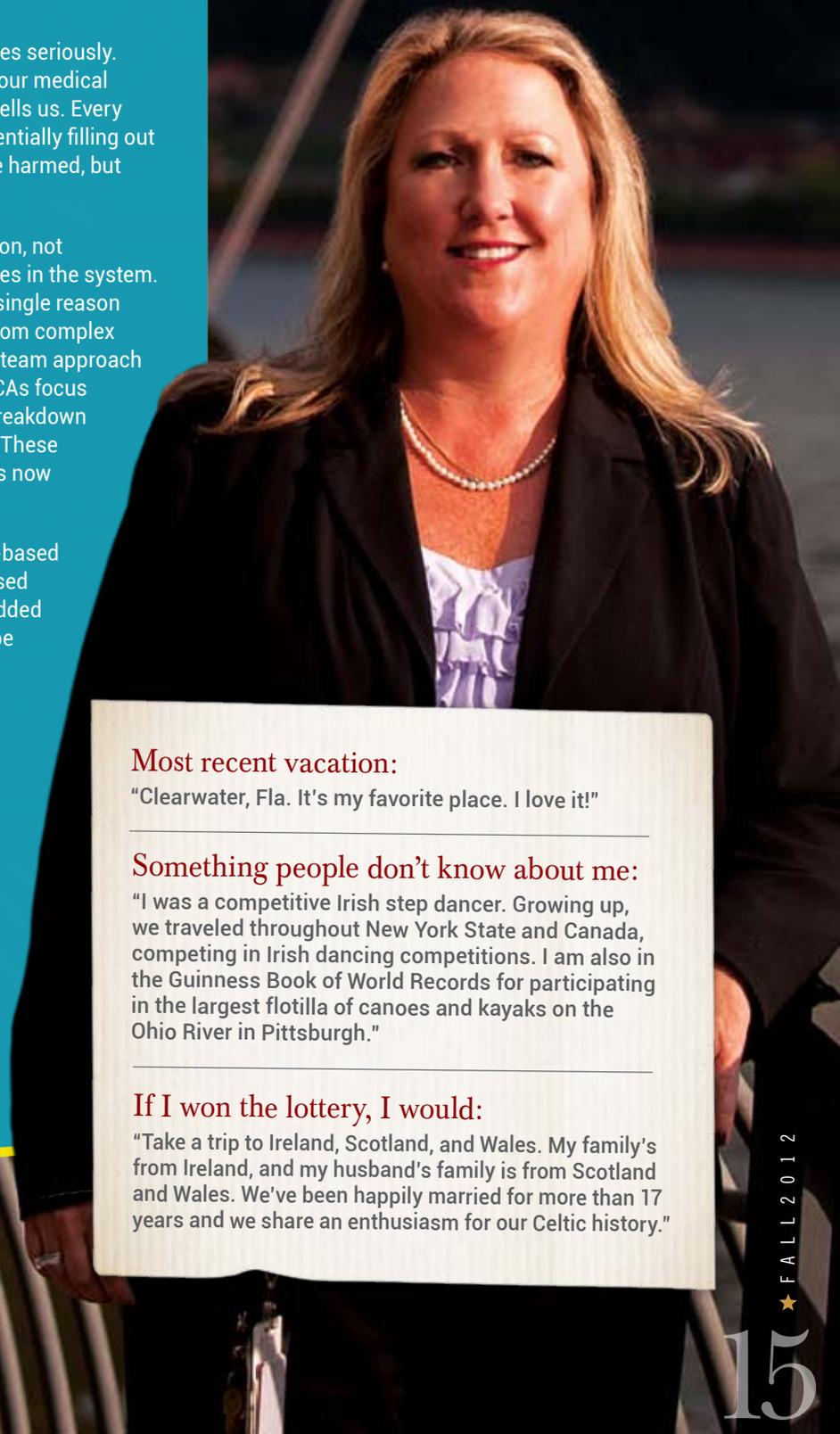
VA's patient safety program focuses on prevention, not punishment, to target and eliminate vulnerabilities in the system. Inadvertent, adverse events seldom occur for a single reason or because of one person's actions, but rather from complex systems issues. Root Cause Analysis (RCA) is a team approach used to study adverse events and close calls. RCAs focus on identifying the most fundamental reason a breakdown occurred and on developing countermeasures. "These actions help us take the best care of our patients now and in the future," Moira says.

VISN 4 is in the process of implementing a Web-based system of patient event reporting. "The Web-based program allows easy access, and gives us the added ability to develop a robust database which can be analyzed and trended," Moira explains.

The Safe Patient Handling initiative involves acquiring equipment to assist nursing with patient movement. Expanding the use of ceiling lifts is another way safety is improving for VISN 4 patients. Patients can be transferred from bed to bath or wheelchair without injury to themselves or to VA staff.

Moira began her VA career at the Martinez, Calif., VA Medical Center and has worked for VA for 23 years. She became the Network's patient safety officer and risk manager in 2004, and was the lead patient safety officer for VA from 2008 to 2011.

It's a privilege to serve Veterans and I'm honored to be part of the VISN 4 team!



Most recent vacation:

"Clearwater, Fla. It's my favorite place. I love it!"

Something people don't know about me:

"I was a competitive Irish step dancer. Growing up, we traveled throughout New York State and Canada, competing in Irish dancing competitions. I am also in the Guinness Book of World Records for participating in the largest flotilla of canoes and kayaks on the Ohio River in Pittsburgh."

If I won the lottery, I would:

"Take a trip to Ireland, Scotland, and Wales. My family's from Ireland, and my husband's family is from Scotland and Wales. We've been happily married for more than 17 years and we share an enthusiasm for our Celtic history."

ANGELA KEEN

"VA is on the forefront of defining mental health service delivery," says Dr. Angela Keen, mental health manager and network homeless coordinator for VISN 4. "No system provides better, more comprehensive mental health care than VA."

Before earning her Doctor of Philosophy in clinical psychology from the University of North Dakota in 1991, Angela did her pre-doctoral training at the Highland Drive VA Medical Center. After completing her education, she became the coordinator for the geriatric inpatient unit at Highland Drive, where she worked as a clinical psychologist.

Angela liked the options that the VA health care system provided, both in terms of Veterans' health and her own career. She is grateful to be able to serve Veterans. "My father is an Army Veteran who went to school on the GI Bill," she says. "He left the Army just as Vietnam was escalating, after serving in Europe."

In VISN 4, Angela works to make sure the Network's mental health care is recovery-oriented and Veteran-centered. She also provides oversight for mental health and homelessness programs and initiatives, and our support of Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans.

Angela is currently working with the national committee that is developing a staffing model for outpatient mental health services and has also served as a site visitor for the Office of Mental Health Operations mental health site visits, surveying programs across the country to assess mental health services. Within VISN 4, she routinely conducts site visits to ensure that all of the mental health care services match VA standards at a national level.

"We can always improve on what we do, but we provide the most effective service in the most efficient way possible. Our Veterans deserve that."

Favorite guilty pleasure:

"Chocolate and red wine."

Favorite hobby:

"Traveling and spending time with my two sons. We have a family trip to Europe coming up that I'm really excited about."

If I could live anywhere in the world, I'd live:

"In Arizona."

Chief Logistics Officer

JAMES MCKINLEY

"Logistics is making sure that employees always have the right thing in the right place at the right time," explains Jim McKinley, VISN 4's chief logistics officer. "My goal is to take VISN 4's logistics program to the highest level possible, and to make it the best in the Nation."

"We're close," Jim adds, explaining that VA keeps tabs on every network's logistical performance measures. As chief logistics officer, Jim's responsibility is to ensure that every VISN 4 facility has ample supplies of nonexpendable items such as wheelchairs, oxygen, and defibrillators, as well as consumable supplies, such as syringes and needles, gowns, and gloves.

To help VISN 4 become the best in logistics, Jim is standardizing supply and equipment purchases throughout the Network to the maximum extent possible, thereby establishing a single standard of care for Veterans throughout the VISN. By doing so, he's helping to get VA and taxpayers the best possible prices for the products the Department needs through volume purchases, and making it easier for other VISN 4 employees to deliver the highest quality health care.

Jim has been with VA since 1990, and has been chief logistics officer since February 2012. His first job was as a pharmacy technician at the Wilkes-Barre VA Medical Center. His first VA job was memorable for another reason. "I worked for a fellow named Marty Flaherty," he explains. "Marty taught me to be totally customer focused in my work, and that the needs of the customer always come first."

Dogs or cats:

"I prefer dogs, but we have two dogs, four cats, and a hamster!"

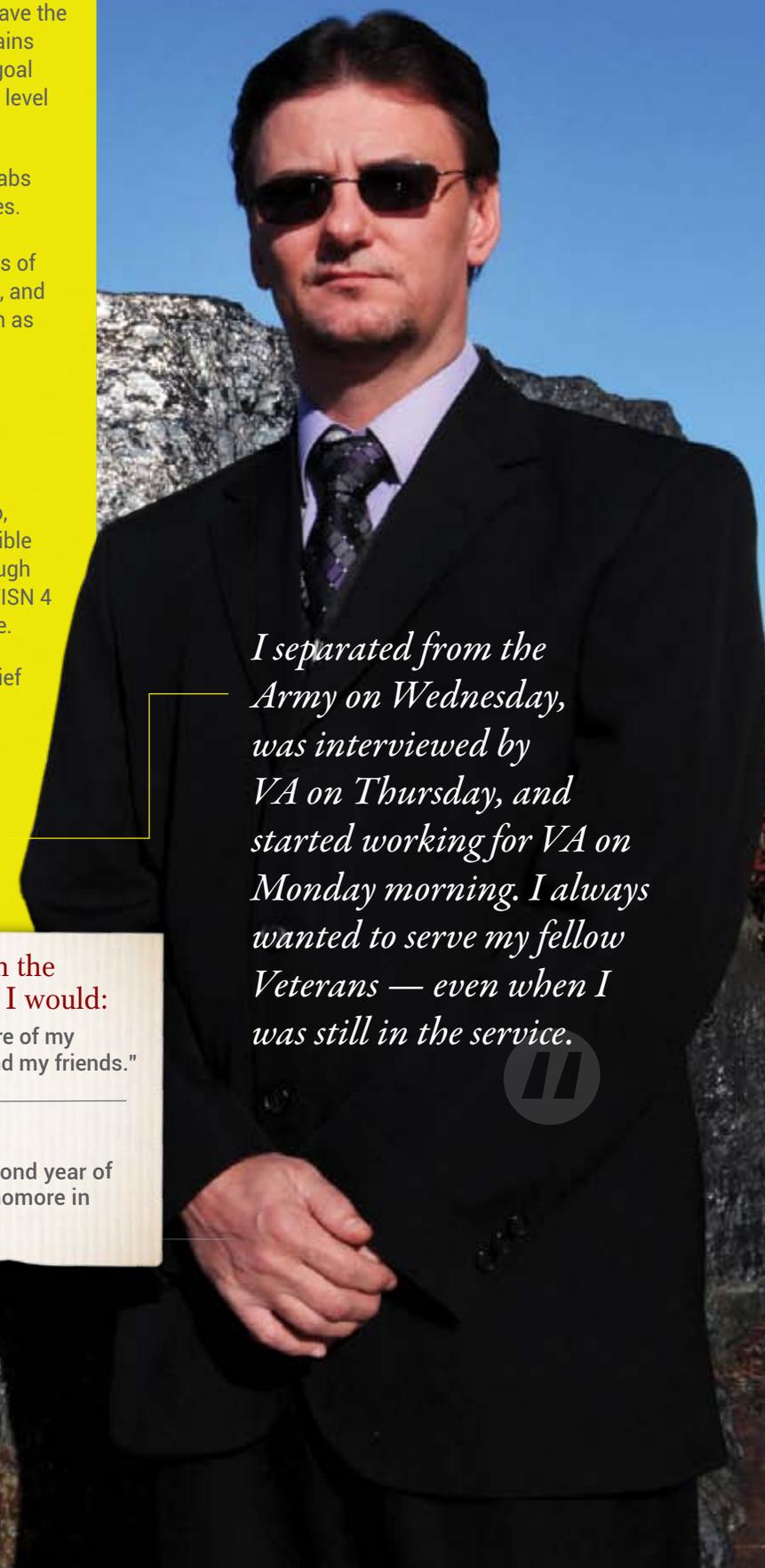
If I won the lottery, I would:

"Take care of my family and my friends."

Best gift I've ever received:

"My two kids. My daughter is in her second year of pharmacy school, and my son is a sophomore in high school."

I separated from the Army on Wednesday, was interviewed by VA on Thursday, and started working for VA on Monday morning. I always wanted to serve my fellow Veterans — even when I was still in the service.



Fiscal Quality Assurance Manager

JEN FARRAR

"As the internal auditor for VISN 4, I make sure internal controls are in place and VISN 4 is in compliance with financial regulations. But, because I'm an auditor, some people are intimidated by the title," says Jen Farrar. "It's a balance between being the bad guy and showing people that I care."

Others help Jen find both balance and fulfillment in her job at VA. "I've had several great mentors here at VA, but my mom has always been there and encouraged me," she states. "She supported me through college and she always encouraged me to find a rewarding job."

After graduating from Robert Morris University with a bachelor's degree in accounting, Jen started working for the Department of Defense as a contract auditor in 1998. She came to VISN 4 as a fiscal quality assurance manager in 2005. Quality assurance employees like Jen carefully manage and record finances, logistics, and capital assets in order to zero in on any possible problem areas. They help VA improve its facilities and their ability to provide quality care.

Jen also provides assistance to several VA programs for Veterans. She volunteered for the 31st National Veterans Wheelchair Games, a week-long event hosted by VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System in August 2011. She also regularly supports the annual "Heroes at Heinz Field" event held each September.

"It's very rewarding to give back to those who have served our country. To be able to watch our Nation's Veterans enjoy themselves brings a smile to my face."

Celebrity I'm mistaken for:

"Reese Witherspoon. Someone showed me a face morph picture, and I still have it! I guess I kind of do look like her, I just hadn't noticed before."

Dream vacation:

"My dream vacation would be to take my family to a secluded island with no cell phones, computers, or BlackBerries."

Describe VISN 4 in one word:

"Determined"



How does your work for VISN 4 help Veterans throughout the Network?

1. DEBRA A. HUGHES

Compliance and Freedom of Information Act Officer

"Our compliance program is just one of many ways that our VISN maintains high ethical standards and adheres to the policies set forth by the Veterans Health Administration. We strive to be transparent to preserve and validate Veterans' trust in the work we do."

2. BETH A. OLESH

Strategic Planning Officer

"I assist medical centers with ensuring that community-based outpatient clinics improve access to services for Veterans. I also provide data that enables facilities to make informed decisions about the services that are needed now and in coming years."

3. BILL CRESS, LCSW

Program Coordinator, Operation Enduring Freedom/Operation Iraqi Freedom/Operation New Dawn (OEF/OIF/OND)

"I assist OEF/OIF/OND Veterans by coordinating services with other VA programs, the Department of Defense, and community resources to ensure that Veterans' needs and concerns are adequately addressed."

4. JANELLE ALTMANN

Quality Management Specialist

"The work I perform helps identify quality-related health care data trends across VISN 4's 10 medical centers. These trends help drive a focus for change, which positively impacts how Veterans receive the health care they deserve."

5. CHERYL SQUIER

Patient Safety Specialist

"As a patient safety specialist, my goal is maintain and create sustainable systems that lead to safe patient care for Veterans and to support the overall patient safety program. My primary focus is to assure that reusable medical equipment within VISN 4 is properly reprocessed and stored prior to use."

VISN 4

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WE'D LIKE TO HEAR FROM YOU

VISN 4's Vision for Excellence is published for the employees, volunteers, patients and friends of VA Healthcare-VISN 4. To submit story ideas for possible inclusion, contact David Cowgill at 412-822-3578 or david.cowgill@va.gov.

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