



James E. Van Zandt VA Medical Center

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VA Outpatient Clinics:

DuBois, Huntingdon, Indiana, Johnstown, State College

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Annual Report: Fiscal Year 2014

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Integrity,
Commitment,
Advocacy,
Respect,
Excellence



Every Veteran is Number One

James E. Van Zandt VA Medical Center—Altoona

Annual Report to Stakeholders 2014



Director, William Mills, reviews the schedule for telehealth appointments with Medical Support Assistant, Heather Diehl.

James E. Van Zandt VA Medical Center:

Unique Veterans Served: 24,683

Outpatient Visits: 196,657

Inpatient Bed Days of Care: 1,750

Community Living Center Bed Days of Care: 13,143

Employees: 680

Total Operating Budget: \$115,616, 868

*Appointments within 30 days: 98.26%

*November 5 data from the Pending Wait Time Report—VHA National Audit

Dear Stakeholder:

Fiscal year 2014 (FY14) was transformational for the James E. Van Zandt VA Medical Center (VAMC), as we started the year with a mission change. Based on waning demand, and the need to maintain the highest levels of clinical competence, we closed the Intensive Care Unit and converted the Emergency Department to an Urgent Care Center, open 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. 365 days per year.

In April, we moved and expanded the Johnstown VA Outpatient Clinic and added five rooms for the emerging telehealth program. From April through the end of the fiscal year, the Department of Veterans Affairs received national attention regarding access and wait times for Veteran appointments. This led to an opportunity for all VAMCs to review and evaluate our scheduling practices and define ways to improve. After having visited with every clinic that schedules appointments at the VAMC and Clinics, I am proud of the work that is done by the 118 employees who manage appointments. I am extremely proud to say that the percentage of appointments over 30 days started at 2.9% in June (one of the lowest in the nation) and at the end of the fiscal year was down to 1.74%. Additionally, we spent over \$17 million on non-VA care so Veterans could receive services that are not readily available within the VA system.

As the year progressed, we continued to move forward to improve access to health care for Veterans. In August, we broke ground on a 24,000 square foot, two floor behavioral health building that will house 35 staff. Multiple programs are offered for Veterans who are being treated for depression, anxiety, mental illness, PTSD, Military Sexual Trauma and other issues. In September, we opened two new VA Outpatient Clinics in a partnership with CR Associates. The new clinics are located in Huntingdon and Indiana Counties, and are equipped to offer care for up to 4,000 Veterans each. We held our first quarterly Town Hall for Veterans in September with attendees from the Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) and the DuBois Vet Center. The 75 Veterans who attended had the opportunity to share issues and concerns they have related to VA health care and benefits. We are committed to continuing to offer opportunities such as this to hear the “Voice of the Veteran.”

In reflecting on FY14, I appreciate those who continue to believe that VA health care is the best care anywhere. We appreciate the 25,000 Veterans and their families who put their faith in us. Our staff of 680 employees (215 Veterans) is among the best in VA. My appreciation also goes to the American Federation of Government Employees (AFGE) Local Union 1862 for their support of employees and for the positive relationship they have developed with management. To the Veteran Service Organizations (VSO's) and the elected officials who serve our Veterans, I am also grateful. The support of each one of you has allowed us to thrive in challenging times.

As we move into FY15 (our 65th year), new national and local initiatives are taking hold. First and foremost is the focus on becoming more of a patient centered, customer focused organization. On the pages of this report you will see the faces of Veteran patients, staff, and volunteers who already believe that we are doing that and are striving to be better every day.

Thank you for your support and investment in the health and well-being of Veterans. It is my distinct pleasure to work with a team that is committed to improving the lives of those who gave so much to preserve our freedom.

William H. Mills
Medical Center Director

Opening doors and breaking new ground



Photograph by Jeremy Boland, Moments Photography



Photograph by Jeremy Boland, Moments Photography



Photograph by Jeremy Boland, Moments Photography

“As we go forward, one thing’s clear. VA cannot do what needs to be done and accomplish its goals without a full complement of partners—public, private, and volunteer. We don’t have all the answers. We can’t operate in a vacuum—no 21st century organization can. That’s why we’re aggressively leveraging our existing relationships and affiliations and forging new ones.”
—VA Secretary Robert A. McDonald

Improving access to health care

May 2014: Ribbon cutting for new Johnstown VA Outpatient Clinic at 598 Galleria Drive. Clinic serves over 4,000 Veterans, employs 18 and offers 14,000 square feet of new clinic space.

August 2014: Ground breaking for new Behavioral Health building. Planned for opening in August 2015, the new two-story building will serve over 4,000 Veterans, employ more than 35, and offer 24,000 square feet of space for all mental health programs. Anticipated growth of mental health services is 40% over the next 20 years.

September 2014: Two ribbon cuttings for new contracted VA Outpatient Clinics in Indiana and Huntingdon Counties under the management of CR Associates.

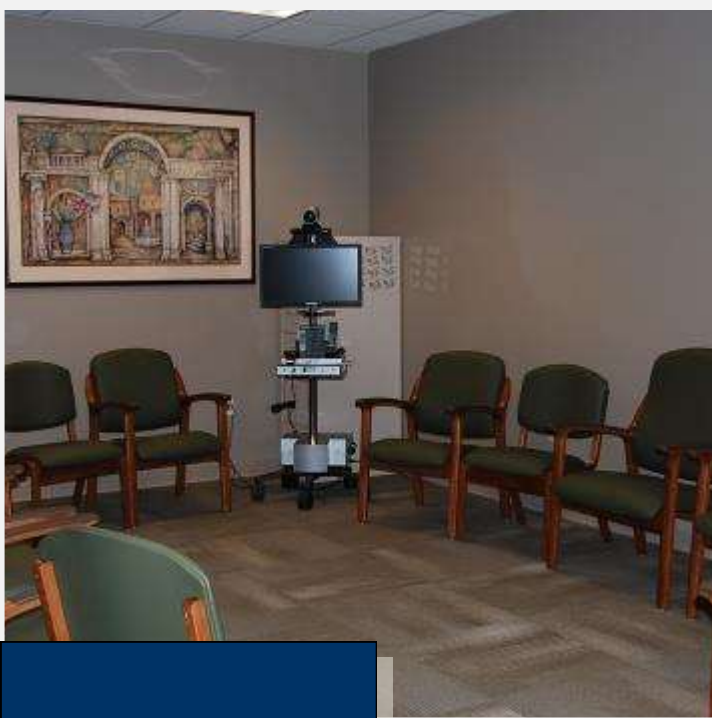
The Huntingdon County VA Outpatient Clinic is located at 13903 William Penn Highway, Mapleton Depot. The Indiana County VA Outpatient Clinic is located at 1570 Oakland Avenue.

Both clinics can eventually employ up to four practitioners, eight nurses, a phlebotomist and five clerical staff. Each clinic has capacity to provide health care for up to 4,000 Veterans. Telehealth Services are available to link patients to services at the Altoona VAMC.

CR Associates is a Veteran-owned company that specializes in facility development, staffing and management. The company serves more than 50,000 Veterans nationwide.



Bringing health care closer



“Telehealth is rapidly becoming an attractive option, especially for Veterans who do not have a VA health care facility close to home.”
- VA Secretary Robert McDonald

Increasing access to health care in a rural setting requires creativity, technology and commitment.

For Veterans who live in our rural 14 county area, four programs are helping our Veterans receive care when and where they need it. Telehealth, Home Telehealth (HT), My HealtheVet/Secure Message, and Home Based Primary Care (HBPC) programs provide treatment visits, daily monitoring, direct communication with health care practitioners, and home visits to Veterans through old-fashioned “house calls.”

Telehealth:
The Telehealth program was expanded in FY14 with **funding from VA’s Office of Rural Health**. New clinics offered through telehealth included physical and occupational therapy as well as non-VA clinics for both Tomorrow’s Hope transitional living program and

WyoTech trade school program.

Other clinics that used telehealth included psychology, psychiatry, MOVE, dermatology, tele-retinal screenings, anti-coagulation clinics, homeless screenings, chronic kidney disease education classes, and nutrition consults. Combined there were more than 5,700 telehealth encounters in FY14 (an increase of 32% from FY13), saving Veterans and staff the expense and hardship of traveling for face-to-face appointments.

Over \$650,000 in new telehealth equipment and new dedicated telehealth space was added at all locations. Eight new telehealth technicians were hired in 2014, increasing the dedicated telehealth staff to 14.

Home Telehealth:
HT offers Veterans with chronic diseases and conditions a way to self-monitor and self-report on their condition on a daily basis. Each patient’s care is coordinated by a Registered Nurse.

The program served over 350 patients for conditions such as chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, congestive heart failure, coronary heart disease, diabetes, hypertension, weight management and other complex conditions.

A daily check in with the “Health Buddy,” a small electronic monitor, allows patients to manage their conditions, and gives them daily feedback and advice on how to deal with changes. New equipment allowed Veterans to use cell phones and a computer log-on page to report results of blood pressure, blood sugar and other medical information. The program helps Veterans stay out of the hospital and participate in managing their health.

.....with virtual care and home visits



My HealtheVet is an online program that allows Veterans to access their health information, order prescriptions online, and communicate with medical staff about non-urgent health questions and concerns through Secure Message.

All primary care, specialty care, behavioral health, and dental teams have been trained in using Secure Messaging to communicate with Veteran patients. There were 17,528 messages exchanged in FY14.

The Blue Button feature allows Veterans to view, print, or download and store information from their personal health record (PHR) and to review progress notes, lab results and other valuable medical information.

- Veterans using My HealtheVet and Secure Message:
- 12,904 (54%) registered
 - 10,342 (43%) In-Person-Authenticated with a premium account
 - 4,822 (20%) Opted in to send and receive Secure Message
 - 65,952 Prescriptions refilled on My HealtheVet

Home Based Primary Care
HBPC has been making “house calls” to Veteran patients for seven years. The program started in Altoona in 2007 and expanded to DuBois in 2011. In 2013, the Altoona team was expanded to include more staff members allowing more Veterans to be enrolled.

In FY14 there were 377 Veterans enrolled and 5,733 visits were made.

There are 23 dedicated HBPC staff. This program is anticipated to **expand to Johnstown in FY15 due to the support of VA’s Office of Rural Health** program funding.

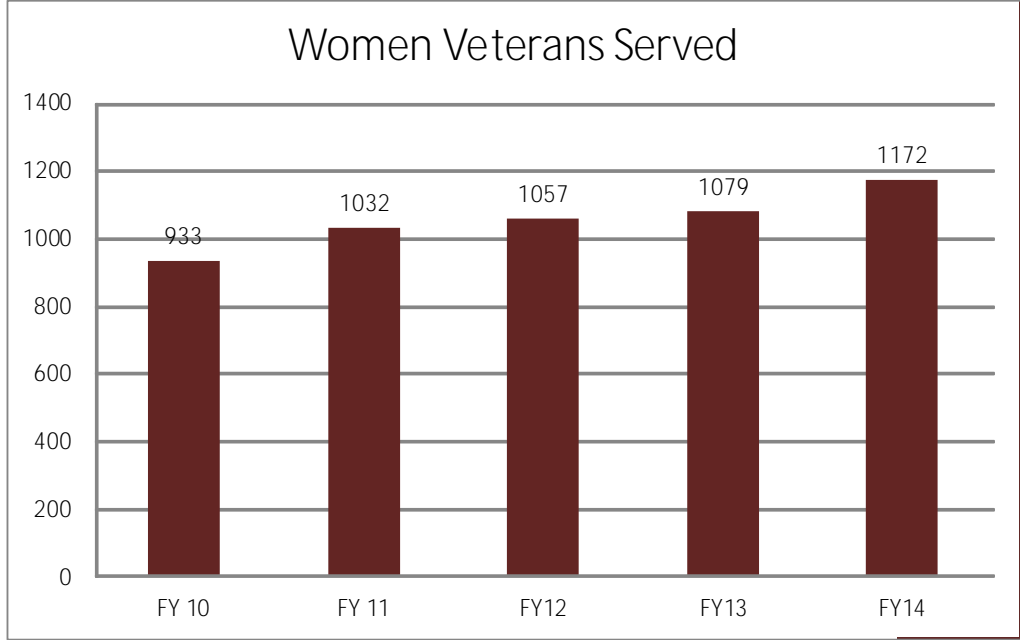
With the driving distance increased to 60 miles, HBPC was able to include Veterans living in more rural areas.

Veterans who qualify for HBPC receive home visits from an interdisciplinary health care team, supervised by a VA physician, and composed of nurse practitioners, physician assistants, nurses, social workers, physical and occupational therapists, psychologists, dieticians and clinical pharmacists.

“A great program for the severely wounded Veteran! Saves hours of uncomfortable travel time; a win-win program with nurses who truly care! It makes our lives easier and safer. One cost effective program! Thank you!”
HBPC Patient



Women Veterans Program Committee offers programming for Women Veterans throughout the year with events such as Breast Cancer Celebrate a Survivor Day, Clothesline project to highlight sexual abuse and Military Sexual Trauma and Women's Heart Health Awareness—Red Day.



Nationally the number of women Veterans has been growing faster than the number of men Veterans. The number of women Veterans we serve has increased from 3.7% to 4.7% of our Veteran population in the last five years.

Our Women Veterans Program is poised to help women Veterans to receive the comprehensive care they deserve.

Our goal is that each woman Veteran will be assigned to a primary care team that can provide care from head to toe.

Other services provided to women Veterans in FY14 included:

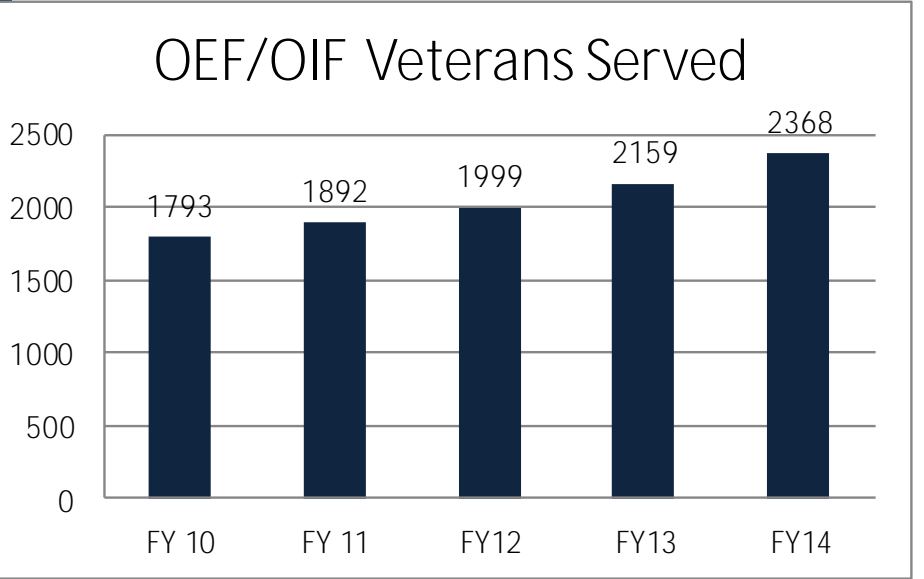
- Mammograms: 371 Female (21 male)
- Cervical cancer screenings: 237
- Dexa scans (osteoporosis): 344
- Military Sexual Trauma encounters: 1,483
- HUD/VASH housed 9 women Veterans
- Obstetrics Care:
 - First Quarter: 4
 - Second Quarter: 4
 - Third Quarter: 7
 - Fourth Quarter: 9

Veterans from Operation Enduring Freedom/Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation New Dawn OEF/OIF/OND represent 9.3% of the total population we serve.

Our Transition and Care Management Office provided case management to 225 OEF/OIF/OND Veterans, 48 of whom are seriously injured. There were 189 Veterans assisted by the program who suffered from poly-trauma. The staff completed over 90 percent of all case management screenings for new Veterans requesting care in Altoona.

A Welcome Home event was held at DelGrosso's Amusement park and a Post Deployment Health Reassessment event was held at the VAMC.

The Caregiver Support Program offered services to 105 families who have a wounded service member from OEF/OIF/OND. Caregivers are offered a support system, financial support and are eligible for VA health care.



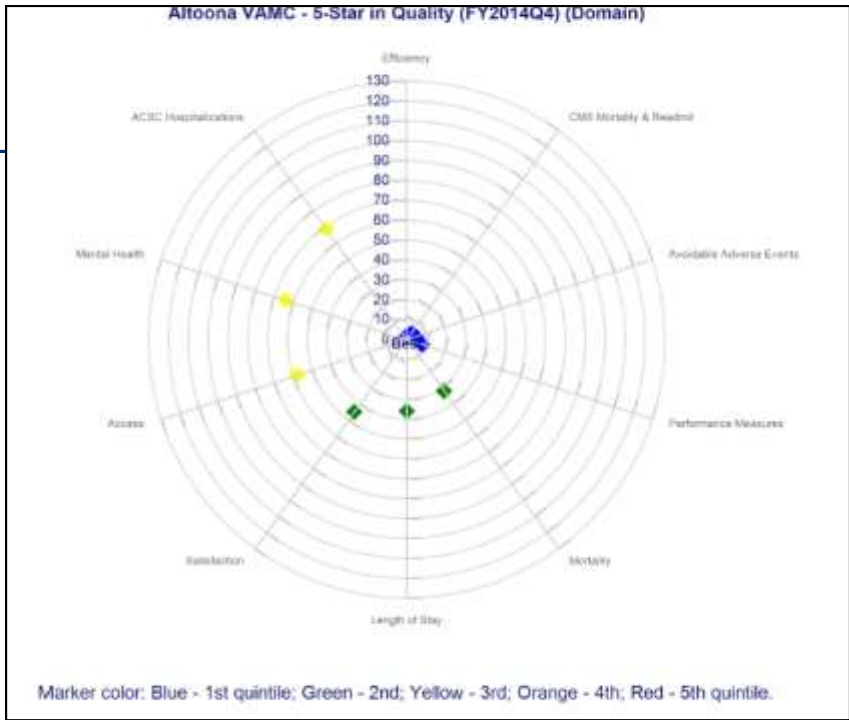
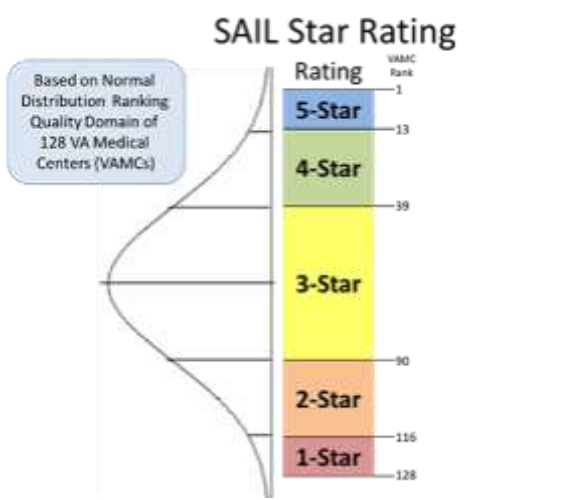
A Veterans Art Group led by Peer Support Specialists offers Veterans of all ages the opportunity to connect with each other in creativity and fellowship.

Measures of success

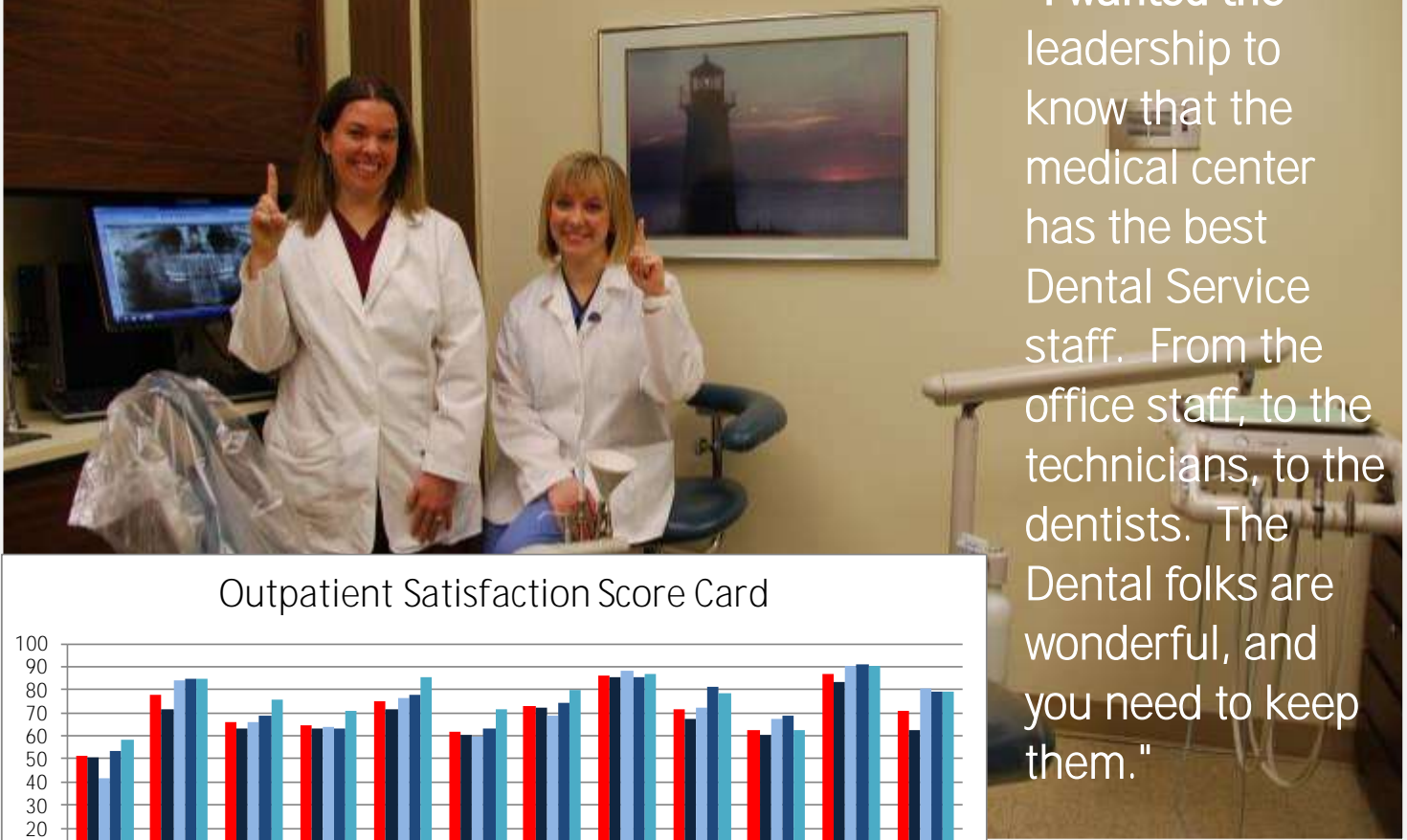
- The James E. Van Zandt VA Medical Center was named one of the top 25 hospitals, the most prestigious environmental achievement award offered by Practice Greenhealth. This award is given to facilities that are leading the country in health care sustainability.
- The Pathology and Laboratory Service received results from the Laboratory Management Index Program review by the College of American Pathology testing. We ranked number one among VA labs of similar size, as the most productive with the lowest cost among similar VA labs.
- Based on a May survey by The Joint Commission, we were granted a three year full accreditation.
- The Joint Commission recognized the VAMC as a Top Performer for 2013 for exemplary performance in using evidence based clinical processes to improve care for pneumonia.
- The medical center received a three year accreditation from the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF) for the Homeless, Housing and Urban Development-VA Supportive Housing, Compensated Work Therapy- Supportive Employment and Transitional Work Experience programs.
- Our Community Living Center was surveyed and accredited by the Long Term Care Institute.
- Our staff met and exceeded five of the six performance measures under the Patient Aligned Care Team (PACT) model of primary care.
- The Blair County Chamber of Commerce inducted the VAMC into the Blair County Business Hall of Fame in a ceremony in October, 2014.



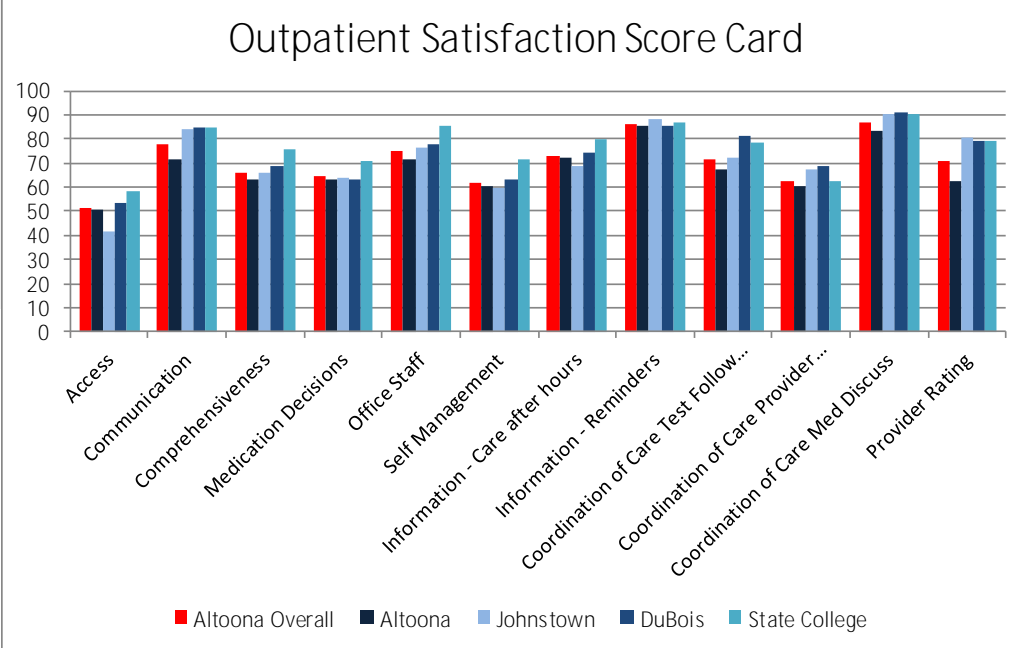
The James E. Van Zandt VA Medical Center has a 5-star rating in quality based on the Strategic Analytics for Improvement and Learning (SAIL) model. SAIL is designed to offer high level views of health care quality and efficiency, enabling VAMC leadership to examine a wide breadth of existing VA measures.



The Voice of the Veteran

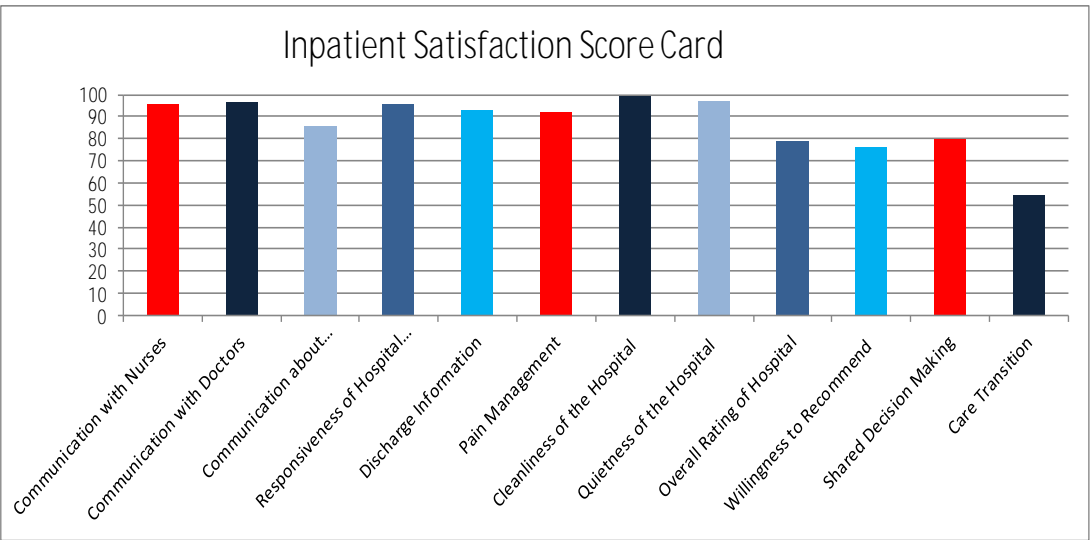


“I wanted the leadership to know that the medical center has the best Dental Service staff. From the office staff, to the technicians, to the dentists. The Dental folks are wonderful, and you need to keep them.”



“The staff at the State College VA Center are pleasant & give 100% to each patient. I am so pleased with this service.”

“My Doctor was attentive and concerned about me as a person. The nurses went out of their way to help me understand my condition and medication.”



Making a Difference in Home and Community

Veterans Justice Outreach program:

The purpose of the Veterans Justice Outreach (VJO) Program is to avoid the unnecessary criminalization of mental illness and extended incarceration among Veterans by ensuring that eligible justice-involved Veterans have timely access to VHA services as clinically indicated.

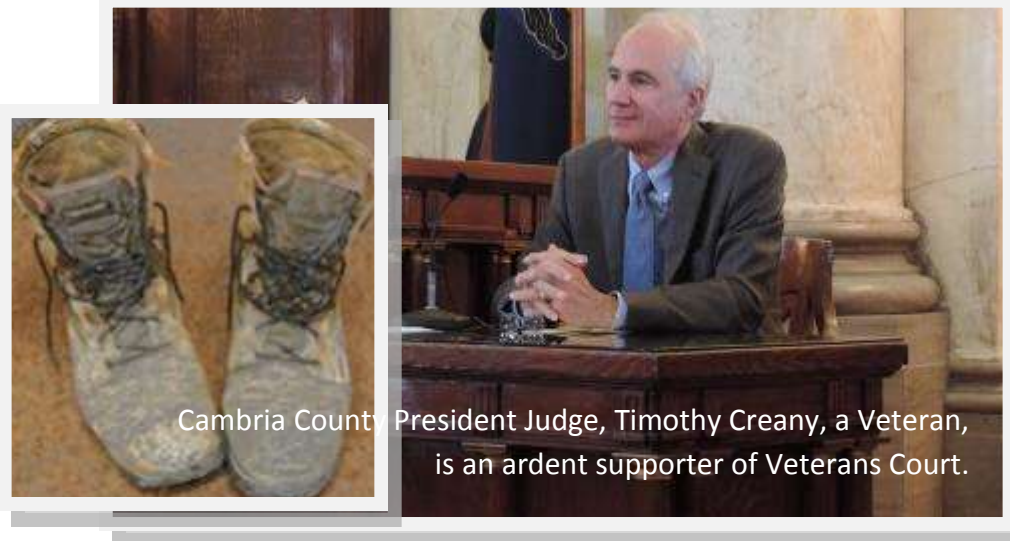
Two Veterans Justice Outreach Specialists are responsible for direct outreach, assessment, and case management for justice-involved Veterans in local courts and jails, and liaison with local justice system partners.

We have supported the establishment of Magisterial level Veterans Courts in Blair, Centre and Indiana Counties, and a Common Pleas Veterans Court program in Cambria County. The VJO Program Coordinator works closely with the criminal justice system by attending Criminal Justice Advisory Boards, visiting Veterans who are incarcerated, and assisting Veterans who are successfully engaged in behavioral health treatment.

- 29 Veterans graduated from the Cambria County Veterans Court.
- Five Veterans successfully completed their obligations under the Centre County Magisterial District Justice Veterans Court.

Homeless Veterans Program:

- 296 Veterans were assisted through the Homeless Veterans Program during 1,241 encounters with staff.
- 44 Homeless/Near Homeless Veterans were referred to the program by clinicians.
- 41 Veterans were transferred from transitional housing to non-VA independent housing.
- 15 Veterans were transferred from transitional housing to HUD/VASH housing.
- Two new emergency shelter contracts were added, including a shelter for women.



Volunteers and VSOs supporting Veterans

It is impossible to measure the caring and sharing that is offered to Veterans through the VA Voluntary Service (VAVS) and the support of the Veteran Service Organizations (VSOs) who offer their time and talents.

The people who make up the VAVS bring so much to Veterans. Whether they volunteer regularly to escort patients, deliver mail, play games with Veterans, or assist with special events, their time is precious and is appreciated.

VSOs in our 14 counties are very generous with donations of cash and items that bring comfort and recreation to Veterans. We are grateful for all that our VAVS friends do to help Veterans.

2014 Statistics:

- Volunteers—
Regular scheduled volunteers – 385
Regular scheduled volunteers hours – 33,211
Occasional hours – 1835
- Donations—
Monetary – \$61,883
Activities - \$19,461
Items - \$106,540
Total \$187,885



Three VSOs have office space in the VA medical center to better support Veterans.

- • VFW—Provided assistance with VBA claims to 629 Veterans
- • VVA—Provided assistance with 427 VBA claims and assisted 75 Veterans with their emergency assistance fund and 40 Veterans through the furniture and household items program
- • DAV—Provided 2,881 rides to Veterans for medical appointments

Reaching Out to all 14 Counties

Fourteen county outreach events held in the fall of 2014 gave Veterans the opportunity to enroll for health care, register for My HealtheVet, receive a flu shot, meet with a social worker, connect with Vet Centers, and learn about VA health care and benefits. In total there were 64 enrollment outreaches in 2014.

Outreach Tour 2014:

Bedford County – American
Legion Post 113

Blair County—Altoona VAMC

Cambria County – Courthouse

Cameron County – VFW Post

6221

Centre County—Sam's Club

Clearfield County – VFW

Clinton County—Flemington

Elk County – Community Center

Huntin
1754

Indiana County — VFW Post
1989

Jefferson County — Heritage House

Juniata County – American
Legion Post 298

Mifflin County — Library

Somerset County — VFW Post 139

Results:

91 applications completed

105 applications handed out to be returned

21 Veterans opted into Secure Message

114 Veterans given information on My HealtheVet

9 applications for Veterans Lifetime Electronic Records (VLER) completed

14 Veterans given information on VLER

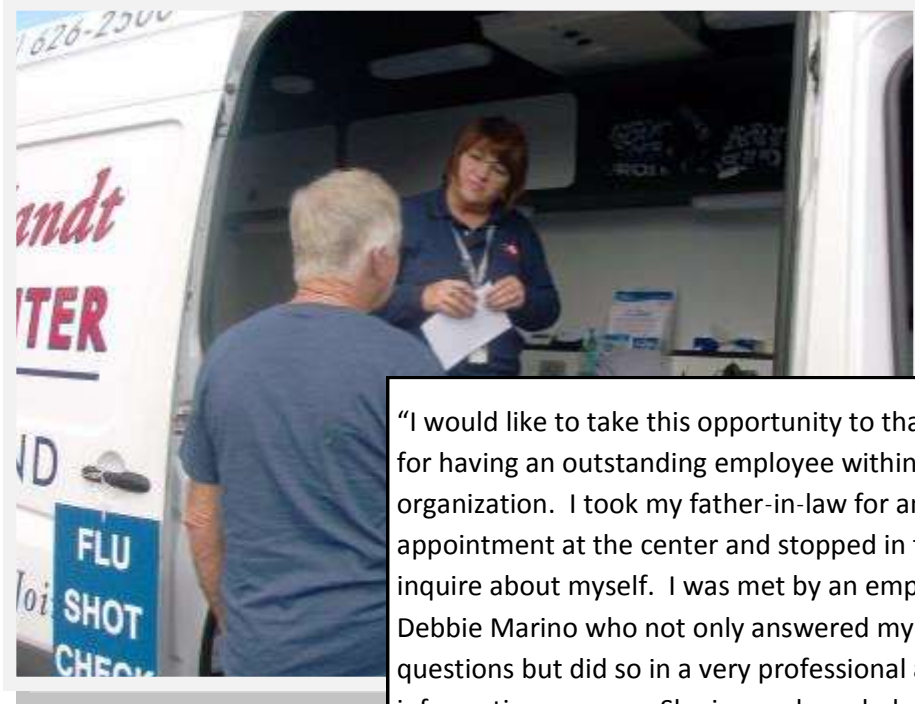
101 Veterans given information on Social Work programs (OEF/OIF/OND, Homeless Program)

16 VBA claims completed

22 Veterans advised on claims

243 Veterans given information on Vet Centers from DuBois and Erie

419 flu vaccinations



"I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for having an outstanding employee within your organization. I took my father-in-law for an appointment at the center and stopped in to inquire about myself. I was met by an employee Debbie Marino who not only answered my questions but did so in a very professional and informative manner. She is very knowledgeable. She went above and beyond the call of duty for her job. She also followed up with a phone call to me to ensure the information was relayed to me properly and told me what to expect. If this is the type of employees you have on staff, I will, if and when the time comes be happy to use your facility. She should be commended for her hard work and professionalism." Veteran



VA employees are the foundation of everything we do to serve Veterans. In addition to their day to day work with Veterans, our employees joined together in 2014 to raise more than \$50,000 for the Combined Federal Campaign, donated over 3,000 pounds of food to local food banks, participated in the new Employee Association and as Employee Ambassadors, walk in community parades and the annual VA2K, and represented the face VA of to our Veterans and in their communities.