

[ PORTRAITS *of* PROGRESS ]

2014 ANNUAL REPORT





# leadership

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

It is my privilege to share VA Healthcare - VISN 4's annual report for 2014 with you. In this report, you can read about some of the work our facilities have been doing to provide excellent care for Veterans, and about a few of our many accomplishments during the past year.

In 2014, VISN 4 employees joined Department of Veterans Affairs employees throughout the Nation in reaffirming our dedication to VA's overarching core values. These core values, first introduced in 2011, are integrity, commitment, advocacy, respect, and excellence. Together, their initials spell out "I CARE." Our values define who we are as an organization: our culture, our character, and how we will serve Veterans.

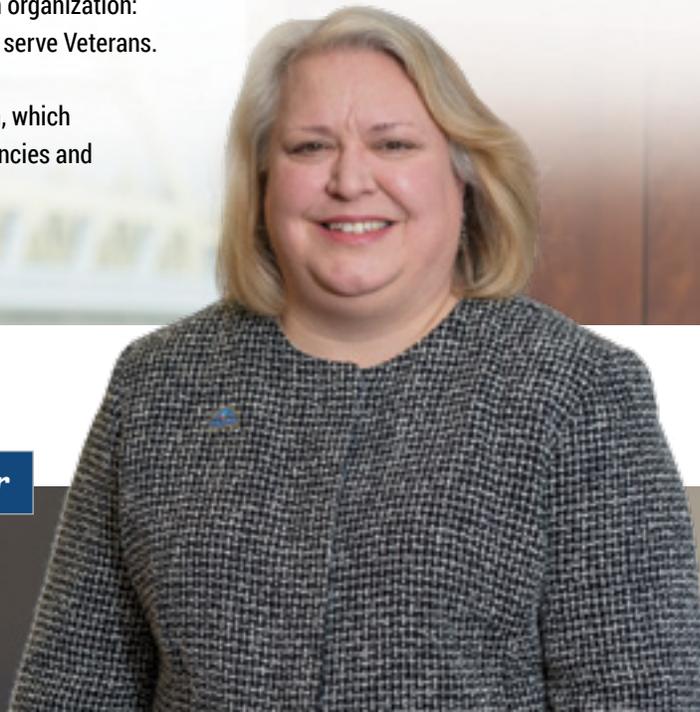
These values unite us in our noble mission, which sets our work apart from that of other agencies and

organizations. They reflect our continuing commitment to Veterans and their families. I hope every Veteran in VISN 4's area of responsibility understands that our Network is fully committed to living by these values – and to doing all we can to accomplish our mission of service to you in an exceptional manner.

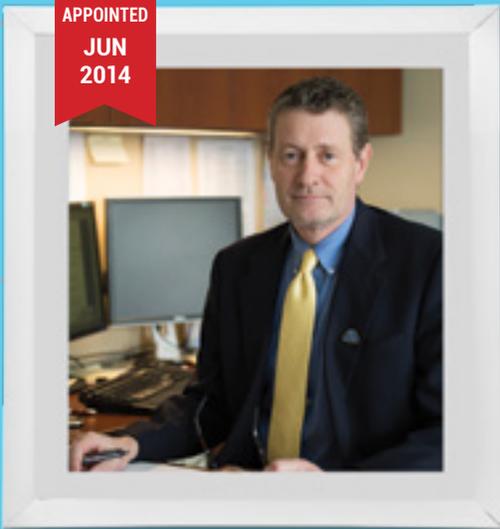
I am proud to be a part of VISN 4's team of dedicated professionals and thank you for your continued support of our Network.

*Carla Sivek*

**Interim Network Director**



APPOINTED  
JUN  
2014



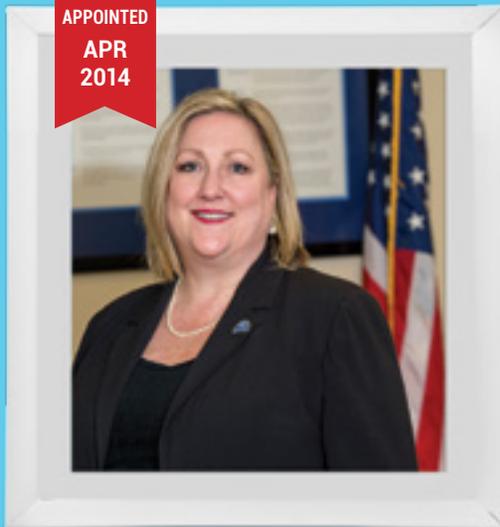
**Timothy Burke, M.D.**  
Acting Chief Medical Officer

APPOINTED  
DEC  
2009



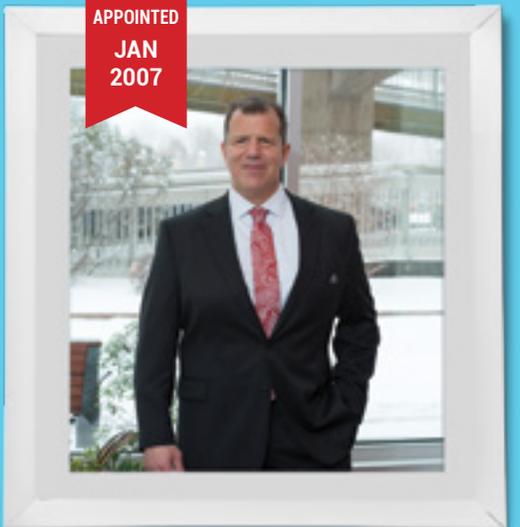
**James F. Baker**  
Chief Financial Officer

APPOINTED  
APR  
2014



**Moira M. Hughes, FACHE**  
Acting Quality Management Officer

APPOINTED  
JAN  
2007

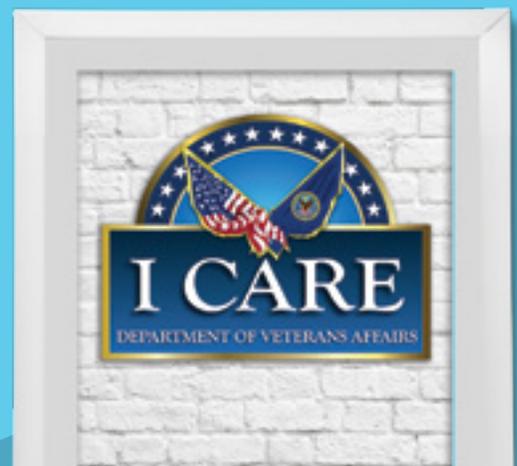


**David E. Cowgill**  
Communications Manager

APPOINTED  
SEP  
2012



**Kimberly Butler, MPH**  
Executive Assistant



## **Core Values**

Integrity • Commitment • Advocacy  
Respect • Excellence

# operating statistics

FISCAL YEAR 2014



## Financial Snapshot

Total Budget:

# \$2,489,211,000

1. Medical Care Collections Fund

**\$125,453,000**

3. Consolidated Mail-Out Pharmacy

**\$133,574,000**

5. Services

**\$471,404,000**

7. Lands and Structures

**\$72,696,000**

2. Salary & Benefits

**\$1,298,726,000**

4. Drugs and Medicines

**\$110,038,000**

6. Miscellaneous

**\$344,358,000**

8. Equipment

**\$58,414,000**



**Gifts & Donations Received**

# \$3,813,805.81

# Workload Snapshot



Outpatient Visits  
**3,567,597**



Prescriptions Filled  
**6.68 million**



Emergency Dept/  
Urgent Care Visits  
**99,021**



Surgical Procedures  
**23,082**

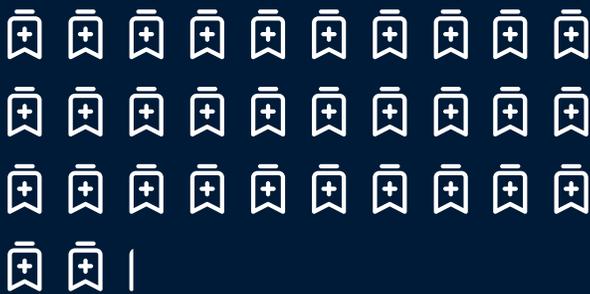


Outreach Events  
**909**

## 320,512

### Veterans Served

= 10,000



## 26,486

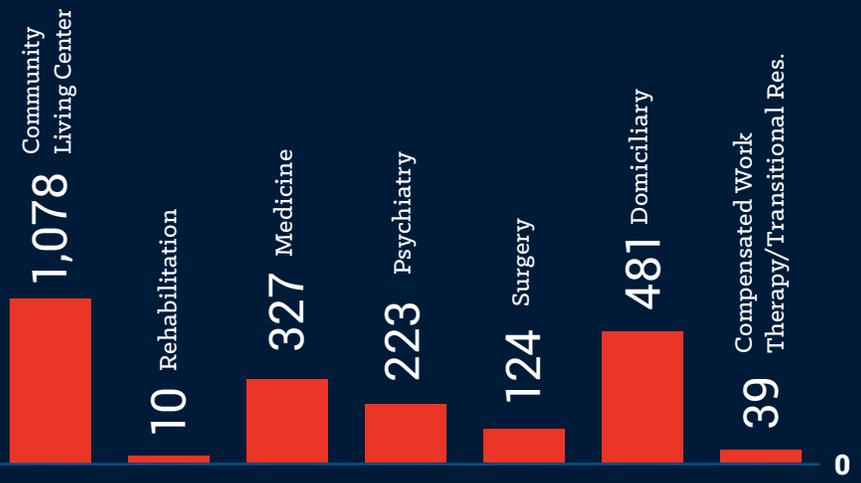
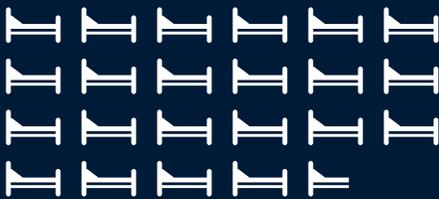
### Women Veterans

= 1,000



### Inpatient Beds = 100

## 2,282



## Workforce Snapshot

Total Employees	13,874
Veterans	4,002
Nurses	2,734
Physicians	1,039
Volunteers	5,379



## Research Snapshot

5 Sites: Coatesville, Clarksburg, Philadelphia and Wilkes-Barre VA Medical Centers, and VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System

Projects	533
Investigators	341
Funding	\$43,393,908

# partners in health

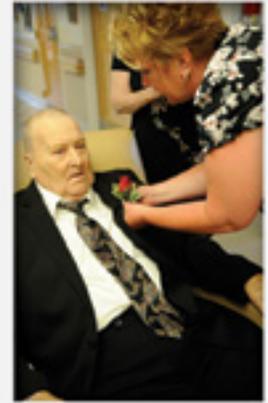


James E. Van Zandt  
VA Medical Center



PHILADELPHIA VA MEDICAL CENTER





# VISN 4 WEST

## 1 James E. Van Zandt VA Medical Center (Altoona)

 Employees <b>680</b>	 Operating Beds <b>57</b>	 Outpatient Visits <b>196,657</b>	 Veterans Served <b>24,683</b>	 Operating Budget <b>\$115,616,868</b>
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Web: [www.altoona.va.gov](http://www.altoona.va.gov) | Facebook: [www.facebook.com/VAAaltoona](https://www.facebook.com/VAAaltoona)

## 2 VA Butler Healthcare

 Employees <b>592</b>	 Operating Beds <b>163</b>	 Outpatient Visits <b>174,466</b>	 Veterans Served <b>19,332</b>	 Operating Budget <b>\$101,107,312</b>
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Web: [www.butler.va.gov](http://www.butler.va.gov) | Facebook: [www.facebook.com/VAButlerPA](https://www.facebook.com/VAButlerPA)

## 3 Louis A. Johnson VA Medical Center (Clarksburg)

 Employees <b>892</b>	 Operating Beds <b>100</b>	 Outpatient Visits <b>273,712</b>	 Veterans Served <b>21,874</b>	 Operating Budget <b>\$164,603,749</b>
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Web: [www.clarksburg.va.gov](http://www.clarksburg.va.gov) | Facebook: [www.facebook.com/VAClarksburg](https://www.facebook.com/VAClarksburg)

## 4 Erie VA Medical Center

 Employees <b>710</b>	 Operating Beds <b>60</b>	 Outpatient Visits <b>267,142</b>	 Veterans Served <b>23,345</b>	 Operating Budget <b>\$116,000,000</b>
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Web: [www.erie.va.gov](http://www.erie.va.gov) | Facebook: [www.facebook.com/VAMCErie](https://www.facebook.com/VAMCErie)

## 5 VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System

 Employees <b>3,531</b>	 Operating Beds <b>545</b>	 Outpatient Visits <b>683,634</b>	 Patients Served <b>69,763</b>	 Operating Budget <b>\$583,000,000</b>
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Web: [www.pittsburgh.va.gov](http://www.pittsburgh.va.gov) | Facebook: [www.facebook.com/VAPHS](https://www.facebook.com/VAPHS)

[1]



[2]



[3]



[4]



[5]



# VISN 4 EAST

## 1 Coatesville VA Medical Center

 Employees <b>1,335</b>	 Operating Beds <b>452</b>	 Outpatient Visits <b>200,404</b>	 Veterans Served <b>19,477</b>	 Operating Budget <b>\$183,820,000</b>
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Web: [www.coatesville.va.gov](http://www.coatesville.va.gov) | Facebook: [www.facebook.com/CoatesvilleVAMC](https://www.facebook.com/CoatesvilleVAMC)

## 2 Lebanon VA Medical Center

 Employees <b>1,413</b>	 Operating Beds <b>188</b>	 Outpatient Visits <b>481,072</b>	 Veterans Served <b>44,774</b>	 Operating Budget <b>\$262,714,000</b>
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Web: [www.lebanon.va.gov](http://www.lebanon.va.gov) | Facebook: [www.facebook.com/VALebanon](https://www.facebook.com/VALebanon)

## 3 Philadelphia VA Medical Center

 Employees <b>2,588</b>	 Operating Beds <b>316</b>	 Outpatient Visits <b>557,151</b>	 Veterans Served <b>56,427</b>	 Operating Budget <b>\$503,298,000</b>
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Web: [www.philadelphia.va.gov](http://www.philadelphia.va.gov) | Facebook: [www.facebook.com/PhiladelphiaVAMC](https://www.facebook.com/PhiladelphiaVAMC)

## 4 Wilkes-Barre VA Medical Center

 Employees <b>1,331</b>	 Operating Beds <b>173</b>	 Outpatient Visits <b>402,049</b>	 Veterans Served <b>38,954</b>	 Operating Budget <b>\$230,547,000</b>
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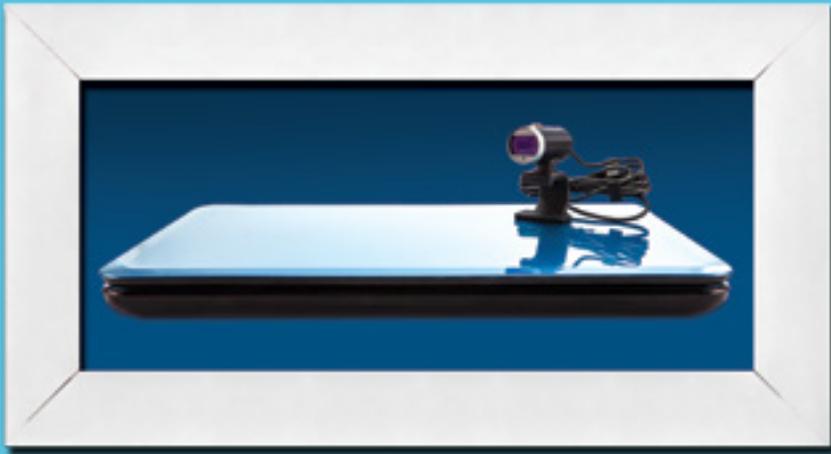
Web: [www.wilkes-barre.va.gov](http://www.wilkes-barre.va.gov) | Facebook: [www.facebook.com/VAWilkesBarre](https://www.facebook.com/VAWilkesBarre)

## 5 Wilmington VA Medical Center

 Employees <b>920.3</b>	 Operating Beds <b>60</b>	 Outpatient Visits <b>282,028</b>	 Patients Served <b>27,976</b>	 Operating Budget <b>\$189,521,900</b>
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Web: [www.wilmington.va.gov](http://www.wilmington.va.gov) | Facebook: [www.facebook.com/WilmingtonVAMC](https://www.facebook.com/WilmingtonVAMC)





*In fiscal year 2015, VISN 4 will receive \$32.2 million and will hire more than 430 full-time employees to improve Veterans' access to VA health care.*

# access

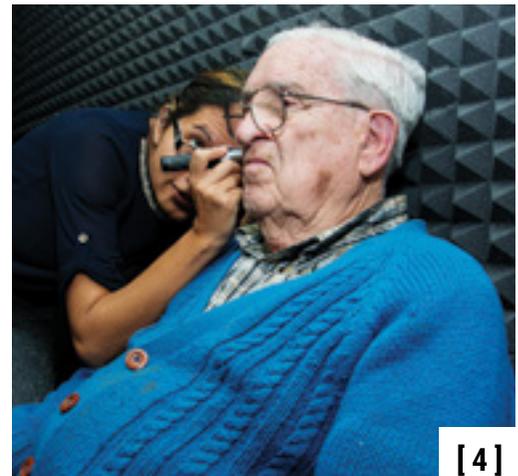
*One of VISN 4's most important goals is to enhance Veterans'*

*ability to **access** our services.*



To that end, we've significantly expanded our network of outpatient clinics and initiated a number of other programs to improve access to our care. We want to make it easy for Veterans to access every health care service our Network offers.

## *Additional steps VISN 4 took in 2014 to improve health care access for Veterans include:*



- [1]** Altoona VA Medical Center opened two new community-based outpatient clinics, in Huntingdon and Indiana counties.
- [2]** Altoona added a second home based primary care team, to provide management of chronic diseases for rural Veterans in their own homes. Coatesville VA Medical Center also expanded its home based primary care program by using a rural health grant to hire additional staff and increase the number of Veterans it can care for.
- [3]** Coatesville VA Medical Center began a mobile adult day health care program to serve more than 25 elderly or disabled Veterans who live at home. These Veterans can now join VA health care professionals for recreational activities close to home – one day each week at the Downingtown Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 845 and the West Chester Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 106.
- [4]** Philadelphia VA Medical Center's community-based outpatient clinic in Gloucester County now provides audiology care for eligible Veterans in an OnSite Health Van stationed at the clinic.
- [5]** Extended hour encounters throughout VISN 4 grew from 11,092 in fiscal year 2013 to 17,925 in fiscal year 2014, a 162 percent increase.
- [6]** At the end of fiscal year 2014, 96 percent of all Veterans served by VISN 4 completed their appointments within 30 days of their preferred or clinically indicated date.
- [7]** VISN 4's electronic wait list decreased by 85% between June 2014 and September 30, 2014.
- [8]** Wilkes-Barre VA Medical Center implemented a contract with the Wayne Memorial Community Health Center to establish a new outreach clinic in rural Honesdale, Pennsylvania. The clinic bridges the geographic gap for Veterans who had a hard time making longer trips to already existing sites.

# Health Care Anywhere



**Veterans  
Health Library**

[www.veteranshealthlibrary.org](http://www.veteranshealthlibrary.org)



**Veterans Health Library bolsters existing online health portal**

My Health*e*Vet ([www.myhealth.va.gov](http://www.myhealth.va.gov)) is VA's personal health record. The online record allows Veterans and their families to better understand their health status, explore ways to monitor and improve their health, and connect with VA health care providers.

The system, available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, allows Veterans to become active partners in their own health care. The website has added a number of new features recently, according to Lisa Kendziora, VISN 4's My Health*e*Vet coordinator.

One of the site's most popular new features is the VA Prescription Tracking tool, which allows Veterans to track the delivery of their VA prescriptions online through My Health*e*Vet. It tells them when prescriptions will be delivered, where the package is in the delivery process, and what will be included in the package when it arrives.

Besides improving Veterans' satisfaction with My Health*e*Vet, and adding to the value of the site, the new VA Prescription Tracking means Veterans no longer have to call VA to check when their prescription will arrive – reducing call waiting times at facilities for those who call with other issues.

My Health*e*Vet also recently introduced the "Veterans Health Library," which offers Veterans, family members, and caregivers access to comprehensive, Veteran-focused health information.

The library is a one-stop source of health information and resources to help Veterans understand and manage their health problems, make informed decisions about their care, and stay well and well informed. The Veterans Health Library information includes topics specific to Veterans, such as Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, Traumatic Brain Injury, and Agent Orange.

"It's the go-to place for patients and staff, so that we're all speaking the same language," says Kendziora. "The Library uses plain language health content to simplify complex health information so that it can be easily understood by all patients."

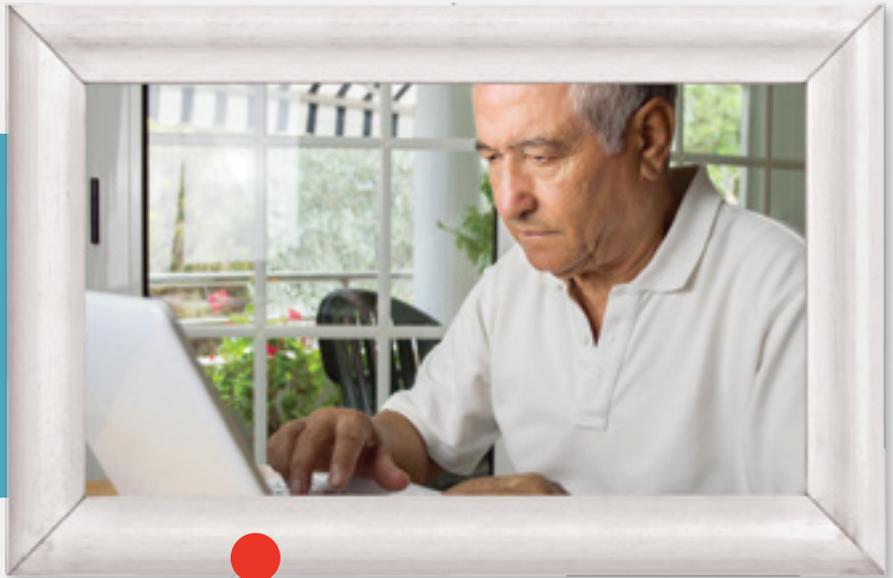
Another new feature is the "Health*e*Living Assessment." This tool offers Veterans help in taking their first step to making healthy changes. The Assessment asks My Health*e*Vet users confidential questions about health issues including diet, exercise, weight, family medical history, and alcohol and tobacco use. The answers are used to calculate the Veteran's "health age" and risk for disease.



“

*My HealthVet empowers patients to partner with their health care teams and be an active partner in their care decisions. It is a fabulous tool, and will help Veterans get the care they need and deserve.*”

**Lisa Kendziora** / VISN 4 My HealthVet Coordinator



*“It helps patients focus on changing their lifestyle to improve their health,” explains Kendziora.*

At the end of 2014, 173,655 VISN 4 Veterans were registered to use My HealthVet, an increase of more than 25,000 from 2013. In addition, 72,848 patients now have Premium My HealthVet accounts, up from 53,000 last year.

Premium (upgraded) accounts allow Veterans to view their official VA health record, view their Department of

Defense Military Service information, and communicate electronically with their VA health care team.

To obtain a premium account, My HealthVet users need to go through an authentication process. This process verifies a Veteran’s identity before allowing access to their VA health record.

My HealthVet’s secure messaging feature allows VA patients to communicate online with their health care teams on health issues including appointments, medications, lab results, and routine questions about their health status. VISN 4 patients and providers generated 343,635 messages last year – over a third more than 2013.

Along with most of the clinical care areas communicating with their patients, in 2014, VISN 4 began integrating secure messaging within home telehealth, ensuring every Veteran receiving home telehealth services is informed on the many ways My HealthVet and secure messaging will improve their care.

## There are now two ways to upgrade an account:



**In-Person Authentication:** A VA patient can upgrade his or her account in person at a local VA Medical Center or community-based outpatient clinic.



**Online Authentication:** A My HealthVet VA patient account user can upgrade his or her account online if he or she has an eBenefits premium account.



Online  
My Health, My Care: 24/7 Access to VA

# Telehealth Programs Surge in VISN 4



**New programs, increased services mark 2014 accomplishments**

Telehealth involves the use of health informatics, disease management, and communications technologies to make care more convenient and accessible for Veterans, and to help keep them healthier. VA and VISN 4 are at the forefront of developing and using telehealth technology.

At the Louis A. Johnson VA Medical Center in Clarksburg, West Virginia, 55.4 percent of Veterans are participating in the facility's virtual care program – the highest percentage in VISN 4.

Among the facility's specialties are “traditional” telehealth methods such as teleretinal imaging to improve eye health and telemental health counseling. In 2014, a Clarksburg Veteran – the facility's first – participated in a mental health counseling session using his home computer and webcam.

A quickly growing clinical program is the facility's tele-warfarin clinic, which manages the health of Veterans taking warfarin, a prescription

medication used to prevent harmful blood clots from forming or growing larger.

***At the Erie VA Medical Center, telehealth encounters increased by 30 percent from 2013 to 2014.***

The facility has hired telehealth clinical technicians at the medical center and all its outpatient clinics, and now provides telehealth services at its community-based outpatient clinics for its physical medicine and rehabilitation programs.

And the Wilkes-Barre VA Medical Center has introduced tele-genomics, in which cancer patients undergo genetic counseling from counselors located in Salt Lake City, and tele-gynecology, in which the facility's full-time gynecologist counsels patients remotely on hormonal replacement therapy, follows up on surgical procedures, and provides consultations to assist health care providers at the community-based outpatient clinics.





*During primary care visits, Wilkes-Barre VA providers take photos to send to an ophthalmologist to prevent the need for additional appointments for the Veteran.*



*“As virtual care continues to evolve, we’ll provide more opportunities to enable Veterans to receive timely, quality, and efficient health care — closer to home.”*

**Ron Sandreth** / Operations manager for community-based outpatient clinics and rural health at Louis A. Johnson VA Medical Center (Clarksburg)





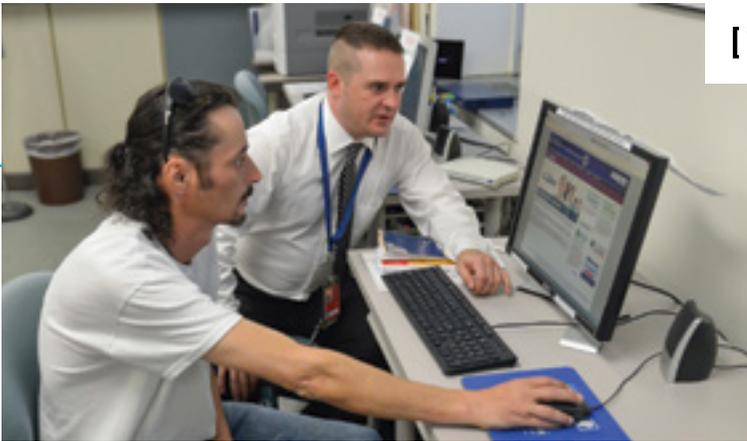
# patient-centered care

*In VISN 4, we strive to provide personalized, proactive, and **patient-driven care** to all Veterans who have entrusted their care to us.*



Making sure that a patient's health and well-being are properly cared for goes beyond merely managing diseases and injuries. Patient-centered care considers the whole person and all of his or her individual needs and goals, and makes the patient's goals central to every care decision.

*Here are some ways in which VISN 4 improved patient-centered care in 2014:*



[ 7 ]



[ 8 ]



[ 9 ]

- [ 1 ] Erie VA Medical Center implemented free valet parking to provide easy, hassle-free parking for patients, visitors, and volunteers.
- [ 2 ] Lebanon VA Medical Center strengthened and expanded its partnership with nearby Harrisburg Area Community College by placing a campus counselor onsite. The program, called VetSuccess On Campus, is the only one of its kind in Pennsylvania and supports returning Veterans in their efforts to receive a quality education as part of their transition back to civilian life.
- [ 3 ] Wilkes-Barre VA Medical Center initiated a buffet-style lunch service for residents of their Community Living Center. Residents are now able to choose from a variety of menu options in a social and engaging dining environment. Lunch service now includes an appetizer, main course, and dessert cart.
- [ 4 ] Research staff at VA Pittsburgh's Human Engineering Research Laboratories worked with representatives of the Federal Drug Administration, Johns Hopkins University, and the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency to publish a paper on the interdisciplinary science needed to achieve a breakthrough in brain-computer interface.
- [ 5 ] VA Pittsburgh's "Addiction Triage for Homeless: Enhancing VA Medical Homes" program helped reduce emergency department use and inpatient admissions at the facility by implementing case management and substance use care for homeless Veterans.
- [ 6 ] The Coatesville VA Medical Center's Women Veterans Health program received a \$4,500 VA grant to support the development and implementation of a number of programs for women Veterans, including support and education for women Veterans who have experienced domestic violence; training for the health care providers who treat them; and educational campaigns to raise awareness.
- [ 7 ] Louis A. Johnson VA Medical Center now provides facility tours for newly enrolled Veterans. The 15- to 20-minute tour includes common service areas and an optional orientation for case-specific programs, services, and specialty clinics throughout the facility. This professional and personalized welcome for all Veterans provides a great opportunity for them to get to know the facility and its services, and to be enrolled in programs such as My Health<sup>e</sup>Vet.
- [ 8 ] VA Butler Healthcare's hospice care program was ranked first in the Nation among VA facilities in supporting Veterans at the end of their lives and their families, according to a study conducted during fiscal year 2014. VA Butler's program focuses on providing high levels of quality of life and comfort for Veterans with advanced diseases that are life limiting. The program provides for the physical needs of Veterans, in addition to the psychological, emotional, social, and spiritual needs of these Veterans and their loved ones.
- [ 9 ] VA Butler Healthcare implemented a new centralized check-in process. Now, no matter how many appointments a Veteran has in one day, he or she only has to check in and out once.

# Boot Camps

## Bring Veterans Home



**Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Coatesville work with communities to house homeless Veterans**

In 2009, the Department of Veterans Affairs committed itself to ending Veteran homelessness by the end of 2015. VA has made strong progress towards that goal since then.

According to the 2014 Point-in-Time estimates of homelessness in America, a national survey conducted by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), homelessness among Veterans has declined 33 percent since 2010. VISN 4 is proud of its contribution to that decline.

The Network uses a number of means to help get Veterans off the streets and into permanent housing. One major tool is the Department of Housing and Urban Development – VA Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH) program. The program is a joint effort between HUD and VA to provide homeless Veterans with HUD housing vouchers allowing them to rent privately owned housing, while VA offers clinical and other supportive services.

### Philadelphia VAMC's Contribution

"Since August 2013, we've housed 87 people in Philadelphia through the HUD-VASH program," explains Rob Greco, HUD-VASH supervisor for the Philadelphia VA Medical Center.

The Philadelphia VA is also participating in another program to end chronic homelessness. The program, called the 100,000 Homes Campaign, is a national movement of communities and organizations working together to find permanent homes for 100,000 of America's most vulnerable homeless individuals and families.

The campaign's "boot camp" process has brought people involved in homeless programs throughout Philadelphia together to speed up the process of getting Veterans into safe and secure homes. "We work together, and share which programs work best for homeless Veterans," says Greco. "And if Veterans come to us who are not eligible for VA help, we refer them to others who may be able to help." The group meets weekly to share information.

One result of the process has been the forging of a "pretty great" relationship with the Philadelphia Housing Authority. Greco cited a number of improvements that relationship has offered Veterans.

Veterans, for example, no longer need to go to the housing

authority's offices to do business with them, and VA's case management team now offers tours of available apartments to homeless Veterans every week – even before Veterans receive their HUD vouchers. The housing authority also pre-inspects units to ensure their suitability before a Veteran agrees to move in.

As a result, the time it takes for a Veteran to get permanent housing under HUD-VASH has been cut in half, from 120 days to 60. In fiscal year 2014, 77 percent of the Veterans housed under the program were chronically homeless, and "we're almost always operating at nearly full capacity," Greco explains. "That tells us we're doing well."

With more than 20 case managers for homeless Veterans, Philadelphia has one of the largest VA staffs to support homeless Veterans in the Nation. "We work together very well," says Greco.

***"We not only take care of homeless Veterans, we take care of each other. It's really remarkable to see how we help each other out and how efficiently things work, even when we're in a constant state of growth."***





## Coatesville's Story

Philadelphia's success has been replicated elsewhere in VISN 4. Kelly Turturice, social work supervisor for the Coatesville VA, explains: "I was so impressed by what I was hearing about this program from Philadelphia and elsewhere that I wanted to have a similar process for Coatesville, even though our facility is not in a major urban area. Because we have almost 400 beds filled on any given night for homeless Veterans here, many Veterans come here from elsewhere, and decide they'd like to stay."

Coatesville received permission from "100,000 homes" to use the campaign's techniques to put together its own monthly boot camp. The facility pulled teams together in each of the three

Pennsylvania counties it supports – Chester, Montgomery, and Delaware – to get all the key players together.

"It's very much a community-based project, not just VA," explains Turturice. "That's why I think it's been so successful."

In February 2014, 30 area homeless advocates and agency representatives set "100 day sprints," ambitious but achievable goals to house homeless Veterans, for each county. Two of the three counties exceeded their goals by June, one by a significant number. Once the sprint was completed, all the counties recommitted to new goals for December, with similar success.

**“** *Until every Veteran is housed, though, we're not done!*

**Kelly Turturice** / Coatesville VA Social Work Supervisor



## Helping the Homeless in Pittsburgh

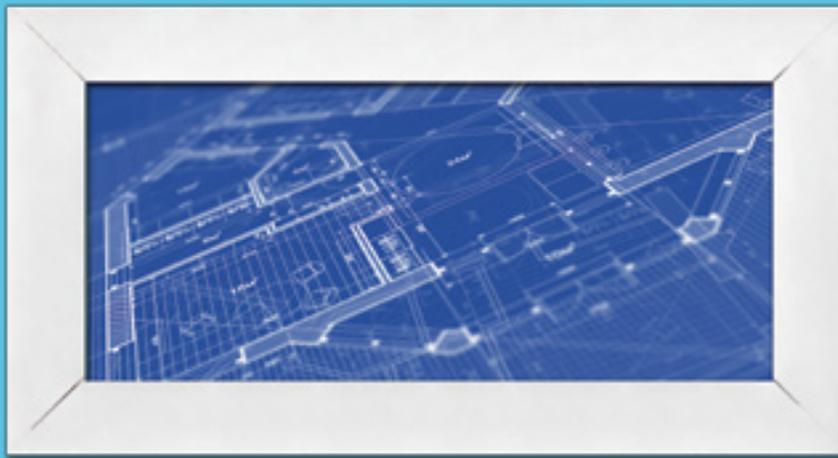
On August 8, 2014, 35 representatives from agencies including VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System, HUD, the Mayor of Pittsburgh's office, the Allegheny County and City of Pittsburgh Housing Authorities, the Allegheny County Department of Human Services, and others held the first meeting of Pittsburgh's "boot camp" to help the area's homeless Veterans.

At the meeting the group committed itself to providing housing for 627 homeless Veterans over the next 16 months. In the first 100 days after the meeting, 125 Veterans received permanent housing. More than a third of these Veterans have either been homeless for more than a year or have had multiple instances of homelessness throughout their lives. A total of 274 homeless Veterans have received services through the initiative thus far.



**“** *We're not only working with HUD, but also with our county and our community, because they also are housing homeless Veterans.*

**Mary Frances Pilarski**  
VA Pittsburgh Health Care for Homeless Veterans Program Manager



# facility enhancements and expansions

***Newly constructed*** buildings, offices and suites allow VISN 4 to provide more and better assistance to the Veterans we are privileged to serve.



The benefits of the projects completed in 2014 are numerous: they will help Veterans receive shorter wait times, more homelike environments, increased privacy, and new treatments. They also demonstrate our responsibility to help protect the environment of the communities in which our Network's facilities are located. Here are some of the construction projects VISN 4 has recently completed to ensure our Veterans receive world-class health care in facilities that are worthy of them.

## In 2014, these facility enhancements and expansions were completed:

[2]



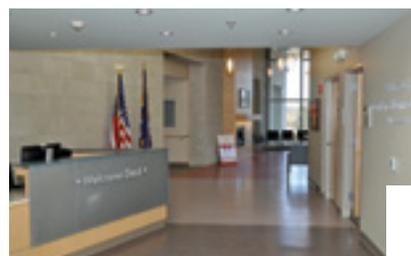
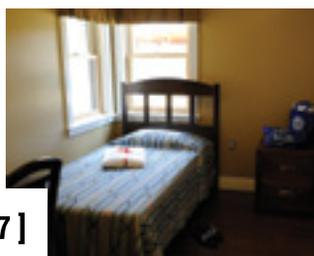
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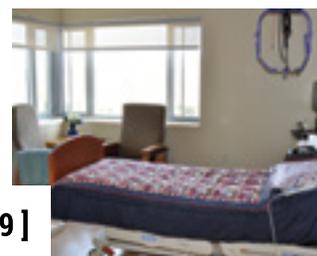
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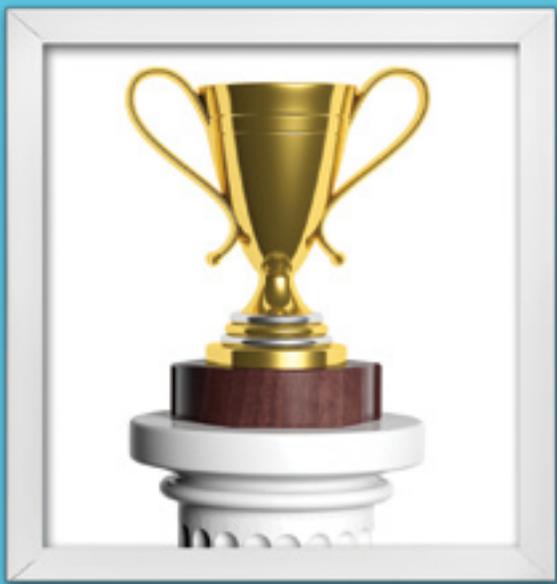
[7]



[9]



- [1] James E. Van Zandt VA Medical Center in Altoona, Pennsylvania, moved its Johnstown community-based outpatient clinic into a larger building where staff can provide additional specialty care services, such as audiology, mental health, nutrition, and teledermatology.
- [2] Louis A. Johnson VA Medical Center in Clarksburg, West Virginia, moved its Tucker County community-based outpatient clinic into a larger building where Veterans will receive improved and increased care and services. With this move, the 19-year-old clinic doubled in size. The clinic now serves more than 1,200 Veterans from seven counties every year.
- [3] Coatesville VA Medical Center opened its new Specialty Care, Urgent Care and Diagnostic Service Center. The \$13.4 million center includes new equipment and technology, increased space, centralized check-in areas, and improved patient safety features.
- [4] Erie VA Medical Center moved their Ashtabula community-based outpatient clinic into a new 6,276 square-foot clinic where they can continue to expand efforts to provide onsite specialty services, including telehealth and behavioral health programs. The Ashtabula clinic serves 2,300 local Veterans.
- [5] Lebanon VA Medical Center opened a new, expanded, surgical center. The new center nearly doubles the capacity of Lebanon's operating, procedure, and pre- and post-operative areas. Opening this new center required workflow and process evaluation, staff training, and consultation with surgical experts in both VA and the private sector.
- [6] VA Butler Healthcare completed construction of its relocated Community Living Center (CLC), and opened 30 CLC beds. The center's first 30 beds opened in fall 2011. The new CLC houses 60 Veterans and is designed to make Veterans feel more at home by providing them with a community setting in which to live, as well as with private bedrooms and bathrooms.
- [7] Lebanon VA Medical Center opened a new residential rehabilitation and treatment center (also referred to as a domiciliary). This \$7.4 million facility provides state-of-the-art, high-quality residential rehabilitation and treatment services for Veterans with mental health and substance use disorders, medical concerns, and psychosocial needs such as homelessness and unemployment.
- [8] Wilmington VA Medical Center opened a new Education Resource Center to provide state-of-the-art training for the facility's medical professionals.
- [9] Coatesville VA Medical Center opened a new hospice unit. The \$5 million addition includes a large, sunlit great room, ideal for Veterans and families to spend special moments together; a modern, home-like kitchen in which families can prepare favorite meals; a meeting area; and eight private suites.
- [10] VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System used new interior piping maps to identify more than 1,000 areas of stagnant-water-piping for removal. VAPHS installed instantaneous water heaters and more than 3,000 specialized mixing valves, enabling staff to increase circulating hot water temperatures and effectively kill bacteria while minimizing the risk of scalding for patients and staff. The facility also installed 19 chlorine injector systems in its hot- and cold-water distribution systems to prevent Legionella growth throughout the plumbing system.
- [11] Wilkes-Barre VA Medical Center replaced its 60-plus-year-old water tower. The new 400,000-gallon tank (100,000 gallons larger than the old one) incorporates the latest technologies for maintaining and monitoring a safe supply of fresh water.



# celebrated events

*In every organization*

**events** occur that deserve

*to be recognized;  
and employees are honored who  
deserve to feel proud.*



Within VISN 4, we call these “celebrated events.” In 2014, our Network’s celebrated events included visits from dignitaries, a special event perfectly accomplished after years of planning, prestigious awards given to employees in recognition of demonstrated excellence, and the dedication of new buildings and programs that will serve Veterans well for years to come.

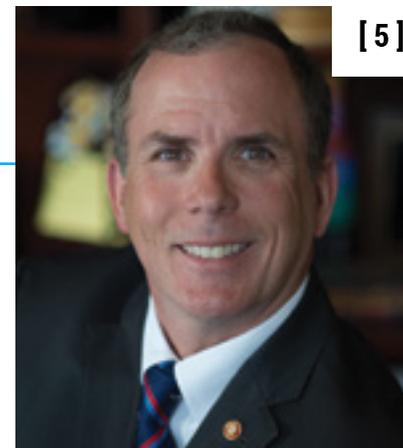
## VISN 4's celebrated events in 2014 included:



[1]



[3]



[5]



[6]



[7]



[8]

[1] Lebanon VA Medical Center received the 2014 Physician Assistant Education Association Partnership Faculty Award for their involvement with the Pennsylvania State Hershey Physician Assistant Program.

[2] Dr. Leslie R. M. Hausmann, research health scientist at the Center for Health Equity Research and Promotion at VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System, received a Diversity and Inclusion Excellence Award from VA Secretary Bob McDonald. Hausmann was recognized for her efforts to increase the representation of less than expected groups in the health sciences.

[3] The Jewish Healthcare Foundation, in partnership with The Fine Foundation, recognized VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System with a 2014 Fine Award for Teamwork Excellence in Health Care. This award, open to all western Pennsylvania health care providers, encourages essential teamwork in developing systems, tools, and programs that better serve patients and families by spotlighting those who have made a difference. VA Pittsburgh received a platinum award for revamping its policies and procedures for anesthesia, surgery, and recovery for joint replacement patients.

[4] The 3M Corporation recognized Lebanon VAMC as a national best practice for excellence in sterilization safety, which reduces hospital-acquired infections.

[5] Dr. Rory Cooper, director of VA Pittsburgh's Human Engineering Research Laboratory, was one of three recipients of the robotics industry's highest honor, the Engelberger Robotics Award. Cooper was also one of 12 recipients of the Henry Viscardi Achievement Awards in 2014 and was officially appointed Civilian Aide to the Secretary of the Army for western Pennsylvania.

[6] Melanie Thomas, voluntary service assistant at Wilkes-Barre VA Medical Center, received the Arline Phillips Achievement Award from the Greater Wilkes-Barre Association. This award recognizes a person who has overcome obstacles associated with having vision impairment and who exemplifies an independent life style.

[7] Louis A. Johnson VA Medical Center in Clarksburg, West Virginia, became a Quilt of Valor Distribution Center. The medical center has already presented 38 quilts to Ex-Prisoners of War, women Veterans and Veterans of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. To learn more about this program, visit [www.qovf.org](http://www.qovf.org).

[8] Erie VA Medical Center celebrated the opening of its new Behavioral Health Clinic with a Veterans Art Gala and Open House for Veterans, their families, and members of the community. The Art Gala showcased art projects created by Veterans involved with the new clinic. Each art piece represented an aspect of a Veteran's journey through recovery.

# VA Secretary, Deputy Secretary Tour Philadelphia VAMC



## Secretary commends medical center for getting Veterans off waiting list

Last summer, both VA's then-acting Secretary (now Deputy Secretary) Sloan D. Gibson and new Secretary Robert McDonald visited and toured the Philadelphia VA Medical Center. Deputy Secretary Gibson's visit took place on June 23; Secretary McDonald's visit took place on September 5.

Each VA leader toured the facility and met with medical center staff and with community leaders and Congressional staff. Both Deputy Secretary Gibson and Secretary McDonald (who asks Veterans and VA employees to call him "Bob") also held press conferences for local news media outlets, addressing national and local VA-related issues.

During his visit, Secretary McDonald recognized the medical center and its staff for the work that had been done to provide Philadelphia-area Veterans with better access to VA health care. He noted that in just a few months, the facility had reached out to more than 1,600 Veterans, and had gotten them off waiting lists.

In his press conference he said, "(Philadelphia's) employees understand, as I do, that we will have to earn the trust of the American people. Part of regaining that trust is getting Veterans off wait lists, into clinics, in Philadelphia — and we've made progress!"



*...in just a few months, the facility had reached out to more than 1,600 Veterans, and had gotten them off waiting lists.*



Those interested in participating or attending can get more information at [www.wheelchairgames.org](http://www.wheelchairgames.org).



# Wheelchair Games Roll On!



## 34th Annual Games a rousing success in the City of Brotherly Love

More than 550 Veteran athletes participated in the 34th annual National Veterans Wheelchair Games in Philadelphia from August 12-17, 2014. The Games, which were co-presented by VA and Paralyzed Veterans of America along with local sponsors, were jam-packed with more than five days of exciting competition in eighteen medaled events including softball, quad rugby, basketball, and power soccer.

The Games showcased the prowess and determination of the athletes who participated in them, and the dedication and enthusiasm of fans and more than 3,500 volunteers from the Philadelphia VA Medical Center and throughout VISN 4 who worked hard to help these Veterans along their rehabilitation journey.

The theme of the 2014 Games was “Where Heroes Make History,” highlighting Philadelphia’s rich American history.

The Games are the largest annual wheelchair sports event in the world, and is an annual event open to all Veterans of the U.S. military who use wheelchairs for sports competition due to spinal cord injuries, neurological conditions, amputations, or other mobility impairments.

The 2014 Games were the first to be held in Philadelphia. Preparations are well underway for the 35th Games.



**The 35th Annual Games will be held:  
June 21-26, 2015  
in Dallas, Texas**



2014 ANNUAL REPORT

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