

# **Wilkes-Barre VA Medical Center**

## **2011 ANNUAL REPORT**

**ON THE CUTTING EDGE**

## MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

I am excited to be at the Wilkes-Barre VA Medical Center. Since arriving in early December 2011, I've seen that this Facility provides outstanding quality care and that our employees and volunteers exemplify the values critical to giving the best care anywhere. During 2011, the Medical Center experienced a number of changes and challenges. Our employees and volunteers rose to the challenges and performed at an exceptional level, offering services that are "On the Cutting Edge". These services demonstrate the Medical Center's emphasis of fulfilling our critical mission: providing outstanding health care to our Veterans.

The purpose of this Annual Report is to highlight the many things we are proud of and the many enhancements we have made to care for the Veterans of Wyoming Valley. Examples of this performance included:

- Recruiting 37 new medical staff enabling the expansion of services offered on-site;
- Expanding services with new equipment:
  - New Bone Densitometry (DXA) Machine,
  - New Radiology Equipment at Sayre and Allentown Clinics,
  - Adding MRI software platforms to provide advanced innovative techniques for MR image acquisition and processing,
  - New Digital Radiology/Fluoroscopy.
- Meeting all expectations and goals for Transforming the VA into a 21st Century Organization (T-21 Plan). Significant contributions include:
  - Patient Care Aligned Teams: Greater than 35% increase in Staffing Ratio for Patient Care Aligned Teams,
  - Prevention Initiative: Excellent Performance – Met 9/9 initiatives. (Target was 6/9),
- Achieving a composite score of 100 on The Office of Compliance and Business Integrity Scorecard;
- Achieving Executive Career Field (ECF) Organizational Goals in Financial Stewardship, Operations Excellence and Client Satisfaction.

I am elated to be here as a part of a stable and permanent leadership team. Many of you already know our Chief of Staff, Dr. Mirza Ali, M.D., and our Associate Director of Nursing Services, Linda Stout, RN, MSN. Our Associate Director, Douglas Paxton has been with Wilkes-Barre since March of 2011. This past year has been outstanding. I'm confident that we will move forward to an even more impressive future as we continue to provide services to our Veterans that are "On the Cutting Edge".

*Margaret B. Caplan*

MARGARET B. CAPLAN  
Director



*Executive Leadership Team: Left to right: Mirza Z. Ali, M.D., Chief of Staff; Margaret B. Caplan, Director; Douglas V. Paxton, Associate Director; and Linda Stout, R.N., Associate Director for Nursing Services.*

## CARDIAC CATHETERIZATION AND ELECTROPHYSIOLOGY SUITE

The 12,000 square foot newly renovated area for the Diagnostic Cardiac Catheterization and Electrophysiology Suite and Hemodialysis Unit provides for an environmentally improved, safe and aesthetically pleasing setting that provides state of the art equipment and services to Veterans.

The Diagnostic Cardiac Catheterization and Electrophysiology suite will enable the Medical Center to provide coronary angiograms and other sophisticated cardiac diagnostic tests for Veterans at Wilkes-Barre without having to refer them to community facilities, or other VA Medical Centers.

The suite is equipped with state of the art bi-plane imaging equipment capable of 3D imaging. Services to be offered include: diagnostic cardiac catheterization, peripheral angiography and stenting, pacemaker and Automated Implanted Cardioverter Defibrillator (AICD) insertion, and comprehensive electrophysiology studies to determine and treat the causes of certain kinds irregular heart beat.



**Cardiac Catheterization Team:** - Left to right: Anuradha Tunuguntla, M.D., and Mickey Gadhoke, M.D., FACC, Cardiologists; Rich Weaver, Registered Cardiovascular Invasive Specialist, Lead Technologist; Melissa Puchalski and Ellen Dodd, Radiologic Technologists (Radiography); and Kristina Griffiths, R.N., B.S.N, Nurse Manager.



## HEMODIALYSIS UNIT

Although the Medical Center currently provides Hemodialysis for Veterans, the Unit was relocated to an entirely new area and the number of stations performing dialysis was increased to eight.

The Hemodialysis unit employs a new state-of-art water processing system which uses a superior heated water technology to disinfect the water and make it safer by limiting bacterial growth. It has built in safety features with automatic alarms in case of any malfunction. Overall this Hemodialysis unit will increase our capacity and allow us to provide safer and more effective care to our dialysis patients.

## PET/CT Scan - Advanced Technology Designed to Help Accelerate Patient Care

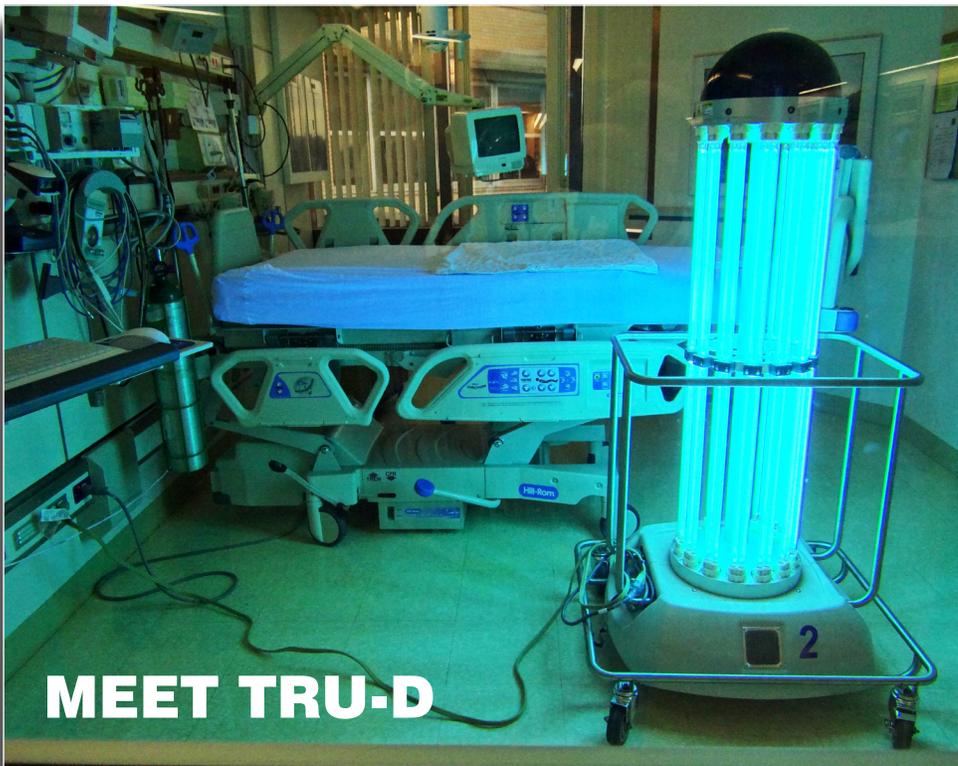
We have just added one of the most advanced diagnostic Positron Emission Tomography/Computed Tomography (PET/CT) imaging systems complete with the latest imaging tools and most advanced clinical applications. PET combined with CT is rapidly becoming a major diagnostic imaging modality used predominantly in determining the presence and severity of cancers, neurological conditions, and cardiovascular disease. It is currently the most effective way to check for cancer recurrences. Studies demonstrate that PET/CT offers significant advantages over other forms of imaging in diagnosing disease. Veterans will benefit from this advanced technology. It brings vital information together to yield early diagnosis as well as effective staging and treatment planning from the beginning of the disease and potentially improve patient outcomes.



*"We are excited to offer PET/CT as a new imaging tool for our radiologists and oncologists. Veterans of our facility who previously needed to travel off station for this exam will benefit from its effectiveness in yielding early disease diagnosis, staging and treatment planning."*

**- Joseph D. Kalowsky, D.O., Chief, Imaging Service**





## MEET TRU-D

Tru-D is a robot we have put into place helping our staff keep a germ-free facility. After we do all normal cleaning, Tru-D takes over and shines high-intensity Ultraviolet Light inside a room, taking care of all the microscopic germs and bacteria too small for the human eye to see. Tru-D is an additional step in the cleaning and disinfecting of clinical areas.

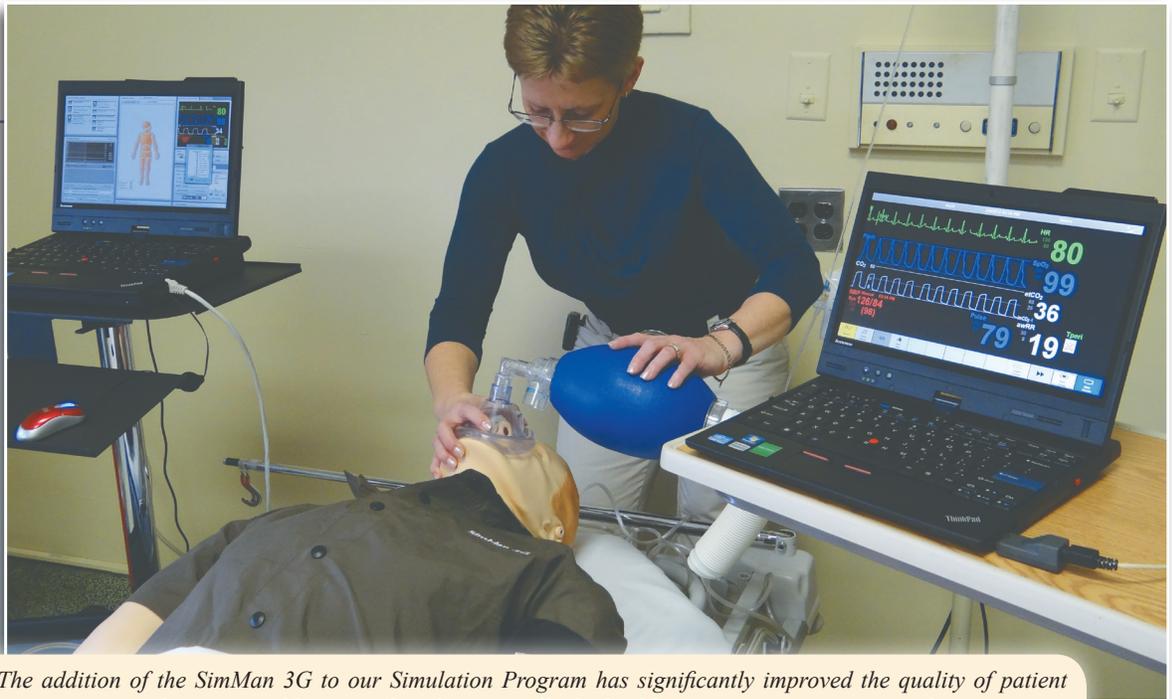
Recent studies have suggested that contaminated environmental surfaces can contribute to hospital acquired infections. By using this UV technology, any surfaces with the potential for contamination would be disinfected, eliminating bacteria that may cause infection. This process improves patient safety and quality of care by decreasing the spread of infection throughout the facility.

## MEET BO, the SimMan!

The SimMan is a high-fidelity mannequin with the ability to create multiple patient presentations.

During a simulated scenario, the instructor uses the computer-based interface to control in "real time" a patient's condition and make changes based on the care that is being provided by participants. Since his arrival at our facility in September of 2011, SimMan has been involved in simulations for Code Blue, Rapid Response Team, external pacing/ synchronized cardioversion, and post procedure care of the cardiac catheterization patient. With the ability to program a rapidly decompensating patient, staff has been able to practice such skills as applying the BCLS/ACLS algorithms, using the AED, and interpreting/treating cardiac arrhythmias.

Staff Development is very pleased with Bo (yes, he has a name) and is excited to see various services incorporating his use into their education plans.



*"The addition of the SimMan 3G to our Simulation Program has significantly improved the quality of patient care experiences that we are able to simulate for our staff. The health care team seems to enjoy the opportunity to practice/improve competencies in a safe environment where they are free to learn without the stress of working with a live patient."*

**- Susan Lewis, M.S.N., R.N./C.C.R.N., Nurse Education Specialist**

*Photo above: Susan Lewis demonstrates some of the capabilities of SimMan 3G.*



## TELEHEALTH SERVICES

- TeleNutrition
- TelePsychiatry
- TeleSurgery
- TeleSocial Work
- TeleRetinal Screening
- TeleWound
- TeleSmoking Cessation
- TeleMOVE
- TeleSpinal Cord Injury



*"Veterans now have the opportunity to access specialty clinics closer to their homes and limit the need to drive to the Medical Center. We offer a variety of individual and group Telehealth specialty clinics to our Veteran."*

- Doreen Lysiak, M.S.N., R.N. Telehealth Coordinator

*From Left to right: Doreen Lysiak, MSN, RN, Telehealth Coordinator; Ghazali A. Chaudry, MD, Chief of Surgical Service; Dharamraj Nirmul, MD, Surgeon; and Joseph Carbo, MS, Physician Assistant.*

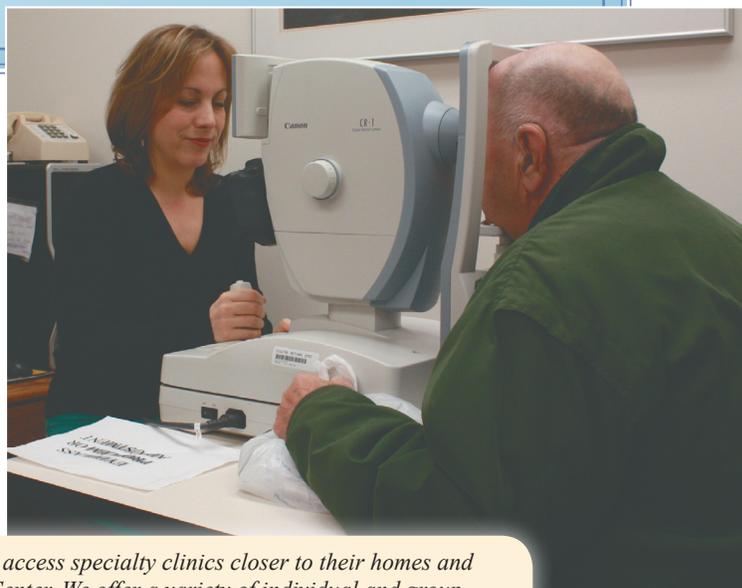
### New Tele-Surgery Clinic

The Medical Center launched its new Tele-Surgery Clinic in 2011. This is an exciting opportunity in combining health care and technology to increase access by narrowing distance and improving patient outcomes. According to Ghazali A. Chaudry, MD, Chief of Surgical Service, clinical video telehealth is just the beginning in outreach efforts for surgical services and he hopes to expand to other community based outpatient clinics in the near future. The clinic

will provide pre and post operative surgical consults to Veterans living in areas that have limited VA services. Telehealth video technology enables the Veteran to be seen at a community based outpatient clinic closer to where they live. This service could not be possible without the full support of leadership throughout the VA system, and a commitment to improve care to our Veterans.

### TeleRetinal Imaging

Diabetes is the major cause of blindness. There are 12,000 to 24,000 new cases yearly. Regular screening and control of diabetes can help prevent major vision loss. Teleretinal imaging uses a special camera to photograph the inner part of the eye in patients with diabetes. The picture can be taken in one of the VA clinics close to the Veterans home and be evaluated by an eye doctor at a distant site.



*"Veterans now have the opportunity to access specialty clinics closer to their homes and limit the need to drive to the Medical Center. We offer a variety of individual and group Telehealth specialty clinics to our Veterans."*

- Dr. Bruce Brownstein

# ACUPUNCTURE

Our acupuncture clinic provides an array of services for our Veterans - pain management for chronic conditions such as low back pain, sciatica, arthritis, knee pain, shoulder pain, elbow pain, and wrist pain. Acupuncture is also used to treat muscle spasms, some neuropathic pain as well as a treatment for PTSD, anxiety and insomnia.



## WOMEN'S HEALTH CARE

### BREAST CANCER AWARENESS MONTH OBSERVED

The Medical Center's Women Veterans Program recognizes Breast Cancer Awareness Month as part of its commitment to provide "the best care anywhere" to Women Veterans. The Women Veterans Health Program offers gender specific services to women veterans. The VA is committed to meeting the general health, mental health and special needs of each woman veteran in a way that offers her privacy, dignity and sensitivity.

Each Veteran is unique. Contact the VA Health Benefits Call Center 1-877-222-8387 for assistance with your eligibility status or the Women Veterans Health Strategic Health Care Group [www.publichealth.va.gov/womenshealth](http://www.publichealth.va.gov/womenshealth). Pat Conroy, Women Veterans Program Manager at the Wilkes-Barre VA Medical Center, can be contacted toll free at 1-877-928-2621 extension 7517.



Left to Right: Marie von Funk, Pat Conroy, Women Veterans Program Manager, and Mary Babcock.

### MEDICAL CENTER HOSTS LUNCHEONS FOR WOMEN VETERANS

The Wilkes-Barre VAMC hosted two luncheons in 2011 for Women Veterans. In May, Mary Babcock, Registered Dietitian and Marie von Funk, Support Network Coordinator for WomenHeart of Greater Lehigh Valley addressed issues relating to women's cardiac health. Major Melissa Rickard, CRNP, MSN was the guest speaker at the November luncheon. She shared her experiences as "A Major, A Woman, A Nurse".



### BREAST CANCER AWARENESS WALK

The Women Veterans Program at the VA Medical Center in Wilkes-Barre sponsored a Breast Cancer Awareness Walk on Friday, October 21st on the Medical Center campus. All Veterans, their families, friends and neighbors were invited to take part in "Walking Toward a Cure" in recognition of Breast Cancer Awareness Month. The walk was followed by a Veterans Benefits and Healthy Lifestyle Fair.

"It is important that the Veteran community be aware of the importance of breast cancer prevention and the various healthcare services that the VA provides", according to Pat Conroy, Women Veterans Program Manager at the Wilkes-Barre, VA.

# QUALITY CARE

Wilkes-Barre Meets All National Patient Safety Goals and National Quality Improvement Goals. Areas where we achieved best possible results or better than targeted ranges include:

- Heart Failure Care – Left Ventricular Failure (LVF) Assessment
- Blood Cultures for Pneumonia Patients Admitted through the ER
- Adult Smoking Cessation
- Pneumonia Care
- Appropriate Antibiotic for Type of Surgery
- Proper Hair Removal for Surgical Patients



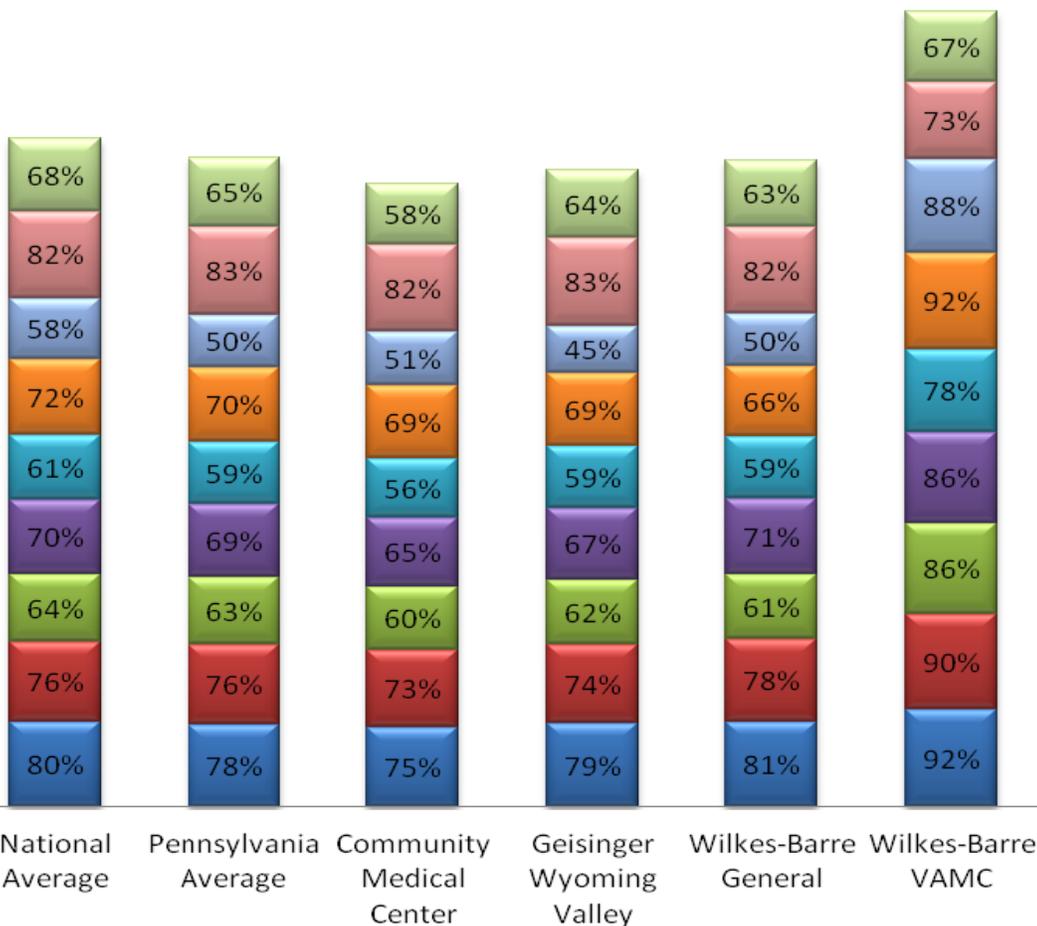
*You can check out the details of our performance at: [www.qualitycheck.org](http://www.qualitycheck.org)*



## WE STACK HIGHER IN PATIENT SATISFACTION THAN OTHER HOSPITALS

- Communication with Doctors
- Responsiveness of Staff
- Communication about Medications
- Quietness of Room
- Overall Rating
- Communication with Nurses
- Pain Management
- Cleanliness of Room
- Discharge Information

The patient satisfaction survey asks a random sample of recently discharged patients about their experience during their stay at the Medical Center. The survey questions are consistent with questions on community and VA patient satisfaction surveys allowing for comparisons.



# THOSE WHO SERVE OUR VETERANS

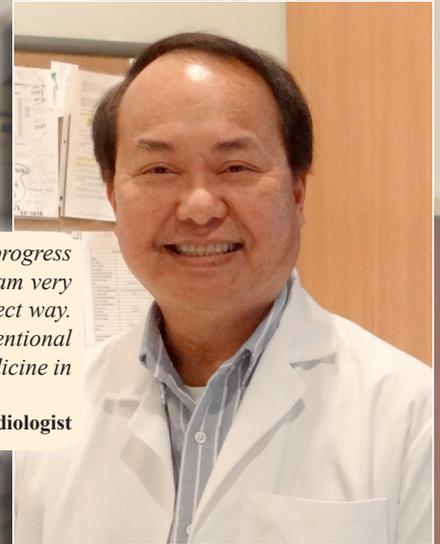


## Interventional Radiology

With the addition of two radiologists to our team, we are now able to provide less invasive ways of getting tissue samples from the lung, liver, thyroid, lymph nodes, breast and other soft tissues which will help make accurate diagnoses.

*"My personal mission is to provide our Veterans patient-focused care, offering the highest levels of medical care and quality service. I am excited and honored to join the Wilkes-Barre VA Medical Center team of dedicated radiologists serving the needs of our nation's Veterans; particularly in assisting the development of the Facility's Interventional Radiology Program."*

- Ami A. Shah, M.D., Interventional Radiologist



*"Our Imaging team will be instrumental in achieving further progress in the delivery of timely healthcare services to our patients. I am very grateful for the opportunity to serve our Veterans in a very direct way. This will be accomplished by providing in house imaging interventional procedures and applying current advancements in Nuclear Medicine in general radiology imaging to our diagnostic services."*

- Raulie Rodrigo, M.D., Interventional Radiologist

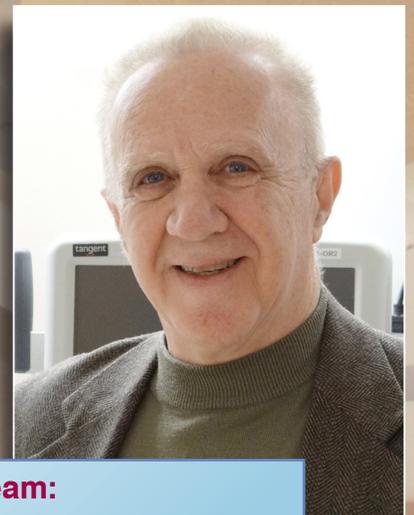


## C-Arm Portable X-Ray Unit

C-Arms are used in the Operating Room to guide the surgeon using X-ray technology when needed; typically used in vascular, neurosurgical, orthopedic, pain management, spinal, and geriatric procedures.

### Charles J. Hubbard, M.D.

Dr. Hubbard joined the WBVA surgical team in November of 2010 and has done joint replacement surgeries such as hip and knee. He also specialized in shoulder replacement surgery; the damaged parts of the shoulder are removed and replaced with artificial components, called a prosthesis. The treatment options are either replacement of just the head of the humerus bone (ball), or replacement of both the ball and the socket (glenoid).



### New Addition to our Surgical Team: Victor Benjamin Nakkache, M.D., Neurosurgeon

Dr. Nakkache provides general neurosurgical services as well as surgical treatment of most spinal conditions, including spinal cord stimulators. Dr. Nakkache completed his surgical internship at the Long Island Jewish Medical Center, New York City and his Neurosurgical Residency and Fellowship at the University of Rochester, NY.



*Volunteers Bill Roberts and John Brogna assist CLC resident, Albert Burkevage, on to the new bus for an outing.*



### **New Bus for Recreational Activities**

This modern, fully equipped vehicle offers the residents of our Community Living Center (CLC) a pleasant mode of transportation to local community events. These events include trips to sports games, shopping malls, bowling centers, and Veteran Service Organization sponsored programs/meals to name a few. The bus is equipped to accommodate wheelchairs along with ambulatory Veterans.

### **Therapeutic Garden Enhances Quality of Life of our Residents**

As part of the Lowe's Heroes program, Lowes of Wilkes Barre #652 donated a variety of plants, garden supplies, and numerous hours to enhance our Therapeutic Sensory Garden. We are grateful to Lowe's for making our facility a part of the Lowe's Heroes Program and for improving our Sensory Garden for the enjoyment of our Community Living Center residents.



## PARTNERING WITH THE COMMUNITY

- Graduate Medical Education: Implemented the medical residency/fellow program.
- Developed educational collaborative with Geisinger Healthcare System in support of Continuing Medical Education program.
- Collaborated with the Commonwealth Medical College establishing medical student rotations and curriculums.



- Developed programming and curriculum in Geriatric Medicine for PGY-3 residents.
- Together with the Wright Center for Graduate Medical Education, developed core curriculum in Geriatric Medicine for the internal residency program.



*Photo – left to right: Kermit Douglas, CEO Program Coordinator, Transitional Housing Site and Veteran Dick Beasley.*

### CEO Receives VA Per Diem Award for Homeless Veterans

The William Cherkas Residence, a Veterans Transitional Housing Program, operated by the Commission on Economic Opportunity (CEO) and located on the campus of Wilkes-Barre VA Medical Center is a recipient of the VA Per Diem Award for Homeless Veterans. Transitional Housing is available to homeless Veterans on site at the Wilkes-Barre VAMC.

We have two VA Transitional Housing facilities, the Father Edward P. Nolan Residence, which was established in 2001, and the William Cherkas Residence. The William Cherkas Residence has six self-contained one-bedroom apartments with a common lounge. All of the apartments are located on level one for wheelchair accessibility.



### ONE VA CONGRESSIONAL FORUM HELD AT WILKES-BARRE VA

Staff from the Veterans Health Administration, Veterans Benefit Administration and National Cemetery Administration provided a broad summary to Congressional Representatives of how the three VA branches interact and provide services to Veterans.

# VOLUNTEERS ROCK!!



*Highest award recipients, Seated from Left to Right:*  
*Elgene Glycenfer – 6,250 Hours; Mario Malvizzi – 2,500 Hours;*  
*Marion Kunigonis – 10,000 Hours; Joan Matuszak – 6,250 Hours;*  
*and John Brogna – 1,750 Hours.*  
*Standing: Arthur Pekata – 35,000 Hours;*  
*Roy Clayton – 2,500 Hours; William Roberts – 2,500 Hours;*  
*Leonard Carlin – 4,000 Hours;*  
*and Janice M. Boss Former Medical Center Director*

## DONATIONS • \$355,894.34

Thank you to all who provided donations for our Veterans!  
 We are pleased to report that during fiscal year 2011, donors gave \$355,894.34 in monetary, items, and activity donations for the Medical Center patients and residents in our Community Living Center.

## RECOGNIZING OUR VOLUNTEERS

An important part of our health care team is our volunteers. They nourish the spirit of patients and staff alike, reminding them that the community has not forgotten those who have defended freedom.

The VAMC honored volunteers for their unwavering commitment to serve during National Volunteer Week, April 10th – 16th. A volunteer recognition ceremony with a theme of “Volunteers Rock” was held at the Quality Inn Suites and Conference Center in Wilkes-Barre. Volunteers and their guests enjoyed the 1950’s rock and roll decorations and jukebox music.

Last year, volunteers selflessly gave 51,970 hours of service at the Wilkes-Barre VA Medical Center and its Community Based Outpatient Clinics in Allentown, Sayre, and Williamsport.

At the recognition ceremony, volunteers received awards for reaching various hourly plateaus ranging from 50 hours through 35,000 hours of service.



## YOUTH VOLUNTEER SUMMER PROGRAM

The 2011 Summer Youth Volunteer Program at the Wilkes-Barre VA Medical Center (VAMC) kicked off with two orientation sessions and pizza parties on June 7th and 13th, and concluded on August 10th. Certificates of Appreciation were given to all 103 Summer Program participants. The youth volunteers provided more than 4,323 hours of service to Veterans this summer. This was an increase of more than 1,000 hours from last summer. The young volunteers were assigned to a variety of areas including the Medical Center’s Nutrition and Food Service, Emergency Room, Canteen, Warehouse, Recreation Therapy, Pharmacy, Community Living Center, and the Business Office.



# FACILITY OPERATING STATISTICS

## Medical Care Cost Recovery

1st Party Means Test	<b>\$1,083,471.01</b>
1st Party Pharmacy Copay	<b>\$6,186,354.95</b>
3rd Party Insurance	<b>\$5,177,041.90</b>
<b>Total Collections</b>	<b>\$12,446,867.86</b>

Number of Unique Patients Served  
**40,868**

## Average Daily Census

Inpatient Total .....	<b>39.13</b>
Medicine.....	<b>29.98</b>
Psychiatry .....	<b>5.95</b>
Surgery .....	<b>3.20</b>
Substance Abuse recovery Treatment Program .....	<b>8.43</b>
Observation .....	<b>1.43</b>
Community Living Center ....	<b>86.63</b>
Medical Center Total .....	<b>135.62</b>

## Visits by Outpatient Clinic

Wilkes-Barre	<b>269,455</b>
Allentown	<b>68,226</b>
Berwick	<b>4,729</b>
Northampton County	<b>3,816</b>
Sayre	<b>18,224</b>
Tobyhanna	<b>1,090</b>
Williamsport	<b>13,427</b>

Total Outpatient Visits  
**378,967**

Total Operating Expenses  
**\$226,962,000**



## NOTABLE COMPLETED PROJECTS

**Cardiac Catheterization/Hemodialysis** – Construction was completed for a new Cardiac Catheterization Suite and Hemodialysis Unit. Project cost: \$3,759,631

**PET/CT Site Preparation** – Existing space was prepared for the installation of a new PET/CT Scan. Project cost: \$656,667

**Community Living Center Air Handlers Replaced** – Four existing air handler units were installed. Project cost: \$1,124,900

**Command Center Constructed** – Medical Center monitoring alarms and communication operations were centralized to a single location. Project cost: \$357,000

**Site Paving** – Four existing asphalt parking lots were paved to provide smooth and safe passage for patients and staff. Project cost: \$564,900



**VA**  
**HEALTH**  
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Defining  
**EXCELLENCE**  
in the 21st Century

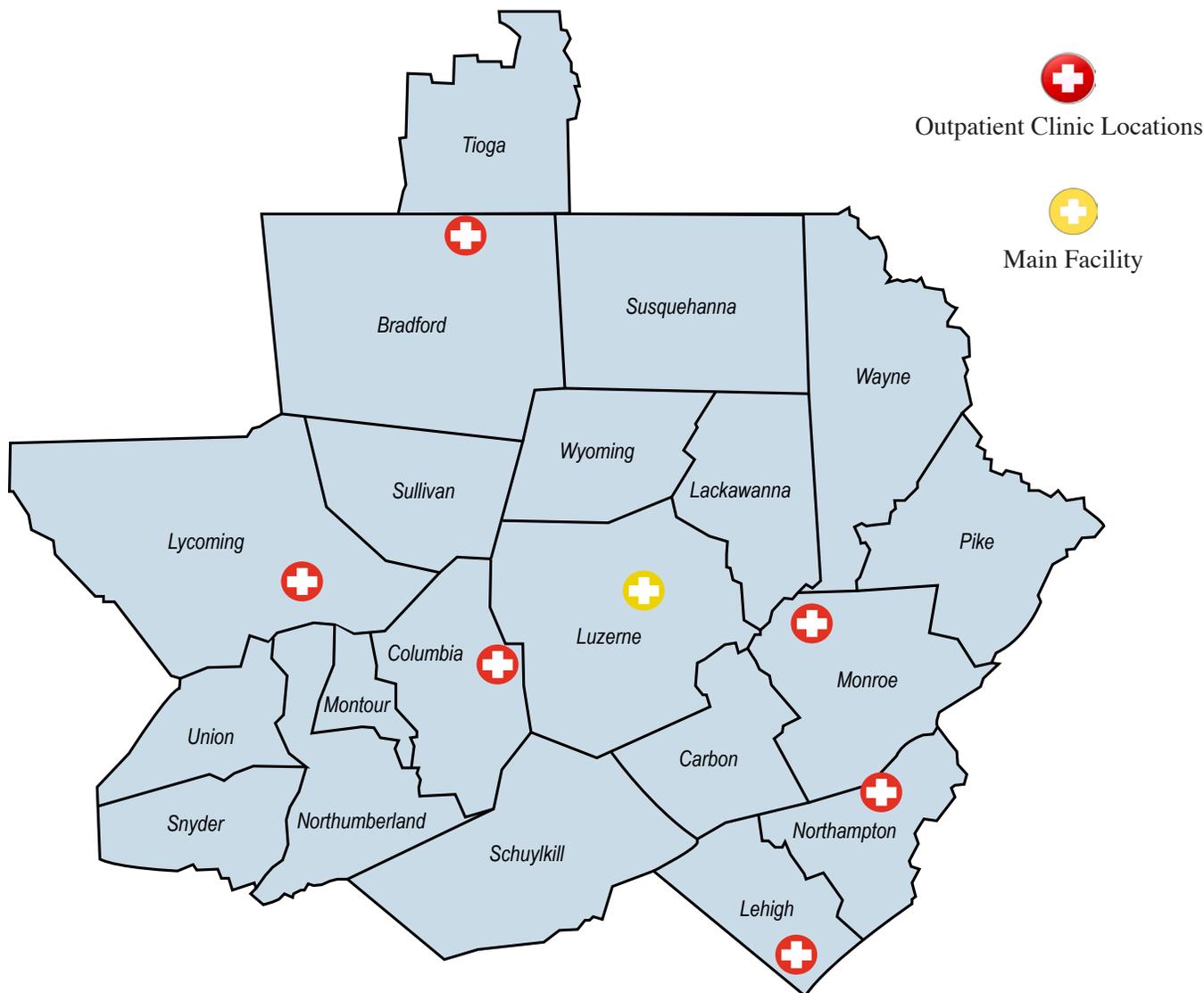
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[www.wilkes-barre.va.gov](http://www.wilkes-barre.va.gov)

The Wilkes-Barre VA Medical Center Healthcare System also provides healthcare services at the following locations:

## VA Medical Center Wilkes-Barre, PA



### Allentown Outpatient Clinic

3110 Hamilton Blvd.  
Allentown, PA 18103  
(610) 776-4304  
Toll Free 1-866-249-6472

### Tobyhanna Outpatient Clinic

Tobyhanna Army Depot  
Building 220  
Tobyhanna, PA 18466  
(570) 615-8341

### Sayre Outpatient Clinic

157 Elmira St.  
Sayre, PA 18840  
(570) 888-6803  
Toll Free 1-877-470-0920

### Northampton County Outpatient Clinic

Phoebe Slate Belt Nursing Home  
& Rehabilitation Center  
701 Slate Belt Boulevard  
Bangor, PA 18013-9341  
(610) 599-0127

### Columbia County Outpatient Clinic

Alley Medical Center  
301 West Third Street  
Berwick, PA 18603  
(570) 759-0351

### Williamsport Outpatient Clinic

Campus of Divine Providence Hospital  
Werner Bldg. 3rd Floor, Suite 304  
1705 Warren Ave.  
Williamsport, PA 17701  
(570) 322-4791



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