



HORIZONS

PAGE 2

Wellness Clinic Volunteers

Keep **VETERANS**®

MOVE!ing



Make Your MOVE!®

VA's MOVE!® Program works with Veterans to lose weight and keep it off.

If you are carrying extra weight, one of the best things you can do to protect your health is to lose the weight. VA's MOVE!® (Managing Overweight and Obese Veterans Everywhere) program, designed by the department's National Center for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention (NCP), is a national weight management program designed to help Veterans lose weight, keep it off, and improve their health.

"Here at the Wilkes-Barre VAMC, we strive for a five percent weight loss to reduce weight-related health risks and/or maintain a healthy body weight," explains Paola Montross, the facility's MOVE!® coordinator. "We try to offer as many support options as we can to meet the needs of our diverse Veteran population such as women Veterans, retired Veterans, and Veterans with full time jobs."

After filling out the MOVE!® questionnaire and meeting with a registered dietitian, the MOVE! team works with Veterans to create SMART (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, Timely) goals. MOVE!® facilitators, which includes a registered dietitian, physical therapist and psychologist, provide a once-a-week meeting focusing on health and wellness through healthy eating, physical activity and behavior change, including a healthy cooking demonstration. Individualized sessions face-to-face, by telephone, and through secure messaging are also available and encouraged.

A home messaging telehealth program is also an option for support. The program offers daily interaction over a home messaging device for 82 days. The simple-to-use device communicates over your telephone line, sending guidance and support, and asks how you are doing. A scale will be provided to report your weight daily so that your nursing care coordinator can keep up with your program. This does require weekly contact to stay in the program.

Keith Naylor, who preceded Montross as Wilkes-Barre's MOVE!® coordinator, explained another essential part of the

program—helping Veterans to exercise more. "We have a 24-week program to get Veterans in the habit of exercising," he tells us. "Then they go over to the other side of the wall, where our Wellness Center is."

Veterans do aerobic exercises, using treadmills, elliptical walkers, bicycles, free weights, and a special kind of equipment called a Scifit.

"We want them to be as fit as they can," Naylor explains, "but we don't want to aggravate any health conditions they have. So we monitor them closely." Each Veteran using the Wellness Center has his own exercise program, developed by kinesiologist Gary Adams.

"We try to have the right option for every Veteran participating in the program," explains Montross. "The MOVE!® program meets three of the nine healthy living messages established by the NCP—eat wisely, be physically active, and strive for a healthy weight.

"It really is a wonderful program for Veterans," she concludes. "I love being part of it!"



We want them to have some fun in an environment just for Veterans. Most of them do very, very well. //

Keith Naylor
Former Wilkes-Barre MOVE!®
Coordinator

1111 East End Boulevard
Wilkes-Barre, PA 18711-0026
Call (570) 824-3521
or Toll Free at 1-877-928-2621
www.wilkes-barre.va.gov

Visit any one of our sites of care:

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

Sayre Outpatient Clinic
1537 Elmira St.
Sayre, PA 18840
(570) 888-6803
Toll Free: 1-877-470-0920

Northampton Outpatient Clinic
Phoebe Slate Belt Nursing Home & Rehabilitation Center
701 Slate Belt Blvd.
Bangor, PA 18013-9341
(610) 599-0127

Tobyhanna Outpatient Clinic
Tobyhanna Army Depot, Bldg. 220
Tobyhanna, PA 18466
(570) 615-8341

Columbia County Outpatient Clinic
Alley Medical Center
301 West Third St.
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

Photography by **Edward T. Shudak and Larkin Harris.**

LIKE US!
www.facebook.com/VAWilkesBarre



“*My wife says she’s noticed a difference in my temperament when I exercise. It’s great that the center is here for us.*”

Bob Dolan, Vietnam Veteran

Working Out at the Wellness Center

Did you know that the Wilkes-Barre VA Wellness Center’s exercise and fitness gym is open to all inpatients and outpatients, following the completion of an exercise consult with their primary care physician? The center is open from 7 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. It is very popular with Veterans, especially those who have graduated from the MOVE!® program, and made physical fitness part of their healthy living plan.

“Early in the morning,” says Hank Petrosky, a Korean War Veteran and a VA volunteer since 2006, “the machines are just about all filled. The fellows know it’s a good deal.” Hank’s volunteer assignment is to watch other Veterans as they work out to ensure no one gets hurt while using the equipment.

A group of five to ten Veterans come every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday to work out and then go for coffee together.

Alex Podsadlik, a Marine Corps Veteran who served in Vietnam, is among them. He’s been riding the stationary bicycle, working out with weights, and using the Scifit cycle for five years. “I enjoy coming early,” he says.

Bob Dolan, who uses the Scifit and the bike, is another Vietnam Veteran member of the Monday, Wednesday, Friday group. He has been using the center for five years now, and tells us “my wife says she’s noticed a difference in my temperament when I exercise.” Bob

Below: Veterans and volunteers gather in the Wellness Clinic Monday through Friday for camaraderie and cardio.

has gone through the MOVE!® program three times, twice following major surgeries. “It’s great that (the center) is here for us,” he says.

Dan Jollimore, an Army Vietnam Veteran, rides the bicycle and uses the elliptical walker, the treadmill, and the rowing machine two to three hours each visit, and he visits three days a week. For Dan, the results have been amazing. In the last three years, he has lost 212 pounds. Besides exercise, he credits “portion control” for his remarkable success. He also attends lectures and healthy kitchen demonstrations whenever he can. To lose weight, he explains, “you’ve got to want to do it. Mindset is 99 percent of the battle.”



A GUIDE TO POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER

Behaviors and symptoms associated with PTSD

Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is a psychiatric disorder that can develop if a person is exposed to a traumatic event. A traumatic event is something that involves a serious threat of injury to oneself, or witnessing it happening to someone else. A person who is exposed to something like that may develop symptoms of trauma. These symptoms are what make up PTSD.

There are a lot of myths about PTSD. Many people believe that if you have it you can't get better. That's just not true.

Matthew Dooley, Psy.D.,
Wilkes-Barre Staff Psychologist

"Most people who are involved in such events do not develop PTSD—thank goodness", explains Matthew Dooley, Psy.D., a Staff Psychologist at Wilkes-Barre and VISN 4's point of contact for PTSD services. "Among the Veteran population, however, especially those who are recently returning from combat, the estimate is about 20 percent have developed PTSD."

PTSD often begins to manifest itself with what are called "intrusion symptoms"—symptoms in which an individual keeps recalling a traumatic memory, and can't get it off his or her mind. The memory occupies their thoughts, and they may have nightmares. A more troubling version of intrusion symptoms are flashbacks. Flashbacks occur when a person is awake and the memory pops into his or her thoughts, and he or she loses track of the here and now—in effect, having a waking nightmare.

Other symptoms include hyperarousal, in which people may become very keyed up or irritable, or have angry outbursts, difficulty concentrating, and startle very easily.

Photo: Dr. Dooley meets with an interdisciplinary group of colleagues to discuss treatment plans.



They can also become hypervigilant, constantly looking over their shoulder and being very uncomfortable in crowded places. Those with PTSD also develop changes in the ways they think and perceive, seeing themselves, others, and the world in very negative terms.

Finally, people with PTSD exhibit avoidance behaviors, deliberate attempts to avoid thinking or feelings about their trauma. They may avoid people and situations, such as war movies, that might remind them of what they experienced.

"All of this leads to one of the most clinically important aspects of the disorder," says Dooley, "which is the consequences of impairment." If these symptoms are manifesting themselves at a certain level, "it will affect a person's ability to function, and if it's severe enough, it will start to impair a person's ability to maintain relationships, perform tasks adequately at home and at work, and his or her ability to regulate emotions and to sleep."

For Veterans with PTSD, Wilkes-Barre and its CBOCs offer treatments focused on helping Veterans reduce their symptoms and recover from the impairments they caused. Treatments

include learning skills to improve symptom management and reduce impairments, as well as Evidence Based Psychotherapies (EBPs). Wilkes-Barre's Psychology service works closely with Psychiatry, Social Work, and Nursing services as part of an interdisciplinary team to help Veterans achieve their treatment goals. VA Central Office recently recognized the facility for having a "Strong Practice" in the delivery of recovery-oriented PTSD treatment.

"If any Veteran is experiencing any of the symptoms of PTSD, I hope they will contact us right away," says Dooley. "Younger Veterans have an opportunity older Veterans did not have immediately after deployment—they can take care of the problem now, and years from now, they can say 'Wow, I'm glad I got that taken care of!'" Older Veterans are benefiting significantly from these treatments as well.

"I've treated a lot of patients, and I've seen patients—regardless of their age or when they served—use the treatments effectively, achieve what they are trying to achieve, and lead a better life that they are satisfied with," he concludes.

Introducing New Leaders

3 ROSE ZEIGLER

1 AMY KLUSH

In January, Amy Klush became Wilkes-Barre’s **supervisory radiology technologist for imaging**. She is a familiar face around the hospital, having worked in imaging for eighteen years.

“I supervise the radiology technologists and the Computerized Tomography (CT) scan technologists at the facility,” she explains. “Someone else supervises nuclear medicine, ultrasound and the Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) technologists. Dividing responsibilities makes it easier, since there are so many technologists here.”

Amy was born and raised locally, in the town of Pittston. She now lives in Plains, not far from where she grew up. She attended Pittston Area High School and the Allentown Hospital (now Lehigh Valley Hospital) School of Radiology. She has been a radiology technologist since 1992.

2 TAMMY OPPELT

Tammy Oppelt is Wilkes-Barre VA’s new **supervisor of credentialing and privileging**. In that position, she serves as the resident expert on the hospital’s medical staff processes and accreditation standards and is a consultant on medical staff accreditation programs throughout the hospital and its community-based outpatient clinics.

Oppelt and her staff make sure that job applicants have the licenses, registrations, certifications, education, training and experience, and current competencies they need to provide exceptional health care. She also monitors the performance and credentialing of current employees, and serves as VISN 4’s lead credentialing and privileging expert.

“Our job is to make sure our Veterans are receiving the best care they can possibly receive,” she explains. “We’re like gatekeepers, trying to make sure only the best people work here.”

Oppelt began her career at the Wilkes-Barre VA as a phlebotomist, fourteen years ago. She has been a clinic clerk, a secretary in the respiratory therapy clinic and worked in human resources. She joined the credentialing and privileging staff in 2006.

4 BRAD WOFFORD

“What a lot of people don’t know about the Veterans Canteen Service (VCS) is that we are part of VA, not a private company, and we don’t use any taxpayer revenues to operate,” explains Brad Wofford, the **new VCS chief at Wilkes-Barre**. “We are self sustaining, and all the extra money we make goes back to VA to help with some great programs!”

At Wilkes-Barre, VCS manages the retail store, cafeteria, coffee shop, vending machines, catering, and contracts with other vendors to provide services to patients and visitors.

Unlike post and base exchanges, any Veteran enrolled in VA’s Health Care System and their family members can shop or dine with VCS tax free, as well as use the Special Order Program at 1-800-664-8258. Veterans enrolled in VA’s Healthcare may also shop online through the VCS All Exchange online website (www.vacanteen.va.gov).



CONSTRUCTION UPDATES

STARTING THIS QUARTER:

Expand Surgical Clinics 3rd Floor Center: The 3rd floor center and west will be totally renovated to provide specialty outpatient clinic exam rooms and expanded waiting area. The project will take twelve months to complete.

CURRENTLY UNDERWAY:

Expand Emergency Department: The Emergency Room is being totally renovated and expanded. The construction is being phased so the Emergency Room will be operational throughout construction. The project will take fifteen months to complete.

Expand Oncology: The 4th floor of the CLC building is being renovated to provide for a new Oncology Suite. The project is expected to be completed in February 2015.

Replace Water Tank: The water tank is being replaced with a larger and differently shaped water tank. The project is expected to take twelve months to complete.

Electrical Upgrade for Panels: This infrastructure project is upgrading the electrical service and replacing electric panel boxes. The project will take fifteen months to complete.

Upgrading Patient Rooms in the Community Living Center (CLC): We are in the process of upgrading patient rooms and flooring throughout the CLC's second and third floors. The work will close three or four rooms at a time, and should be completed in April.

Building 5 Renovations: Building 5 is being totally renovated to provide additional administrative space for the Medical Center. The building is now empty. The project will be completed in June.

Renovation of the 2nd floor Wound Care Clinic: This project will provide offices for Prosthetics, Orthotics, and Rehab, and the wound care clinic itself. The Ultrasound Suite was completed in September 2013, and the remainder of the project will be completed in July.

Renovation of the 3rd floor center for Phlebotomy: Phlebotomy will be moving into newly renovated space on the third floor. The project will be completed in May.

Replacing Light Fixtures: New, more energy-efficient light fixtures will be placed throughout the main building and the CLC by May 2014.

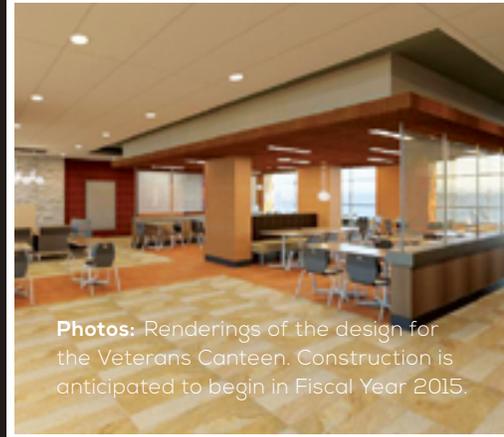
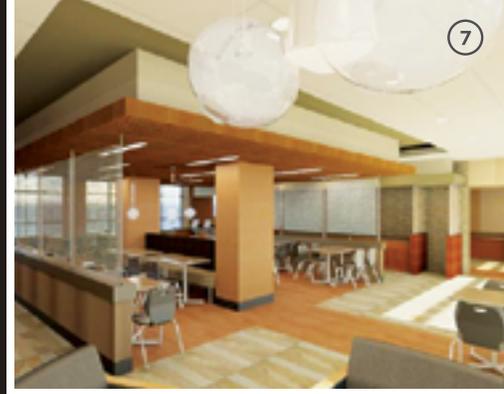
Upgrading Plumbing: Phase 1 of this project involves installing new vertical risers for domestic water throughout the main building by May 2014. Phase 2, not yet begun, involves installing horizontal risers.

Steam Traps Replacement: Steam traps (which discharge condensation without letting steam for heating escape) are being replaced throughout the main building. The project will continue once the weather is warm enough. This project is scheduled to be complete in August.

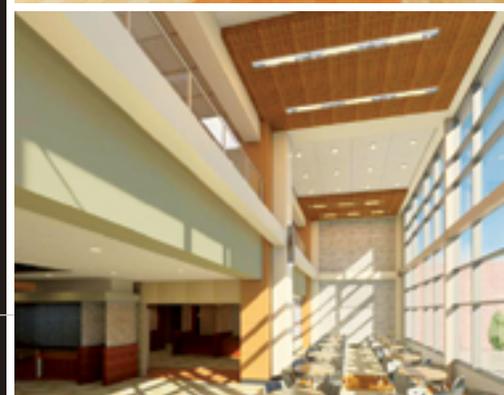
Upgrade Compensation & Pension: The 1st floor center will be totally renovated to provide for a Comp & Pen suite and a Voluntary Service suite. The project will take twelve months to complete.

COMPLETED IN THE LAST QUARTER:

Basement Clean Storage Project: This project, located on the ground floor, created a controlled environment for Logistics to store medical supplies. It was completed in March.



Photos: Renderings of the design for the Veterans Canteen. Construction is anticipated to begin in Fiscal Year 2015.



“They all tell me it is a rewarding experience. They get a good feeling from volunteering in this program.”

Valerie Barna, LCSW,
Palliative Care Coordinator and Hospice
Social Worker

Fighting the Final Battle Together

No Veteran Dies Alone program provides companionship, solace, to terminally ill Veterans

Sooner or later, every Veteran’s final battle comes to an end. A new Wilkes-Barre program ensures that, at the close of hospice residents’ lives, no Veteran dies alone.

“When I began working in our hospice area, I started to see some patients whose families just couldn’t make it to Wilkes-Barre,” explains Valerie (Val) Barna, LCSW, a social worker on the hospital’s palliative care unit.

“A few local hospitals had started a ‘No one dies alone’ program, and, with the encouragement of Dr. Nabeela Mian, our Chief of Medical Service, we decided to plan for a program here for our Veterans,” she continues.

The program, which is entirely staffed by Volunteers, provides companionship for Veterans at the end of life.

Some volunteers read to Veterans; others play relaxing music or show healing videos available on the GetWellNetwork.

“Sometimes,” says Barna, “they just sit and hold the Veteran’s hand, and when he or she wakes up, there’s another person in the room.” Most volunteers sit with

patients for three to four hours at a time; none stay longer than eight hours. They are ‘on call’ and can be asked to come in at any time if a resident’s condition becomes grave, and if the Veteran has no family or the family is out of the area and can’t make it in time.

Some volunteers are VA employees, and do this in their spare time; others are experienced VA volunteers; still others were recruited especially for this program. Each is trained on how to provide support, and on the importance of self care, including recognizing signs of ‘compassion fatigue’ and processing their own feelings related to death and dying. The hospital holds quarterly meetings to ensure they are not being overly emotionally affected.

Barna also believes that Veterans and their families are grateful for the program. “In almost every case we’ve used the program, there was a mention of it in the Veteran’s obituary—or a letter was sent to the director. It was good for us to know that the family appreciated it.”

Giving Back

John Sakalouckas is one of the volunteers participating in the “No Veteran Dies Alone” program. For more than three years, John has visited Wilkes-Barre’s hospice every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday.

“The patients I sit with just want someone to be there when they wake up,” he tells us. “When they’re asleep, I sit in a corner and pray very quietly for them. When they’re awake, I talk to them if they want to talk.”

John, who taught Spanish, English and world religion for more than 40 years, assists other Veterans as well, helping some get to dialysis appointments and taking others wherever they need to go.

“This is my way of giving back to Veterans for everything they’ve done,” he concludes.

