

VETERANS INTERGRATED SERVICES NETWORK # 3

VACMH

RECOVERY
IS A JOURNEY...

VETERANS ADVOCACY COUNCIL FOR MENTAL HEALTH NEWSLETTER VOLUME 5 ISSUE 3 FALL 2012



[2013 VACMH/vCaring Veterans Advocacy Series](#)

The VISN 3 Veterans Advocacy Council for Mental Health, commonly known as the VAC, and Veterans Organization 501c19 vCaring (www.vcaring.org), are jointly proposing a series of advocacy training for tri-state area veterans. The VACMH is composed of Veterans and staff representing the mental health services of the 8 medical centers at Northport, Brooklyn, Manhattan, the Bronx, Montrose, Castle Point, NY and East Orange and Lyons, NJ. “vCaring” is a charitable organization of war veterans which identifies and funds high-impact health and advocacy initiatives. Most of vCaring’s activities are done in partnership with Veterans Administration facilities.

The VAC and vCaring have a history of working together. In 2011 vCaring funded The RAM/VAC Veterans Retreat, which focused on advocacy training. This Spring, vCaring Chairman Jason Ornstein was a panelist for a coalition convened conference which presented the opportunity to provide information to the veterans, families and staff of VISN 3 catchment about the services that their office or organization provides to veterans and their families and encourage veterans to use those services. The conference also provided an opportunity for those providing services to veterans to hear from veterans about which services they need and any barriers that they perceive might prevent them from obtaining those services.

To continue the expansion of the relationship, Charles Witherspoon, Howard Wunderlich (RAM/VAC) and Jason Ornstein met to outline some activity concepts for 2013. Loosely titled ‘2013 VAC/vCaring Veterans Advocacy Series’, the team outlined at least two 2013 events which would target improving veteran group and self-advocacy skills. The events should be held at VA facilities in the New York City area and funding for marketing, catering and possibly transportation will be provided by vCaring.

The first event will be a Leadership Workshop to be hosted during one of the quarterly VAC meetings and be open to VAC and vCaring guest. During the workshop, vCaring will provide a seminar on leadership (to be further developed), pro-bono, which, as per Jason is similar to executive development provided to professional firms. The second event will focus on advocacy in the political arena with a proposed seminar by an active NYC political consultant and be a compliment to the first event. Skills learned at these events could be applied to Veteran Advocacy at all levels.

Edited by Charles Witherspoon

**VISN#3 VACMH
EXECUTIVE
BOARD
REPORT**

●**The Veteran Advocacy Council for Mental Health was formed in 1996.**

●**Currently the VISN3 VAC is the oldest VISN Council in existence;**

UPDATES:

- The next VISN VAC Face to Face meeting to be held 01.09.2013 at the James J. Peters VAMC in the Bronx.
- New Jersey announced that Holiday Express would be coming on December 15, 2012

NEWSLETTER:

- VISN3 VACMH's newsletter is now published on the VISN3 MIRECC, Recovery Webpage.
- VACMH newsletter volume 5 issue 6 highlights the Voter Registration Drives, Veterans Day Activities, etc.
- Would appreciate support from MHEB members on getting it distributed..
- MHEB and all mental health staff are welcome to write articles for the VISN 3 VAC newsletter.
- See Charles!

**VACMH 09.12.2012
FACE TO FACE**

- Held at the Northport, LI VAMC.
- Voter Registration
- Inpatient Recovery Transformation
- Newsletter
- Women's Health Poster
- Babysitting Services
- Site Visits by Executive Board

NEXT STEPS

- VISN3 VACMH Face Book page can be started but as a personal page.
- Identify Veterans to be editor and responsible for updating. Should be monitored 7 days a week. Manhattan VAC has posted a page.

**PROJECTS THAT THE
VAC IS ACTIVELY
WORKING ON:**

- MyHealtheVet: All members are polled to see if they have signed up for MyHealtheVet. Charles Witherspoon signs up Veterans at the Bronx VAMC.
- VERA: Veterans are working with their primary care providers to ensure that they are "vested" in the system.
- Voter Registration:
- Women's Health Poster.
- Site visits.

SUPPORT FROM MHEB:

- Newsletter – please consider writing a story of your accomplishments in Recovery Transformation
- Encourage local mental health leadership to attend local meetings

**ACTION ITEMS FOR
MHEB:**

- Request from MHEB to help Veterans access Women Veteran Program Managers if there is a need
- It is requested that local MHEB receive a courtesy copy of annual reports before being submitted to Michelle Smith.
- A VISN Annual Report will be submitted once all local reports are due.**
- Look for ways to increase membership at all VAC's.

REPORT TO THE MHEB

- BY-LAWS**
- Bylaws are being reviewed
- Non FACA
- Would like the MHEB to review before they are published for their advice/input

WELLNESS CLINICS

- VANJHCS no longer pays travel for Woodshop
- VANY Harbor, Brooklyn Campus no longer pays for Wellness Clinic
- How to advocate
- Who to advocate to
- Veterans would like to be brought into discussions earlier rather than later.

DOGS AND CATS FOR MILITARY MEMBERS

- Leslie from the Brooklyn Campus of NY Harbor talked about different programs for adopting dogs and cats, including therapy dogs, assistance dogs.
- Benefits for Veterans:
- PTSD
- Loneliness
- Loyalty
- Increase socialization

**A/V/WEB
PRESENTATIONS**

- The DVD, Journey to Recovery was played for members
- www.familyofheroes.com was reviewed. All members enthused to pass on contact information.

JACKETS AND CAPS

- Should be worn around the facilities, especially at our VACMH Council meetings
- Jackets and caps that are still available should be distributed.
- CRITERIA:**
- Current and previous leadership position still active.
- Able to dedicate time needed to accomplish mission of VISN VAC
- Ability to communicate orally and in writing
- Current Co-chairs eligible for reelection.

**SUMMARY OF LESSONS LEARNED
FROM 5/31 VAC/RAM CONFERENCE**

The facilitator should read the short Bio of each panel member (that they sent prior to the conference) at the beginning of the panel.

Event should be well publicized and not so much concern for the size of the room. Equipment (microphones, Computer monitor) etc should be check that it is in good working order prior to the start of the conference.

Coffee should be better.

Surveys should be handed out to the participants soliciting feedback on the conference and suggestion for future conferences.

Barry will set up personal emails group for community partners. Please email him (Barry.Goggin@va.gov) with the information.

Also we asked for the email address of some of the participants (who has the list?) Perhaps it would be nice to send them a email thanking them for coming to the conference.

For Speakers: We should have one person responsible on that day to greet them, ensure that they are signed in and that they meet the facilitator for their panel.

For Presenters: Before the conference, we need to set a deadline for their commitment and have them send in a short bio so that they can properly be introduced.

The MC or master of ceremony should be identified with the role clearly defined.

For Facilitators of Panels: To watch the entire room to ensure that questions are being addressed from all audience members who wish to speak.

The roles of the panels should be clearly identified – what is the statement or take-away message that you want them to give – what information should be provided.

All members of the planning committee should be more professional in their address of staff – especially high level staff no matter what the relationship usually is.

The time notification cards should be bigger! And we should introduce the timekeeper to all members so that they know who to look for.

Each speaker and presenter should be thanked immediately and hearty applause given.

Explanation should be given of what the VAC and RAM are and how to get involved. Local people should be responsible for the timely material, i.e., coffee, donuts, supplies, etc.

Facilitators should be responsible for the question/answer part of their panel.

It was discussed the time (all day vs. ½ day) and we agreed that perhaps starting a little later but going all day would still be the most effective.

Thanks – please feel free to make comments/suggestions. And please remember to send me the contact information so that I can get the thank you notes out!

VETERANS ADVOCACY COUNCIL FOR MENTAL HEALTH NEWSLETTER VOLUME 5 ISSUE 3

VISN 3 VETERAN ADVOCACY COUNCIL FOR MENTAL HEALTH
SEPTEMBER 12, 2012
MINUTES

The meeting was called to order by Co-Chair; Howard Wunderlich at the Northport VA.

Lunch was served

Review of minutes: The minutes were reviewed and accepted as written.

Voter Registration: There was discussion on the VISN 3 VAC helping out with Voter Registration drives at each site in the VISN. A reminder was made that should the voter registration drives take place that no discussion could be made by the Volunteers with reference to the candidates or suggestions on who to vote for.

Inpatient Recovery Transformation: Elana Fine reported that she went to the conference in San Antonio to discuss the planning on implementing recovery onto inpatient units. Ms. Fine and Dr. Shangold will keep all members informed of the status.

Newsletter: Charles Witherspoon indicated that the newsletter needs articles from everyone – on all recovery initiatives and priority issues. Please send Charles articles so that the newsletter could represent what we are doing.

Women's Health Poster: Michelle indicated that the women's health conference has been postponed but would still like to start working on the women's poster. Ms. Leticia White has accepted the request for her assistance.

Homeless Summit – tabled – Charles will report after the summit.

Babysitting Services: Many sites were interested in Northport's babysitting drop in center located on campus for Veterans who are attending appointments. It was suggested that the day care staff be invited to the next meeting to discuss how they got the grant and the procedures necessary to start the program, including the legal aspects. Dr. Rayne indicated that she would contact Hilda and invite her.

Certificates/Recognition was tabled.

Site Visits by Executive Board. The executive board will be making site visits to each of the local sites. These will take place over a period of time and the schedule will be announced.

Local VAC announcements and happenings:

New Jersey: New Jersey announced that Holiday Express would be coming on December 15, 2012 for the Veterans in Jersey who utilize Mental Health Services. This event is a highlight for the Veterans who are supplied with good food, great music and support from the community. Mr. Rosenberg also spoke of the plan for a recovery room to be located at the Lyons Campus. The plan for this room will include the "Missing Table" for the POW's MIAs – there would also be stories of recovery along the walls leading to and from the room. There would be a recovery tree where people could affix their hopes, trials, tribulations and journey with reference to Recovery.

Manhattan: Currently has six members and will be doing a survey for about 60 Veterans without them using their names. Manhattan VAC is also participating in the free SBA training.

Brooklyn: The women's network has added a transcendental mediation group. Ms. White spoke of the Wiwika retreat and hopefully more women veterans affiliated with the VAC can attend.

Bronx: Charles reported that they have been working on an outreach for Court. June 12th was women veteran recognition day.

Hudson Valley reported that things are the same but they are very interested in having a clubhouse and a day care center there.

Northport has a new member, Gale who was welcomed

The meeting was adjourned at 1:54.

CHARLES WITHERSPOON
CO-CHAIR

HOWARD WUNDERLICH
CO-CHAIR

MICHELLE SMITH
ADMIN COORDINATOR

LEON GREEN, PhD
STAFF LAISION

On December, 17th the VISN 3 VACMH Co-Chairs; Howard Wunderlich and Charles Witherspoon met with Jason Ornstein of vCaring. The meeting centered around ways vCaring could help us promote Veteran Advocacy and wellness. Some of the issues discussed included: activities to attract Veterans to the VACMH as well as a follow on to our Advocacy Retreat. Jason emphasized the availability of advocacy consultants and funding for activities related to our Veterans wellness programs. We discussed conducting leadership seminars to a core of Veterans who may then take our issues effectively to the highest councils. More on front page.

Brooklyn Campus

Veteran Advocacy Council

Mission Statement: The Veterans Advocacy Council for Mental Health provides a forum for Veterans and Families to identify issues and concerns regarding patients care and treatment. To communicate recommendations to Mental Health Services and the Administration and to advocate for the delivery of the highest quality mental health care available.

TRANSCENDENTAL MEDITATION

During the month of August for 4 days, six women Veterans from the Brooklyn Va, participated in a class to learn how to do Transcendental meditation. This class was paid for by a grant from the David Lynch Corporation. On a usual basis this class normally cost \$1500.00, but due to the generosity of the David Lynch Corporation these women Veterans were able to take part in this

class..Transcendental Meditation has been taught to Veterans and has said to have helped them deal with PTSD and MST. Their instructor Rita has met with the Veterans on several occasions to check on their progress since completing the class. She has also made herself available to them if needed. My experience since completing the class has been that I really think our bodies need 30

minutes twice a day to just sit and clam down. As I stated to Rita before it really makes a lot of sense, because even when we are supposed to be asleep, when we have PTSD, or just basically things going on in our lives, we really do not rest. So doing the meditation two times a day, gives me the time to just clear my mind of everything, and relax. I have found that I can count on my meditation to make me sleep better, and be just much calmer in

regards to everything around me and my own life. We currently have another class set to start very soon at the Brooklyn Va. This class will have more female Veterans, and clergy. I know I am very excited for this new tool to aid in a lot of our recovery with PTSD/MST.

*BY: Lecia A. Rodriques-Whyte
Brooklyn VA VISN/VAC Co-Chair*

VOTER REGISTRATION

The Brooklyn VA Hospital conducted a voter registration on October 9, 2012. As a result of having this registration, there were 64 Veterans, and workers who came and registered. This was considered a plus for Brooklyn, considering this was the first registration which was run. Veterans came with questions, and some were just happy to be able to register, saying that they had no idea where to go to have this done, or just did not wish to be bothered. So having this done at the hospital, was a blessing for The Veterans, because they really wanted to vote in this upcoming Presidential election. This was run by the VISN/VAC of Brooklyn, and many thanks to the female Veterans who helped with this.

BY: Lecia A. Rodriques-Whyte

What is Guide / Service Dog

To support an active and independent lifestyle VA provides benefits for guide and service dogs. The job of a **guide dog is to assist the blind. A service dog assists someone with a severe to profound hearing impairment or someone with a physical impairment that substantially limits mobility.**

A referral to a specialist may be requested through the assigned VA primary care provider. The specialist will complete an evaluation and make a clinical determination on the need for assisted devices, including a service dog. Each Veteran' case is reviewed and evaluated by a prescribing clinician for the following:

- Means to care for the dog currently and in the future
- Goals that are accomplished through the use of the dog
- Goals that are to be accomplished through other assisted technology or therapy Veterans approved for service dogs are referred to accredited agencies. There should be no charge for the dog or the associated training. The objective of Assistance Dogs International, Inc. is to:
- Establish and promote standards of excellence in all areas of Assistance Dog acquisition, training and partnership.

Here are a few organizations that help Veterans obtain service dogs:

[point click and ctrl will take you to the webpage]

- Canine Companions for Independence
- Educated Canines Assisting with Disabilities
- National Education for Assistance Dog Services
- Puppies Behind Bars

VA source:

http://www.prosthetics.va.gov/GUIDE_AND_SERVICE_DOGS_FREQUENTLY_ASKED_QUESTIONS_FAQs.ASP

Please contact one of the following Veteran Advocacy Council members with your comments, suggestions and/or ideas.

Richie Chan - DAV Chapter 28 - gonefishing287@earthlink.net

Mike DeCataldo, Green House/VSC, Room 16-117, ext 3741

Don Feldman, Korean War Veterans, Room 5-222, ext 6794

Millie Gonzalez, Veterans Support Center, Room 16-117

Ruben Pratts, Purple Hearts, Room 5-224, ext 6547

Lecia A. Rodriques-Whyte [SFC,Ret] bettyr41@yahoo.com

Luis Santos, Clubhouse, USO Member, ext 1248

Leslie Wohlfeld, Veterans Support Center, Room 16-117

Bert Hirsch, Program Coordinator, Veteran Support Center, Rm 16-117, ext 3741

Meredith Hostetter PhD, Room 14-231, ext 3306

Recovery is a Journey– Not a Cure. ’



MANHATTAN VETERANS ADVOCACY COUNCIL NEWS



Sept-Oct, 2012

Tel: 212-686-7500 ext: 3488 E-mail: manvetadv2693@aol.com Anthony J. Williams/Chair, George W. Hick/Co-Chair Steven Konyha/ Secretary, Carmelo Citron and Domingo Vega/ Records Committee,

Harvell Ford/Membership Committee, John Tatarakas/ Liaison

RECRUITING AND INFORMATION



MVAC MEMBERS TOM AND DOMINGO TAKE THEIR TURN AT MVAC **IN THE LOBBY DAY!**

On August 21, 2012 MVAC set up two tables in the lobby of the Manhattan Campus of New York Harbor. The purpose of the event was to recruit new members, introduce MVAC to Veterans and family members, hospital employees and offer information to everyone who stopped by the tables. MVAC members took turns manning the tables. The information distributed during the day was provided by the VA as well as from community organization that offer resources for recovery.

The day's program began at 8:30 AM with MVAC members Domingo and Anthony began setting up the tables. Well before the tables were assembled, participants had already arrived to begin checking out the information. The Veterans were asked to return at 9:30 AM to allow the Council members to time to complete setting up. By 9:10 AM, everything was in order and opened up to enthusiastic Veteran Consumers and family members. 32 Veterans signed the MVAC guest book. We hope to be able to contact those Veterans during the month of September.

Many Veterans related their concerns regarding claims, medical care, and other VA-related benefits and issues. Members of MVAC handled themselves exceptionally well, being most informative, professional and greeting everyone with a smile.

**MVAC MEETS EVERY TUESDAY
IN ROOM 2644 AT 12:00 PM AT THE NYVA HOSPITAL**

Now on Facebook Manhattan Veteran Advocacy Council

THE JAMES J. PETERS BRONX VAMC VETERANS CONSUMER ADVOCATES COUNCIL



Do you have non-urgent medical questions for your primary, specialty or surgical teams?

Use Secure Messaging on My HealthVet to ask your questions anytime during December (2012) and you will be entered into a raffle and will have a chance to win \$50 worth of gift cards to the Veterans canteen store

Note: Please ensure that you are only sending medical questions. Veterans sending non-medical questions, or questions unrelated to their care, will not be eligible for the raffle.

Questions: Please Contact Kim Gibbs at ext. 6685



A Division of the New York Legal Assistance Group

LegalHealth.
Professional Partnership to Promote Well Being

Since 2001, LegalHealth has partnered with medical professionals to address the nonmedical needs of low-income people with serious health problems. LegalHealth complements health care with legal care — providing free legal services in medical facilities and training healthcare professionals to understand the legal issues their patients face.

JAMES J. PETERS VA MEDICAL CENTER

Clinic Location	130 West Kingsbridge Road Outpatient Psychiatry, 3B
Clinic Schedule	Wednesdays 9:30am to 1:30pm
LegalHealth Attorney	Kevin Kenneally 212-613-5081 kkenneally@nylag.org
Key Departments Served (referrals/training)	All departments
Appointments	Jahida Starks, 3B-70 718-584-9000 extension 5173
Clinic Liaisons	LaTonya Heyward, 718-584-9000 extension 5154 Program Manager of Homeless Veterans Services Tony Miskiewicz, 718-584-9000 extension 5178 Program Management Officer, Mental Health PCC

Examples of Legal Issues Handled

- Secure government benefits (SSD, SSI, food stamps, welfare)
- Fix housing problems (evictions, conditions, Section 8)
- Address credit issues (debt judgments and garnishments)
- Handle immigration issues (petitions and adjustments of status)
- Plan ahead (health care proxy, power of attorney, guardianship)
- Solve insurance disputes (Medicare, Medicaid, private carriers)
- Assist with child support modifications
- Apply for discharge upgrades



The NAMI Family-to-Family Education Program is a free **12-week** course for family members and friends of individuals experiencing serious mental illnesses.

The Family-to-Family groups are led by a person:

who is also a caregiver for a person experiencing a serious mental illness who has been through the Family-to-Family group already has gone on to attend advanced training on being a group leader

What does the course include?

- Current information about PTSD, schizophrenia, major depression, bipolar disorder (manic depression), panic disorder, obsessive-compulsive disorder, borderline personality disorder, co-occurring brain disorders and addictive disorders
- Up-to-date information about medications, side effects, and strategies for medication adherence
- Current research related to the biology of brain disorders and the evidence-based, most effective treatments to promote recovery
- Insight into the lived experience of a person with mental illness
- Problem solving, listening, and communication techniques
- Strategies for handling crises and relapse
- Focus on care for you as well as your loved one: coping with worry, stress, and emotional overload
- Guidance in locating appropriate supports and services within the community
- Information on available resources through the VA

Starts Thurs., Jan. 10, 6-8:30 PM at the J.J. Peters VA Medical Center, 130 W. Kingsbridge Rd., Bronx, NY 10468

To enroll contact: Geraldine "Jerry" Burton 6467545128

Holiday Express Rocks the Lyons House

With elves prancing around the auditorium and sightings of the Grinch being rumored about, the Veterans who utilize the Lyons House, a drop in Center for Veterans with a mental health diagnosis were treated to sounds of Holiday Express and rocked into the Holiday Season. The event was held for 160 Veterans at the VA New Jersey Health Care System, Lyons Campus.

The event started with the Pledge of the Allegiance by a Veteran, followed by a prayer by another who is a combat Veteran of the Afghanistan Theater. Immediately Mary D'Arcy, a former Miss New Jersey and an actress who starred in the Phantom of the Opera on Broadway for many years, sang America the Beautiful. Pam McCoy, a well known singer from the Jersey Shore area started the party off on a rock and roll version of "no one should be alone on the Holidays". Veterans sat, danced and smiled throughout the two hour show that included appearances by Rudolph the Red Nose Reindeer, Frosty the Snowman, Elmo (of the tickle me fame), the Grinch and finally a special guest.

Veterans from the audience were asked to appear as "Disco Santa's" to the song "NOEL" which brought the roof down with laughter and tears. One of the Disco Santa's said that this is the 4th year he has participated as Disco Santa "N" and he does it because not only does it make him feel good but his fellow Veterans will laugh and joke but in the meantime he is reminding them that you can try new things and when people laugh at you, it isn't always a bad thing.

Dr. Leon Green, Associate Chief of Mental Health and Behavioral Sciences, indicated that our Veterans expressed great appreciation for Holiday Express coming to provide them with a party and holiday cheer. They let us know that this party is the highlight of their year. They spend the next year talking about the great time and fun they had at the Holiday Express Party singing, dancing, eating and receiving gifts. The veterans look forward to Holiday Express coming each and every year and they can't wait to be part of the fun next year. Each year Holiday Express makes the party better than the last one. We are most appreciative of Holiday Express for all that they do for our Veterans.

Ms. Michelle Smith, Manager of the Lyons House, said that when Holiday Express comes that Veterans walk in a little bit wary of the throngs of people and with the Volunteers who are all strangers and with knowing the music was going to be loud. After the first song, you see the Veterans smiling, rocking to the music and more than a few getting up to dance. They are smiling for the first time in a long time and just having a good time. A younger Veteran said that he only went because it was suggested that he go and he found that he was transported back in time to prior to joining the Army and felt like he was back at the Shore just jamming with good friends, good music and good times.

After wishing for him, Santa Claus made an appearance and wished all well and you could see that the Veterans didn't want to leave and were hugging the Volunteers from Holiday Express who were no longer strangers.

Each Veteran had subs from Jersey Mike with cake, chips and soda/water, they were each given a gift bag from Holiday Express but what gift couldn't fit into the bag was the love and appreciation from all the Volunteers. When Veterans tried to thank them, they in turn indicated that it was them who should be thanking the Veterans.

Government, Volunteers in the News
Preventing Homelessness Among LI's Veterans
Housing, employment programs at Northport VA Hospital.

There are plastic bags of bagels on the counter, and it is very quiet at the Northport Veterans Affairs Medical Center. Rooms off the long tan hallway house dozens of veterans who had been carousing from house to house, sleeping on couches.

"Long Island's homeless veterans are hidden," said Greg Curran, lead social worker for the Homeless Program at the Northport Veterans Affairs Medical Center. "You can't go to Grand Central or Penn Station and see them all there with their belongings at night standing over a steam grate."

Veterans currently make up 14 percent of the homeless population nationwide, a sobering figure on Veterans Day, 2012, according to a report by the Associated Press. 75,609 veterans were homeless in 2009 when President Barack Obama and Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric Shinseki began a commitment to end veteran homelessness by 2015.

A report from the VA issued in the coming weeks is expected to show that number dropping below 60,000.

The VA implemented a six-pillar approach to combat homelessness: Community Partnerships, Income/Employment/Benefits, Housing/Supportive Services, Outreach/Education, Prevention, and Treatment.

Though the contributing factors of homelessness – untreated mental illness and substance abuse – are universal, veterans living in Long Island face particular challenges. The high cost of living is by far the number-one obstacle.

"Long Island is an extremely difficult place to afford. I think the fair market value for a one bedroom apartment is around \$1,300 or \$1,400," said Curran. "Affordable housing is in very short supply."

"We're getting people whose landlords lost their home, and now they're being evicted. The landlord didn't return their security deposit so it becomes a ripple effect and takes a real good assessment to come up with a plan that's going to address everything."

The VA's HUD-VASH program has been effective in combating the housing problem. Started in 2008, the Housing and Urban Development-Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing Program combines Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) rental assistance for homeless veterans with case management and clinical services provided by the Department of Veterans Affairs.

"On any given night we have 400 veterans and dependent family members sleeping in beds that are part of VA funded programs," Curran said. "We work with community partners to move them from emergency to transitional to permanent housing as quickly as we can."

Curran said the most effective way to reach the homeless veteran population on Long Island is through institutional outreach, going through non profits, faith-based organizations, and local government.

Preventing homelessness among at-risk populations is immensely important, said Curran. One of the newest VA programs addressing at-risk population is Veterans Justice Outreach, designed 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.

"They're given an opportunity to stick with VA services as an alternative to being incarcerated," Curran said. "It's been proven that treatment is more effective than incarceration when you're dealing with people who have substance abuse or mental health issues."

A dedicated outreach team goes across Long Island to educate and enroll veterans several times a week, doing upwards of 80 events a year, said Curran.

"For any veteran who finds themselves displaced now or any other time," he said, "contact your local VA because there's a wealth of resources there for you."

VA HUDSON VALLEY HEALTH CARE SYSTEM



Department of Veterans Affairs
VA Medical Centers
Castle Point & Montrose, NY

CONTACT:

Kirsten Aghen
Public Affairs
914-788-4328 or 845-838-5234

For Immediate Release

Women Veterans Health Care Site Available

The Department of Veterans Affairs now has a website devoted strictly to women Veterans. The Women Veterans Health Care website provides information on health care services available to women Veterans, including comprehensive primary care as well as specialty care such as reproductive services, rehabilitation, mental health, treatment for military sexual trauma, VA's Health Awareness and Culture Change campaigns, and links to VA's Facebook and Twitter pages. The site also has the recently developed Women Veterans Outreach Toolkit, which includes fact sheets on VA care and benefits, answers to frequently asked questions, brochures on VA services and health-care awareness materials.

At each VA Medical Center nationwide, a Women Veterans Program Manager is designated to assist women Veterans. She can help coordinate all the services you may need, from primary care to medical services to Mental Health and Sexual Abuse Counseling.

Women Veterans who are interested in receiving care at the VA should contact their nearest VA Medical Center and ask for the Women Veterans Program Manager

For more information, visit the Women Veterans Health Care website at <http://www.womenshealth.va.gov/>.

Web links to Veterans Affairs and Department of Defense Resources

<https://visn3.kognito.com/foh/> *Family of Heroes*, web-based interactive resiliency and PTSD training simulation for families of Veterans in our geographic area. The goal is to assist adult family members support their Veterans' transition to post-deployment life. This includes how to recognize signs of post-deployment stress and to connect them with health services at one of our medical centers.

<http://www.mirecc.va.gov/coaching/>. The Coaching into Care program has unlimited, free coaching with family members or friends to help Veterans address problems and support them in making decisions about care. Callers can reach VA's Coaching into Care program at the toll-free number 1-888-823-7458, 8 a.m. – 8 p.m., Mondays through Fridays.

<http://www.MakeTheConnection.net> features Veterans sharing their challenges and triumphs in working through a variety of common life experiences and mental health problems.

<http://www.eBenefits.va.gov> eBenefits is your one-stop shop for online benefits- Veterans, Service Members, their families, and their caregivers. We invite you to explore eBenefits and become a registered user.

<http://www.ptsd.va.gov> National Center for PTSD

http://www.ptsd.va.gov/public/reintegration/returning_from_the_war_zone/guides.asp Guide for families and a guide for service members returning from the war

<http://www.afterdeployment.org> Wellness resources for the military community: you can click on post traumatic stress, depression, anger, sleep, anxiety, alcohol & drugs, tobacco, physical injury, mild traumatic brain injury, life stress, stigma, resilience, military sexual trauma, health and wellness, families with kids, spirituality and work adjustment

<http://www.militaryonesource.com> Education, relocation, parenting, stress: Military OneSource helps with just about any need. Free service for active-duty, Guard, and Reserve service members and families. Offer translators and translation of materials. Telephone: 1 800 342-9647

<http://www.woundedwarriorresourcecenter.com> 1 800 342-9647 Connecting Wounded Warriors, Service Members, Veterans, Their Families and Caregivers with Those Who Support Them: provides access to services and resources at the national, state and local levels to support recovery, rehabilitation and community reintegration. Visitors can find information on a variety of topics including [benefits & compensation](#), [education & training](#), [employment](#), [family & caregiver support](#), [health](#), [homeless assistance](#), [housing](#), [transportation & travel](#), [volunteer opportunities](#) and [other services & resources](#). For help on how to find resources on the site, visit the [How to Use this Site](#) section of the NRD.

<http://www.VeteransCrisisLine.net> or 1 800 273-TALK (8255): 24/7 crisis line and online chat. In crisis, text 83-8255 free of charge to receive confidential, personal and immediate support.

Evidence-Based Practices: <http://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/> <http://www.ncptsd.va.gov/ncmain/veterans>

www.sesamestreetfamilyconnections.org This interactive Web site, similar to the social networking site Face book, will allow soldiers, sailors, airmen, Marines and their families to stay connected in a safe and nurturing environment surrounded by their favorite Sesame Street friends.

Whether the distance between military members and their loved ones is due to deployment or the recovery from an injury sustained while deployed, the "Family Connections" Web site offers young children an online environment to stay connected, while offering tools for the entire family to aid in the recovery of the visible and invisible wounds of combat.

For DD214 (military discharge): <http://www.archives.gov/veterans/military-service-records/get-service-records.html>

www.myhealth.va.gov Access VA health care, renew meds., journal health info.

<http://t2health.org/apps> Mobile apps:

Breathe2Relax: A breathing exercise built on the iPhone mobile app platform. It decreases the body's stress response, and helps with mood stabilization, anger control, and anxiety management.

A user can record his stress level by swiping a small bar to the left or to the right. Breathe2Relax uses state-of-the-art graphics, animation, narration, and videos to deliver a sophisticated, immersive experience for the user.

PTSD Coach: Self-Assessment of symptoms with individualized feedback, and ability to track changes. **Coping skills** with relaxation and self-help techniques. **Support:** Identify personal sources of emotional support, add phone numbers, and link to treatment programs. **Emergency link** to the Veterans Crisis Line.

T2 Mood Tracker: Monitor over time your emotional experiences associated stress, brain injury, depression & anxiety. With each rating, notes can be added.

Tactical Breather Gain control over your responses to stress. Many of the techniques were provided by Lt. Col. Dave Grossman, author of [On Combat: The Psychology and Physiology of Deadly Conflict in War and in Peace](#).

Talk to another warrior or combat Veteran: 1-800 WAR VETS or 1 877-927-8387

Useful book for clinicians: [Combat and Behavioral Health](#) free download:

http://www.bordeninstitute.army.mil/published_volumes/combat_operational/combat.html

www.dtic.mil/doctrine/dod_dictionary Department of Defense Dictionary of Military Terms

www.defense.gov/specials/insignias Officer and Enlisted Ranks

SPECIAL CONTRIBUTION AWARDS



Left to right: Ann Feder, V03 MH Care Line Manager, Christie Jackson, Mara Davis & Marianne Goodman

Mara Davis, VISN 3 Deputy Network Director, presented Special Contribution Awards to Drs. Marianne Goodman and Christie Jackson at the V03 Mental Health Executive Board meeting in the VISN Office on October 4.

Dr. Marianne Goodman, a psychiatrist who works for the V03 Mental Illness Research Education and Clinical Center (MIRECC) and Dr. Christie Jackson, a psychologist and Director of PTSD at the Manhattan VAMC, developed and successfully rolled out a training program for Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT), sponsored by the VISN 3 MIRECC and taught by the developers of this treatment approach. DBT combines standard cognitive-behavioral techniques for emotion regulation and reality-testing with concepts of distress tolerance, acceptance and mindful awareness largely derived from Buddhist meditative practice. 45 clinicians from across VISN 3 and from one Vet Center completed the training that was offered in two one-week segments in January and June 2012, resulting in the development of 7 functional DBT programs in our network.

This was the first VA-only DBT training in the United States and positions VISN 3 to be leaders in the delivery and dissemination of this treatment across the VA.



I WANT YOU

VISN #3
VETERAN
ADVOCACY
COUNCIL FOR
MENTAL HEALTH
EXECUTIVE BOARD

HOWARD WUNDERLICH-
CHARLES WITHERSPOON
MICHELLE SMITH
LEON GREEN, PH.D.

THE VISN3-VACMH MISSION IS:

- BUILD A WORKING ALLIANCE BETWEEN VETERANS AND ADMINISTRATION TO ENSURE THE DELIVERY OF THE HIGHEST QUALITY OF MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES.
- FOSTER AND EXCHANGE VETERAN/STAKEHOLDER ADVOCACY THROUGH THE EXCHANGE OF INFORMATION.
- STRIVE TOWARD A WELL-INFORMED VETERAN POPULATION THROUGH EDUCATION ON CURRENT TREATMENT MODALITIES AND PROGRAM POLICIES.
- ENSURE THAT "BEST PRACTICES" IN MENTAL HEALTH PROGRAMS IN VISN 3 ARE SHARED BETWEEN ALL FACILITIES OF VISN 3.
- THIS WOULD INCLUDE USE OF A COMMON VETERAN SATISFACTION SURVEY FORMAT.

THE VISN3-VACMH PRIORITY TASKS:

- HOMELESSNESS
- WOMENS ISSUES
- PHARMACY
- COMPUTER / MY HEALTH_E VET
- TRANSPORTATION
- OEF / OIF / OND
- EDU / INFO SERVICES



Update from the Director Martina Parauda, Director, VANYHHS

On January 15th the House passed HR 152 allowing billions of federal aid to New York, New Jersey and Connecticut in the wake of Super storm Sandy. The bill will now go to the Senate and then to the President. Of the money allocated, \$207 million has been earmarked for the Manhattan facility. This money for a Major Project will allow us to move forward with our plans to redesign the facility, creating a new home for outpatient clinics and move utilities above sea level. This is great news for our continuity of care. Again, this does not impact the work we are already doing, cleaning and refurbishing and replacing utilities to reopen our outpatient clinic services in March. The Major Project will come later, once all services have been restored to the Manhattan Campus.



COMPETING VOICES?

In our meetings, the members of the VACMH have this pronounced tendency of putting forth competing ideas, which sounds something akin to “facility chauvinism”. In council we have a proposal... that is not nearly digested before we are engaged in “one-upmanship” or the “piggy-backing” that does nothing to enhance the proposal on the floor. Is this to say, “We have a better idea that is already in place” or we don’t need this proposal”? While I am inclined to believe “competing ideas” is a good thing ... however we spend too much time sorting thru all this “out of the proper context, unnecessary verbiage.” As the newsletter editor, I am astounded when I hear all this piggy backing, yet hardly ever do I receive a blurb or a letter to the editor. There are a lot of things happening around the VISN of great interest to the VAC, which surely can stand on their own. The time to present those things, items, etc. is when they are of immediate relevancy to the Council and not as to compete with the proposal on the floor. Again, being the editor I am very much interested in what all council members have to say, however as a Co-Chair of our Council I must insist we maintain an aptitude and attitude for “taking care of the business at hand”. Respectfully.

Charles Witherspoon,
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PS: A HAIL AND HEARTY THANKS TO OUR CONTRIBUTORS AND A HAPPY 2012 TO US ALL!!!

Disclaimer: The opinions in the editorials and articles are the opinions of the writers. The VISN3 VACMH does not necessarily agree or disagree with the opinions within but as Veterans, we do support the right of each person to have his or her own opinion.