

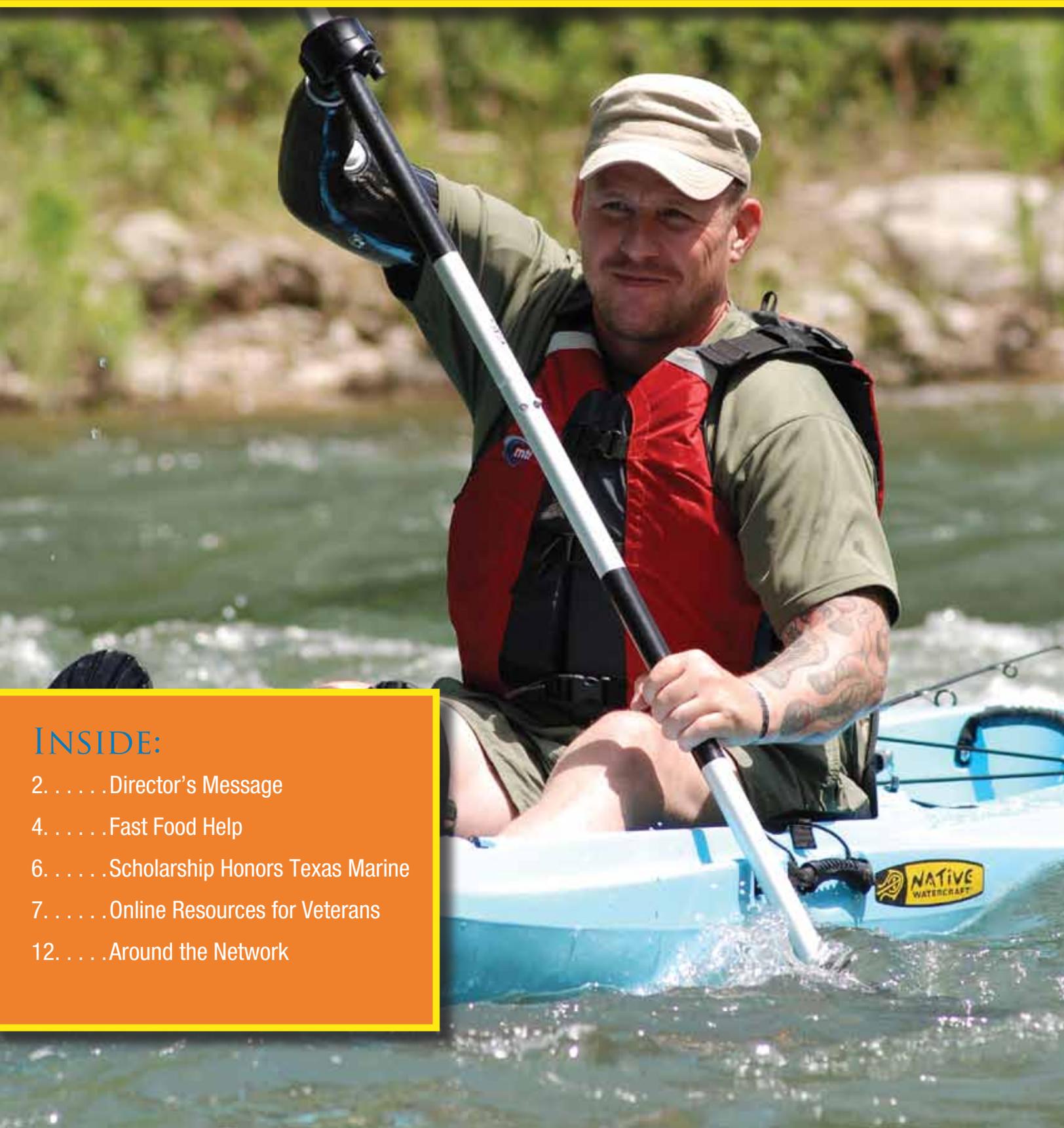
SUMMER 2010

# HEALTHIER LIVING

FOR TEXAS VETERANS

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## HEALTHIER LIVING FOR TEXAS VETERANS

Healthier Living for Texas Veterans is published quarterly by the VA Heart of Texas Health Care Network.

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**VA Heart of Texas**  
**He I work**

Keeping Veterans at the HEART of it all



## DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

On a typical night, about 107,000 Veterans are homeless. Last year, Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki launched a campaign to end homelessness among Veterans within five years. Since then, the number of homeless Veterans has dropped 18 percent.



Joseph M. Dalpiaz

The VA Heart of Texas Health Care Network also is committed to eliminating the cycle of homelessness among Veterans. We support the Secretary's commitment to use every tool at our disposal: health care, education, jobs, and safe housing to ensure our Veterans are restored to lives with dignity, purpose and safety.

A new telephone hotline provides emergency support and resources to homeless Veterans. Family members, workers at community agencies and non-VA providers also may call the hotline at 1-877-4AID VET

(1-877-424-3898). Well-trained expert responders staff the hotline 24/7.

We recognize that homeless Veterans are in need of food and shelter, clothing, financial assistance, and treatment for medical conditions. Additionally, many require access to permanent housing, Veterans benefits and vocational resources.

The VA is allocating \$39 million to fund about 2,200 new transitional housing beds through grants to local community providers. The grants put a priority upon housing for homeless women Veterans and housing on tribal lands.

Our Network's homeless coordinator is Heloise Ferguson and she can be contacted at 214-857-0943 or [Heloise.Ferguson@va.gov](mailto:Heloise.Ferguson@va.gov) for more information on the VA's Grant and Per Diem program and other services for homeless Veterans.

## Recreational Therapy MORE THAN

On a Thursday morning in May, Sgt. 1st Class Marc Dervaes did something he wasn't completely sure he'd ever do again: he hopped into a plastic boat, shoved off from the rocky shore and paddled down a clear, fast river.

The event was a tribute to the inventiveness of a prosthetist at Brooke Army Medical Center's Center for the Intrepid. More, it was a tribute to the indomitable will of a soldier. But the opportunity itself came courtesy of a relatively new non-profit that has introduced more than 3,100 wounded warriors to the therapeutic benefits of kayak angling over the last three years.

Heroes on the Water was the brainchild of a group of Veterans who believed that all of the things that made their time on the water so much fun might add up to more than just a good time for someone recovering from the physical and psychological wounds of war.

# SOUTH TEXAS NURSE RECOGNIZED AS TOPS IN VA

A South Texas Veterans Health Care System (STVHCS) nurse was named one of just six recipients of the Secretary's Award for Excellence in nursing and Advancement of Nursing Programs. Lisa Alexander, RN, MSN, was recognized in the "Registered Nurse, Staff Role" category for her outstanding work as part of the Care Coordination Home Telehealth (CCHT) team.

Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki presented the award at VA Headquarters in Washington, DC, June 30.

"The more than 77,000 nurses employed by the VA are critical to every aspect of the care we provide our nation's Veterans," said Marie L. Weldon, director of the STVHCS. "Lisa exemplifies the skill and dedication that makes VA health care the 'best care anywhere.'"

Alexander completed a Master's of Science in Nursing while working in the Home-Based Primary Care Clinic in San Antonio, which would later inspire the CCHT program. The results of her collaboration with the Diabetes Rapid Action Team were acknowledged as a Best Practice within the VA Heart of Texas Health Care Network, and she is a recognized leader among the national CCHT Master Preceptor group due to her innovation and commitment to national initiatives. 



Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki congratulates Lisa Alexander, RN, MSN, one of six Nursing Excellence award recipients from across the country.

## VA EMPLOYED 77,160 NURSING PERSONNEL

Registered Nurses (RN) .....	47,508
Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetists (CRNA) .....	649
Nurse Practitioners (NP) .....	4,254
Clinical Nurse Specialists (CNS) .....	538
Licensed Practical/Vocational Nurses (LPN/LVN) .....	13,001
Nursing Assistants (NA) .....	11,103

## JUST A GOOD TIME

Dervaes was injured Sept. 12, 2009, as he raced with his men to assist a logistics convoy that had come under fire in Kunor Province, Afghanistan. Before they could reach their objective, the soldiers from Troop C, 3rd Squadron, 61st Cavalry were ambushed. The vehicle Dervaes was riding in was hit by small arms fire and four rocket-propelled grenades (RPGs). One of the grenades crashed through the windshield and into Dervaes' right elbow.

"My first thought was that I wasn't going to be able to ride a motorcycle or drive a stick anymore," he said.

It took Dervaes just three days to get to the Center for the Intrepid, where he would spend the next seven months undergoing treatment and therapy. By the time he saw someone with a Heroes on the Water t-shirt and asked

Cover Photo: Sgt. 1st Class Marc Dervaes paddles a kayak for the first time since losing his right arm after an ambush in Iraq. *Photo by Joe Winston.*

about the program, he had five different prostheses, including one slotted to hold a kayak paddle.

"I've kayaked for a number of years, mostly whitewater stuff, so I was anxious just to find out what the possibilities were," he said.

Dervaes, who recently bought a new kayak and will soon retire from the Army to his Colorado Springs home with his wife of 11 years, says newly injured service members shouldn't rule out anything.

"The prosthetists down there at the Center for the Intrepid in San Antonio are miracle workers," he said. 

Online: [www.HeroesOnTheWater.org](http://www.HeroesOnTheWater.org)

## It's a HOT ONE

The Texas sun is strong and you need to be aware of the harmful effects of overexposure to the sun. Skin cancer, in particular melanoma the most deadly of cancers, can be caused by overexposure to sun. It is important to avoid overexposure to the sun, but also be aware that moderate sun exposure has beneficial effects on health and disease prevention by creating Vitamin D in your body.

Known as the "Sunshine Vitamin," Vitamin D is made in the body by sunlight on the skin. People that spend most of the time indoors must get Vitamin D from artificial light or Vitamin D rich diets and Vitamin D supplements.

### Why do I need Vitamin D?

Vitamin D helps maintain bone health by promoting calcium absorption and maintaining adequate amounts of calcium and phosphorus for bone growth and bone replacement. Recent research has also found that Vitamin D also helps control conditions such as: diabetes, high blood pressure, and muscle weakness.

### Am I at risk of Vitamin D deficiency?

There is no way to know for certain until you get a Vitamin D test. Even healthy people should seek a doctor and have their Vitamin D level tested. You are at higher risk for Vitamin D deficiency if you are elderly or obese, and/or if you have:

- Little sun exposure.
- Dark skin.
- Fat malabsorptive disorders.
- Inflammatory bowel disease.

Find out what your Vitamin D level is by having a Vitamin D 25 (OH) D test by your physician. If you have a Vitamin D deficiency, work with your physician to increase your vitamin D level with diet, supplements and sunlight.

### How do I get enough Vitamin D?

- Take Vitamin D supplements.
- Consume foods with Vitamin D.
- Receive midday sun exposure (without sun block) for 15-30 minutes in the late spring, summer and early fall, exposing as much skin as possible.

## Fast Food WITHOUT GAINING WEIGHT?

A CBS nationwide random telephone poll, conducted in 2005, resulted in the headline "CBS Poll: 23 Percent of Americans Eat Fast Food Once a Week." The participants in the poll were asked how many times they had eaten fast food during the previous week. The results showed:

- 4 percent ate fast food four or more times;
- 17 percent ate fast food two - three times;
- 23 percent ate fast food one time;
- 55 percent ate none.

### Why do Americans eat fast food?

Fast food popularity has increased, because it is convenient, inexpensive, and a quick-fix meal in this fast-paced world. Fast food restaurants entice children with toys in kids' meals, jungle gyms, and video arcades. When shopping, traveling, or rushing from work to school or a ballgame, it is certainly one of the easiest options available.

### Does fast food attribute to increased weight?

*The Lancet*, a medical journal, published a 15-year study

which reported that those individuals who ate fast food more than twice a week averaged a 10-pound weight gain greater than those who ate fast food less than once a week. According to the April 2008 issue of *Consumer Reports on Health*, fast-food patrons' weight gain may be partially due to underestimating the calorie content of the fast food items and eating larger portions. A super-sized fast food meal contains more calories and fat than most people require for a whole day.

### How can I cut calories and fat while eating fast food?

Cutting 500 calories from your intake each day can equate to a one-pound weight loss per week. This can be as easy as choosing smaller portions and making healthier beverage and food choices.

- **Drink water or diet beverages.** Liquid calories are high in sugar and can be easily avoided by making another choice. Fruit juice is a healthier choice than soda, but it is also very high in calories. Instead, order water, unsweetened iced tea, or diet soda for zero calories. Add lemon to water for extra flavor.

Use common sense to prevent sun damage to skin, and avoid sun burns. Check with your doctor if you have a condition or take pills that advise against sun exposure.

### Follow the American Cancer Society tips to prevent skin cancer:

- ☀ Avoid the sun between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m.
- ☀ Choose protective clothing made of tightly woven fabrics that can't be seen through when held up to a light.
- ☀ Use generous amounts of sunscreen and lip balm with a Sun Protection Factor (SPF) of 15 or higher.
- ☀ Wear wide-brimmed hats that shade your face, ears, and neck.
- ☀ Choose sunglasses with 99 percent to 100 percent ultraviolet (UV) absorption.
- ☀ Avoid tanning beds and sun lamps.

Although anyone can develop skin cancer, those people with fair skin, freckles, and lots of moles are most at risk, and should take extra care to protect their skin from the sun's damaging rays. Other risk factors include a family history of skin cancer and severe sunburns as a child.

### How much Vitamin D is in a supplement?

- ☀ Prescription Vitamin D pill: 50,000 International Unit (IU).
- ☀ Over the counter Vitamin D pills: 400 – 5000 IU.

### How much Vitamin D does the sun provide?

20-30 minutes of sunny, mid-day, summer exposure: 10,000 IU.

### What are food sources of Vitamin D?

There are very few food sources of Vitamin D. This makes it hard to get enough from food alone. Some foods sources of Vitamin D include:

- ☀ Pure cod liver oil: 1360 IU/1 Tablespoon.
- ☀ Salmon (sockeye): 794/3 ounces cooked.
- ☀ Tuna, canned in water: 154 IU/3 ounces.
- ☀ Milk with added Vitamin D: 115-124 IU/8 ounces cup.
- ☀ Orange juice with added Vitamin D: 100 IU/8 ounces cup.
- ☀ Yogurt with added Vitamin D: 80 IU/6 ounces. ❤️



🍴 **Limit the added calories.** Skip the cheese and save 70 calories. Skip the bacon and save 45 calories per slice. Skip the mayo and save 40 calories per teaspoon. Ask for ketchup and mustard, they are relatively low in calories but add sodium. When ordering salad dressing, choose a low calorie dressing. Ordering the salad dressing "on the side" allows you to control the amount you put on your salad.

🍴 **Add vegetables.** Add onions, tomatoes, lettuce, and peppers. These will add flavor plus vitamins and minerals with a very small addition of calories.

🍴 **Choose cooking method.** Skip the deep-fried, batter-dipped, breaded, crispy, scalloped, and added sauces. They are higher in calories and fat.

🍴 **Choose smaller portion size.** Larger is not better. Limit the size of your hamburger and don't double the meat patty.

🍴 **Make substitutions.** Ask for a side salad or fruit in place of the french fries with your meal deal order. By adding fruit or a salad you will fill up on fewer calories.

🍴 **Plan ahead to make healthier choices.** Many fast food chains post nutritional information on their websites. Or, you can ask the fast food restaurant for their nutrition guide. By comparing the food choices the fast food chain offers, you can make a healthier low-calorie, low-fat choice.

🍴 **Even a treat can be low-calorie.** Whether there's a celebration or you're giving yourself a reward, there will be times you will want a sweet treat. Do not give into your craving by ordering the biggest malt or sundae on the menu. Instead, choose a low-fat, low-calorie item. ❤️

# New Scholarship for the CHILDREN OF FALLEN SERVICE MEMBERS

## *Benefit Honors Gunnery Sergeant John David Fry*

The children of military personnel who died in the line of duty since Sept. 11, 2001, can apply for an educational scholarship similar to the new Post-9/11 GI Bill. Benefits are retroactive to Aug. 1, 2009.

The scholarship, which is administered by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), is named after Marine Gunnery Sergeant John David Fry.

"The Fry scholarship represents this nation's solemn commitment to care for children whose mothers and fathers paid the ultimate price for our country," said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki.

Texas Rep. Chet Edwards, who represents the Fry family in Congress, penned the bill establishing the scholarship.

VA began accepting applications for the Fry scholarship on May 1, 2010. For more information or assistance applying, call toll-free 1-888-GIBILL-1 (1-888-442-4551), or visit the VA GI Bill Website.

The VA estimates nearly 1,500 children will receive benefits under the Fry scholarship program in 2010. Recipients generally have 15 years to use their benefits, beginning on their 18th birthdays.

Eligible children attending institutions of higher learning may receive payments to cover their tuition and fees up to the highest amounts charged to public, in-state students at undergraduate institutions in each state. A monthly housing allowance and stipend for books and supplies are also paid under this program.



Gideon Fry, 7, son of Gunnery Sgt. John D. Fry, 28, of Lorena, Texas, looks at his father's closet. Sergeant Fry was killed in action seven days before he was to leave Iraq, and a new VA scholarship benefitting the children of fallen warriors bears his name. (*Chang W. Lee/The New York Times, photo used by permission*)

VA will begin paying benefits under the Fry scholarships Aug. 1, 2010. Eligible children may be married. Recipients are entitled to 36 months of benefits at the 100 percent level.

When dependents also serve in the military, the reserves or are Veterans in their own right, eligible for education benefits under the Montgomery GI Bill for Active Duty, the Montgomery GI Bill for Selected Reserves or the Reserve Educational Assistance Program (REAP), then they would relinquish their eligibility under those programs to receive benefits under a Fry scholarship. ❤️

Online: [www.gibill.va.gov](http://www.gibill.va.gov)



John David Fry, 28, of Lorena, Texas, had only a week left in his Iraq tour in 2006 when he injured his hand. He was given the option of leaving Iraq after the injury and going home with a Bronze Star. He declined and two days later volunteered to go on one last run to defuse bombs. After working seven more hours, Fry was killed March 8, 2006, by an improvised explosive device in Anbar Province, Iraq. He was assigned to the 8th Engineer Support Battalion, 2nd Marine Logistics Group, II Marine Expeditionary Force at Camp Lejeune, N.C. Fry is survived by a loving family that includes three children who were under the age of 10 at the time of his death.

# TexVet: PARTNERS ACROSS TEXAS

TexVet: Partners Across Texas is a collaborative effort among organizations including the United States Department of Defense, Veterans Health Administration, Texas Military Forces, and State of Texas programs and agencies including the Health and Human Services Commission's 2-1-1 Texas Information and Referral Network (TIRN) and the Texas A&M Health Science Center.



The partnership also is a forum for collaboration between government agencies and private organizations and businesses that are serving and supporting the military and their families and their communities. Service providers, military, and veterans-related groups all are encouraged to contact TexVet: Partners Across Texas with information that might be shared to help deal with the effects of war and military service.

TexVet: Partners Across Texas focuses on making it easier for military members and their families to find help. The resources identified through TexVet are meant for anyone who is serving or has served in any branch of the military, as well as the family members and others who care about a service member.

The Texas Information and Referral Network, 2-1-1 Texas, also is a part of the TexVet initiative. 2-1-1 is a non-emergency confidential telephone service linking callers to local services in Texas. Anyone can call 2-1-1 to speak directly with a person who is trained to help find needed services. 

Online: [www.TexVet.com](http://www.TexVet.com), or call 2-1-1.

## Wounded Warrior WEB SITE UPGRADED

The Department of Defense (DoD) has upgraded its National Resource Directory (NRD) Web site for wounded, ill and injured service members, veterans, their families and those who support them, recently received a comprehensive system upgrade to provide users with easier access.

The Web site is a collaborative effort between the DoD, Veterans Affairs (VA) and Department of Labor (DOL), and compiles federal, state, local and non-profit resources for wounded warriors, Veterans, family members and caregivers in a single, searchable site.

"We worked closely with users of the National Resource Directory to find out how to make the information they need easier to find," said Noel Koch, deputy undersecretary of defense for Wounded Warrior Care and Transition Policy. "The resulting re-design is easier to navigate and adds useful new features."

The upgrade makes the latest wounded warrior and veteran issues easier to locate and follow. A new "bookmark and share" application helps visitors alert others to the content they've found most helpful through

social bookmarking, Facebook, Twitter, and other social networking tools. Visitors can also subscribe to Really Simple Syndication (RSS) or e-mail updates to receive new content, events and features based on their specific interests and needs.

The faster, enhanced search engine ranks information based on the popularity of the sources among other site users, so the most valuable resources rise to the top of the search results. Visitors can tailor searches for resources in specific states and territories, and apply filters to narrow their searches.

The redesigned site also highlights resources to assist homeless veterans. NRD users can also recommend additional resources.

All resources are thoroughly vetted prior to inclusion on the National Resource Directory, and as always, content is updated and reviewed daily by a content management team which includes veterans and subject matter experts. 

Online: [www.NationalResourceDirectory.gov](http://www.NationalResourceDirectory.gov).

# Texas Museum a Perfect Getaway for V-J DAY

Americans may note a line of small type in the Aug. 14 square of their wall calendars: "V-J Day." It won't mean a day off work for most (it's a Saturday, this year), and in fact Rhode Island is the only U.S. state to mark Victory over Japan as an official holiday (the second Monday of August each year).

The surrender of Japan marked the end of the Pacific war, and also the end of World War II. Some 8 million Americans served in the war against Japan, and more than 100,000 paid the ultimate price in places whose names many Americans do remember: Pearl Harbor, Guadalcanal, Midway, Leyte Gulf, Bataan, and many more.

The end of the Pacific war, and thus the second World War, was announced in the United States Aug. 14 (Emperor Hirohito announced Japan's unconditional surrender on the other side of the international date line, Aug. 15 in Japan), and the instrument of surrender was formally signed aboard the USS Missouri Sept. 2.

Nowhere is the long, island-hopping campaign more fully commemorated and explained than in a startlingly comprehensive museum in the small Texas Hill Country town of Fredericksburg.

Fredericksburg is the boyhood home of Fleet Adm. Chester W. Nimitz, Commander in Chief Pacific Fleet and Commander in Chief, Pacific Ocean Areas during World War II. The steamboat-shaped frontier hotel Nimitz's grandfather owned from 1855 is home to a portion of the nearly 74,000 square feet of exhibit space.

The *Wall Street Journal*, in an article this May, calls the museum "exquisite and engaging," and the writer opines that it is "perhaps the most comprehensive, well-organized and informative military museum I've ever seen."

The museum now covers 6 acres, and includes a restored patrol torpedo boat (PT-309), one of five Japanese midget submarines that participated in the attack on Pearl Harbor, numerous WW II aircraft and hundreds of other artifacts.

A helpful feature for those more familiar with the European Theater of Operations are panels in the George H.W. Bush Gallery, which opened Dec. 7, 2009, that outline contemporaneous events in Europe.

Fredericksburg is located about 70 miles from San Antonio, and about 75 miles from Austin.

Tickets are free to WW II Veterans and \$12 for the general public. ❤️

Online: [www.nimitz-museum.org](http://www.nimitz-museum.org)

This image was snapped by a U.S. Navy photographer in Times Square at the same moment as the iconic Life magazine cover photo. Glenn McDuffie, who now lives in Arlington, Texas, has been identified as the sailor in the photo (see p. 12 for more). Edith Shain, long believed to be the nurse in the photo, passed away June 20 at the age of 91.

# South Korean President Thanks Veterans on 60TH ANNIVERSARY OF KOREAN WAR

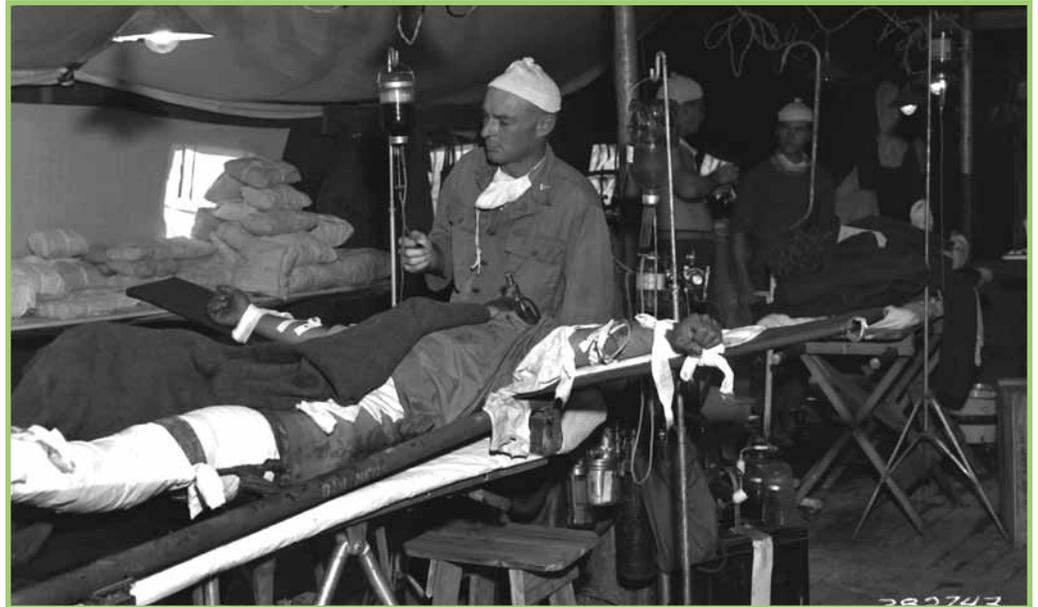
On June 25, 1950, the North Korea Army – organized, equipped and abetted by the Soviet Union – lunged across the 38th Parallel to subdue its countrymen to the south. This flagrant action impelled President Harry Truman to commit U.S. armed forces – unprepared as they were – to the defense of South Korea.

The United Nations Security Council simultaneously called upon member states to do likewise. Twenty other nations would heed the call, 15 sending combat troops, five providing medical support.

The North Korean offensive drove the defenders to the southeast corner of the peninsula. There, the Pusan perimeter was established and reinforced by U.S. armed forces divisions, held in bitter battle after bitter battle. The stout defense made possible a brilliantly conceived amphibious landing at Inchon, which enveloped the over-extended North Korean Army and recaptured the capital city of Seoul.

Massive intervention of the Chinese Communist Forces in November 1950 profoundly altered the nature of the war. Savaged by vastly superior numbers and ill-equipped for combat in sub-zero weather, UN forces retreated to a line well south of Seoul, regrouped and, by March 1951, had fought back to the 38th Parallel. In April and May, Chinese forces launched successive major offensives to drive UN forces from the peninsula. The offensives were repelled at staggering cost to the Chinese.

With the battle line again astride the pre-invasion boundary, proof that aggression had failed, negotiations were initiated to terminate armed hostilities. Opposing forces remained locked in combat, at great loss of lives, for the next two years while the Military Armistice Agreement, effective July 27, 1953, was forged. In the absence of a political settlement, the agreement still regulates the *de facto* boundary between two Koreas.



At the 8209th Mobil Army Surgical Hospital, US 8th Army, Maj. Jesse F. Brown, Commanding Officer, administers whole blood to a wounded US X Corps soldier. Col. (Dr.) Michael E. DeBakey, namesake of the Houston VA Medical Center, was instrumental in developing the MASH concept as well as the VA Medical Center Research System. (U.S. Army photo)

When the guns fell silent over the war-torn Korean Peninsula, the final tally evidenced cost beyond measure in life, limb and material treasure. Many questioned the value of U.S. involvement. The best answer came some four decades later in South Korea, in 1988, when an independent, economically prosperous nation of 44 million stood free to host the “greatest ever” Olympiad. And later, another answer would come with the dismantling of the Soviet Union and its plan for world-wide communism – proof that the three-year war was truly a portent of greater victories to come, for Korea and the world.

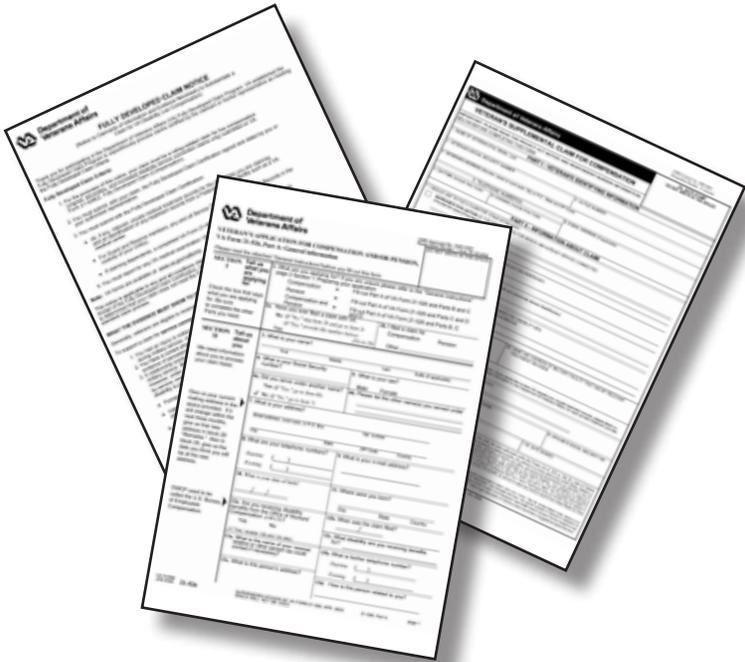
During this year marking the 60th anniversary of the Korean War, the Republic of Korea wants to directly thank U.S. Veterans of the Korean War for their courageous service and sacrifice on behalf of freedom.

A letter signed by the President of the Republic of Korea expressing that free nation’s profound gratitude is available to each living Korean War Veteran and can be obtained on line or by writing to: U.S. Branch ROK 60th AKW Commemoration Committee, 2450 Massachusetts Ave., NW, Washington, DC 20008. ❤️

Online: <http://eng.koreanwar60.go.kr>

# VA Makes Filing Claims

## EASIER AND FASTER FOR VETERANS



As part of Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki's effort to break the back of the backlog, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is reducing the paperwork and expediting the process for Veterans seeking compensation for disabilities related to their military service.

"These reductions in paperwork, along with other improvements to simplify and speed the claims process, symbolize changes underway to make VA more responsive to Veterans and their families," said Shinseki.

VA has shortened application forms to reduce paperwork for Veterans. The new forms, which are being made available on VA's Web site at [www.va.gov/vaforms](http://www.va.gov/vaforms), include:

A shortened VA Form 21-526 for Veterans applying for the first-time to VA for disability compensation or pension benefits. This form has been cut in half – from 23 to 10 pages. It is immediately available to Veterans via Web download, and will be available through VA's online claim-filing process later this summer.

VA Form 21-526b for Veterans seeking increased benefits for conditions already determined by VA to be service-connected. This new form more clearly describes the information needed to support claims for increased benefits.

In order to make the claims process faster, VA has also introduced two new forms for Veterans participating in the

Department's new fully developed claim (FDC) program, which is one of the fastest means to receive a claims decision.

Gathering the information and evidence needed to support a Veteran's disability claim often takes the largest portion of the processing time. If VA receives all of the available evidence when the claim is submitted, the remaining steps in the claims-decision process can be expedited without compromising quality.

To participate in the FDC program, Veterans should complete and submit an FDC Certification and VA Form 21-526EZ, "Fully Developed Claim (Compensation)," for a compensation claim, or a VA Form 21-527EZ, "Fully Developed Claim (Pension)," for a pension claim.

The forms were designed specifically for the FDC program. These six-page application forms include notification to applicants of all information and evidence necessary to "fully develop" and substantiate their claims. With this notification, Veterans and their representatives can "fully develop" their claims before submission to VA for processing.

Along with the application and certification, Veterans must also submit all relevant and pertinent evidence to "fully develop" their claims. A claim submitted as "fully developed" may still require some additional evidence to be obtained by VA, to include certain federal records and a VA medical examination.

VA provides compensation, pension, education, loan guaranty, vocational rehabilitation, employment, and insurance benefits to Veterans and their families through 57 VA regional offices.

Disability compensation is a tax-free benefit paid to a Veteran for disabilities that are a result of – or made worse by – injuries or diseases that happened while on active duty, active duty for training or inactive duty training. Pension is a benefit paid to wartime Veterans with limited income, and who are permanently and totally disabled or age 65 or older.

For additional information, call VA's toll free benefits number at 1-800-827-1000. 

Online: <https://vabenefits.vba.va.gov/>

# Spa Day for FEMALE VETERANS

Nine women from the South Texas Veterans Health Care System's (STVHCS) Mental Health Intensive Care Program (MHICM) enjoyed spa services offered by Spa Enso. The ladies were treated to massages, manicures, pedicures, and facial services.

The MHICM program is a community-based program that provides mental health services to male and female Veterans. The program offers support to Veterans who are in recovery from mental health challenges and diminishes crises in their lives.

For several of the female Veterans, this was their first time indulging in any spa service. The day was a nice surprise for them.

"This is my first time doing this," said Anna Castano, a Veteran who has been using the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) services since 1986.

Castano goes on to say that VA health care for women has "evolved" and indicated her satisfaction with her care at the VA.

Another female Veteran, Elizabeth Missbach, echoed the same sentiment. Missbach has been using VA health care services for 25 years, and she said that VA services for women have improved dramatically over the past few years.

Barbara Hector, Women Veterans Program manager at STVHCS, agreed with Castano and Missbach's comments about the progression of VA services for women.

"The Women Veterans Health Strategic Health Care Group has been established to create timely, equitable and comprehensive health care services for women Veterans at all VA facilities," Hector said. "And it really helps to have a full-time Women Veterans Program manager in every VA health care system."

Diana Morales, a Veteran who has used the VA since 1987, had a message for all incoming female Veterans.

"Go ahead and use the VA system," she said. "Voice your concerns. You have a voice." 🇺🇸



## VA Announces Change to Medication Copays FOR SOME VETERANS

On Jan. 7, 2010, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) froze prescription copayment increases for six months. Veterans who generally have higher income and no service-connected disabilities – referred to as Priority Groups 7 and 8 Veterans – will now pay an additional \$1 for each 30-day supply of outpatient medications. Taking effect July 1, the increase to \$9 from \$8 is the first change in VA's medication copay since Jan. 1, 2006.

This change does not impact Veterans in Priority Groups 2 through 6 who will continue to pay \$8 for each 30-day supply of medications for their non-service connected conditions unless otherwise exempted.

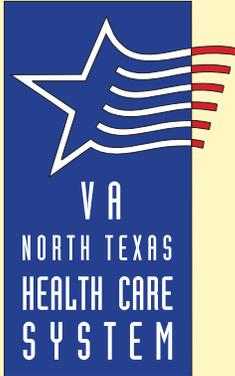
Veterans who have an injury or illness connected with their military service resulting in a disability rated 50 percent or greater – who are known as Priority Group 1 Veterans – are exempt from the copay.

Veterans who have difficulty paying copayments for outpatient medications should discuss the matter with their local VA enrollment coordinator. Veterans may also contact VA at 1-877-222 VETS (8387) or visit VA's health eligibility Web site. 🇺🇸

Online: [www.va.gov/healtheligibility](http://www.va.gov/healtheligibility)



# Around the NETWORK...



## Where Heroes Meet Angels

Veterans in North Texas are receiving a little extra love and care thanks to compassionate citizens who have opened their residences. A welcome alternative to nursing home placement, the Medical Foster Home gives Veterans independence, and caregivers find the program a way to give back to the military heroes who have given so much for our freedom.

VA began the Medical Foster Home program in 2000 as a pilot project in Little Rock, Ark. Other VA facilities like the Dallas VA Medical Center began the program in 2008.

More than caregivers, the community members who partner with VA open their hearts and homes to provide 24-

hour supervision and needed personal assistance. Homeowners must undergo a rigorous protocol to qualify for the program, including experience providing care to disabled adults, CPR training and random visits.

Added measures like security systems and other adaptive equipment or structural access are placed in the home to meet the Veteran's needs.

One Veteran at a time, the Medical Foster Home is matching up eligible Veterans with families eager to give them the love, honor and respect they deserve.

## North Texas Gains CARF Accreditation

VA North Texas Health Care System received a three-year accreditation from the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF) for the Behavioral Health Domiciliary Residential Rehabilitation Treatment program at Dallas and Bonham. A CARF-accredited facility is able to assist its providers in improving the quality of health care services to meet internationally recognized standards in the rehabilitation field.

## Veterans and family members enjoy refurbished waiting areas

On March 31, more than 250 Aaron's staff arrived on campus to great fan fare. Employees, Veterans, Veterans service organizations, and other stakeholders lined the main entrance,



waving flags and 'Thank You Aaron's' and 'We Love Our Veterans' signs.

At about the same time, delivery trucks arrived at the hospital loading docks where Aaron's staff began putting together entertainment systems and other furniture. All the while there were celebrities signing autographs in various waiting areas, including NASCAR Drivers David Reutimann and Trevor Bayne along with 2009 Championship

Bull Riding World Champion Hugo Pedrero, Bass Pro Angler Janet Parker, World Champion Bull Rider Tuff Hedemann, and Jarrod Brannon, host of Aaron's Outdoors TV show.

Veteran Glenn McDuffie, 'the kissing sailor' was on-hand to pose for pictures and sign autographs. McDuffie is widely credited as the sailor kissing a nurse pictured on the famous cover of *Life* magazine in August 1945 when VJ day was announced in New York's Time Square.





## Waco VAMC upgrades blind rehab center



Rep. Chet Edwards and Waco Mayor Virginia DuPuy joined Central Texas Veterans Health Care System for a groundbreaking ceremony for a new 20-bed Blind Rehabilitation Unit on April 5.

The Congressman asked the audience to close their eyes for a minute, an hour, or a day.

"Only then could we understand how blindness could change our lives and our families' lives forever. Only then could we fully appreciate the sacrifice of those who have lost their vision in military service to our country," said Edwards.

Immediately following the ceremony, Blind Rehabilitation Program alumni, including retired four-star General Robert Shoemaker, who commanded both III Corps at Fort Hood and Forces Command and for whom a Killeen high school is named, took attendees through the existing Blind Rehabilitation Program to gain an appreciation for the rehabilitative services Veterans experience in the program.

Costs for the renovation are part of an almost \$50 million improvement plan for five projects set to expand and renovate buildings on the Waco VA campus.

The existing Waco Blind Rehabilitation Center is one of 10 VA Centers across the country. The Center serves blind and visually impaired Veterans and active duty service personnel from throughout the south-central United States.

The program provides Veterans with training in skills to compensate for their vision loss as well as specialized equipment needed by each individual. The goal is to help each Veteran regain as much independence as possible. Projecting an increase in the need for this program, the move into a remodeled modern facility will increase inpatient beds from the current 15 to 20 beds. The new facility is expected to open in early 2011.

## Ride2Recovery

About 125 U.S. military Veterans wounded in Iraq or Afghanistan stopped at the Waco VA Medical Center (VAMC) on April 9, and were greeted by Waco VAMC staff,

Veterans, community members, and Rep. Chet Edwards.

"Taking on this incredible therapeutic cycle trek and facing each day of your recovery with the strength and courage of a warrior is remarkable," said Edwards.

The cyclists participated in the second annual "Ride2Recovery Texas Challenge," a six-day, 350-mile bicycle ride that took them to Ranger Ballpark in Arlington on April 11, to throw out the first pitch at the Texas Rangers vs. Seattle Mariners baseball game.

The riders started their trek at Brooke Army Medical Center in San Antonio. For six days these wounded warriors challenged themselves with the thrill of the open road. Many used adaptive bicycles.

The Ride2Recovery program raises public awareness of the challenges our nation's Veterans face with regard to physical and mental issues.

The program supports outdoor cycling programs, an activity that almost all patients with mental and physical disabilities can participate in.

Online: [www.ride2recovery.com](http://www.ride2recovery.com)



# South Texas Veterans He I

Department of Veterans Aff I



**“Our mission is to provide the best health care available” Weldon said. “I want to invite ALL Veterans to come in to the VA hospital or clinic and enroll for health care. You served our country well and we want to offer you all the benefits you have earned.”**

**Marie Weldon**

## Texas recognizes STVHCS for Performance Excellence

The South Texas Veterans Health Care System (STVHCS) is among six Texas organizations recognized by The Quality Texas Foundation for Achievement in Organizational Excellence with well-deployed, effective, systematic approaches to organizational management.

STVHCS provides comprehensive medical services to more than 88,000 Veterans in 63 Texas counties. The award-winning VA health care system is known for nationally-renowned

medical professionals and electronic medical records.

“Thank you so much for your service to our country,” STVHCS Director Marie Weldon, told a fellow Veteran. Weldon, an Army Veteran herself, assumed the leadership of the award-winning health care system rated in the top 10 among VA medical centers in August of 2009.

The Quality Texas Foundation is a non-profit Texas corporation, focused on the assessment and feedback process, education, training, and recognition to help businesses, schools, hospitals, non-profits, and government agencies improve performance.

## Making you feel at home

Environmental changes and additional caregiver and grief support services are coming to the South Texas Veterans Health Care System.

The Geriatrics and Extended Care Service was awarded a \$2.6 million

grant to expand Veteran Centered Care initiatives in the Community Living Centers (CLC). The funds will pay for environmental changes that will enhance resident life at the San Antonio and Kerrville CLCs. For example, a “bistro” will be created in the resident dining room to increase the food choices available and provide residents with access to hot and cold food and drinks at all times of the day.

Resident rooms will be updated and personalized for each Veteran. In addition, the funds will allow for additional Social Workers and Chaplains.

Programs will be developed to provide services such as caregiver support and bereavement support for Veterans’ family members. Social support is vital to creating a healing environment, and family and friends are encouraged to be involved with the care of their loved one, whenever possible.





## Meet the Chief of Staff



Raul Aguilar, M.D., was appointed Chief of Staff for the new VA Texas Valley Coastal Bend Health Care

System in May 2010. Prior to his appointment, Aguilar was selected as the Associate Chief of Staff for Ambulatory Care in September.

Aguilar began his VA career in 1981 as a Clinical Staff Physician at the McAllen Outpatient Clinic and in 1984 was appointed Chief Medical Officer.

As the Chief Medical Officer, he provided administrative oversight of the facility's physicians and clinical staff in addition to caring for his patient panel.

Aguilar is a 22-year Veteran of the U.S. Air Force Reserve currently serving as a flight surgeon. He has also served as the Chief of Clinical Services, Squadron Clinical Commander, and Medical Group Commander. He has attained the rank of colonel during his tenure of service.

Aguilar is board certified by the American Board of Family Medicine and holds a certificate of Added Qualifications in Geriatric Medicine.

He is also a Clinical Assistant Professor of the Family Medicine Residency Program at the University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio (UTHSCSA).

Aguilar holds a Doctorate of Medicine from the University of Minnesota at Minneapolis and completed his residency at the UTHSCSA. He holds a Bachelor of Science of Petroleum Engineering from Texas A&M University in College Station, Texas.

## Ambulatory Surgery Center to Open Soon



The Ambulatory Surgery Center at Harlingen is on schedule to be completed and handed over to the VA by October 2010, the same month the VA Texas Valley Coastal Bend Health Care System (VATVCBHCS) officially activates into a stand-alone Health Care System.

The construction project is more than 70 percent complete and boasts a three-story center and totals 120,000 sq. ft.

The flagship facility will offer a full range of outpatient services including six surgical suites, colonoscopy and cystoscopy suites, medicine and surgery specialty outpatient clinics, prosthetics care, amputee clinic, and a substance abuse treatment clinic.

Activation is scheduled for January 2011. A parking garage adjacent to the facility is also included in the project.

## Harlingen VA Clinic Brings Powerful MRI to Valley

The VATVCBHCS is proud to announce that the South Texas VA Health Care Center in Harlingen is the first medical facility in the Rio Grande Valley to provide a 3 Tesla MRI machine to South Texas Veterans.

The most powerful magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) machine, known as the "3 Tesla," is able to depict a high quality image allowing for better review and diagnosis.

The addition of this new technology is another example of the VA keeping its promise to provide first-class health care to our Veterans right here at home.





**VA Heart of Texas**  
**He I work**

*Keeping Veterans at the HEART of it all*

# VA HEART OF TEXAS HEALTH CARE NETWORK SITES OF CARE

## VA NORTH TEXAS HEALTH CARE SYSTEM

Dallas VA Medical Center  
4500 S. Lancaster Rd.  
Dallas, TX 75216  
(800) 849-3597

Sam Rayburn Memorial Veterans Center  
1201 E. 9th St.  
Bonham, TX 75418  
(800) 924-8387

Fort Worth Outpatient Clinic  
300 W. Rosedale  
Fort Worth, TX 76104  
(800) 443-9672

Tyler Primary Care Clinic  
3414 Golden Rd.  
Tyler, TX 75701  
(903) 590-3050

Denton CBOC  
VA Primary Care Clinic  
2223 Colorado Boulevard  
Denton, TX 76205  
(800) 310-5001

Paris CBOC  
Northeast Texas Primary Care  
635 Stone Ave.  
Paris, TX 75460  
(903) 785-9900

Sherman CBOC  
VA Primary Care  
3811 US 75 N  
Sherman, TX 75090  
(903) 487-0477

Fort Worth CBOC  
University of North Texas  
Health Science Center at Fort Worth  
855 Montgomery Street  
Fort Worth, TX 76107  
(817) 735-2228

Bridgeport CBOC  
Family Clinic  
812 Woodrow Wilson Ray Circle  
Bridgeport, TX 76426  
(940) 683-2538

Granbury CBOC  
Lake Granbury Primary Care  
Fall Creek Medical Plaza  
601 Fall Creek Hwy.  
Granbury, TX 76049

Greenville CBOC  
Sandknop Family Practice  
4006 Wellington Road, Suite 100  
Greenville, TX 75401  
(903) 450-4788

## CENTRAL TEXAS VETERANS HEALTH CARE SYSTEM

Olin E. Teague Veterans' Medical Center  
1901 S. Veterans Memorial Dr.  
Temple, TX 78613  
(800) 423-2111

Waco VA Medical Center  
4800 Memorial Drive  
Waco, TX 76711  
(800) 423-2111

Austin Outpatient Clinic  
2901 Montopolis Drive  
Austin, TX 78741  
(512) 389-1010

Brownwood CBOC  
2600 Memorial Park Drive  
Brownwood, TX 76801  
(325) 641-0568

Bryan/College Station CBOC  
1651 Rock Prairie Road, Suite 100  
College Station, TX 77845  
(979) 680-0361

Cedar Park CBOC  
701 East Whitestone Blvd.  
Cedar Park, TX 78613  
(512) 260-1368

Palestine CBOC  
2000 S. Loop 256, Suite 124  
Palestine, TX 75801  
(903) 723-9006

La Grange VA Outreach Clinic  
890 East Travis  
La Grange, TX 78945  
(979) 968-5878

## SOUTH TEXAS VETERANS HEALTH CARE SYSTEM

Audie L. Murphy Memorial Veterans Hospital  
7700 Merton Minter Blvd.  
San Antonio, TX 78229  
(877) 469-5300

Kerrville VA Medical Center  
3600 Memorial Boulevard  
Kerrville, TX 78028  
(830) 896-2020

Frank M. Tejada Outpatient Clinic  
5788 Eckhart Road  
San Antonio, TX 78240  
(210) 699-2100

North Central Federal Clinic  
17440 Henderson Pass  
San Antonio, TX 78232  
(210) 483-2900

Outpatient Clinic  
1502 E. Airline, Suite 40  
Victoria, TX 77901  
(361) 582-7700

## VA TEXAS VALLEY COASTAL BEND HEALTH CARE SYSTEM

Corpus Christi Outpatient Clinic  
5283 Old Brownsville Road  
Corpus Christi, TX 78405  
(361) 806-5600

South Texas Health Care Center at Harlingen  
2106 Treasure Hills Blvd.  
Harlingen, TX 78550  
(956) 366-4500

McAllen Outpatient Clinic  
2101 S. Colonel Rowe Boulevard  
McAllen, TX 78503  
(956) 618-7100

Laredo Outpatient Clinic  
6551 Star Court  
Laredo, TX 78041  
(956) 523-7850

Mobile Medical Unit  
Rio Grande City, Roma, Zapata,  
Hebbronville, Falfurrias and Port Isabel, TX