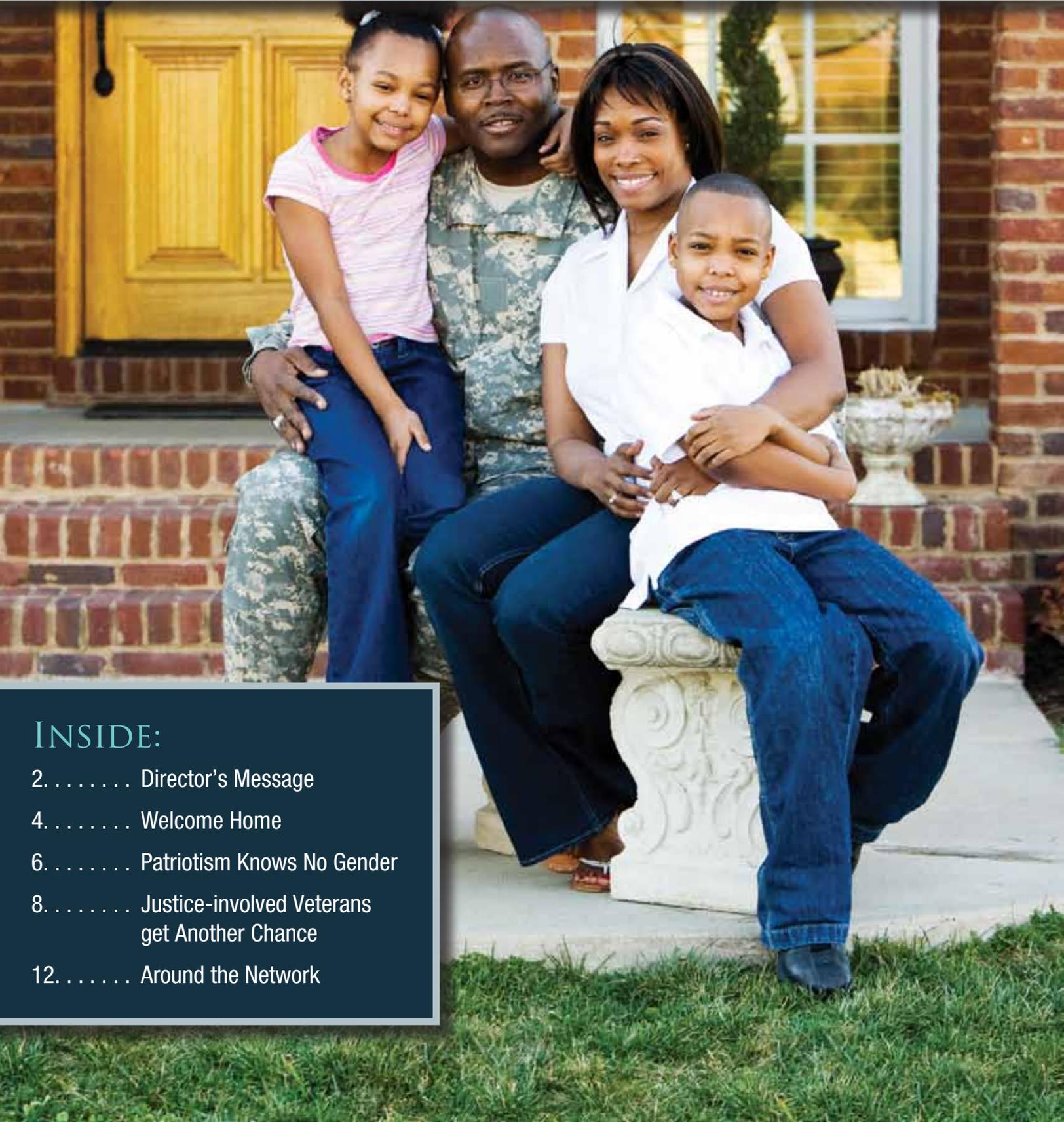


SPRING 2010

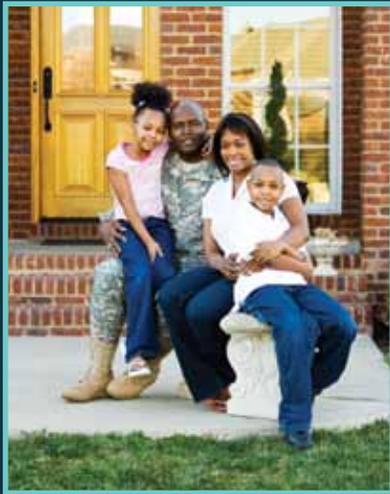
HEALTHIER LIVING

FOR TEXAS VETERANS



INSIDE:

- 2. Director's Message
- 4. Welcome Home
- 6. Patriotism Knows No Gender
- 8. Justice-involved Veterans
get Another Chance
- 12. Around the Network



HEALTHIER LIVING FOR TEXAS VETERANS

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

Editor

Diana Struski
diana.struski@va.gov

Managing Editor

Aaron Reed
aaron.reed@va.gov

Public Affairs Officers

North Texas HCS

Jerry Hopkins (acting)
jerry.hopkins@va.gov

Central Texas HCS

Nelia Schrum
nelia.schrum@va.gov

South Texas HCS

Kathryn Petravage
kathryn.petravage@va.gov

Valley Coastal Bend HCS

Froy Garza
froylan.garza@va.gov

Contact Healthier Living for Texas Veterans by calling 817-385-3796, or sending mail to: Healthier Living for Texas Veterans, 2301 E. Lamar Blvd., Ste. 650, Arlington, TX 76006.



VA Heart of Texas
He I work
Keeping Veterans at the HEART of it all



DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

The VA Heart of Texas Health Care Network rang-in 2010 with a change in leadership. Timothy P. Shea, network director since January 2008, retired after 32 years of distinguished service to Veterans.

As director of the VA North Texas Health Care System, I have been asked to serve as acting network director until the nationwide search for a new, permanent network director is completed.

Shea, a former Marine, previously served in senior leadership positions as director of the South Texas Veterans HCS, the Central Arkansas Veterans HCS and the Louisville VAMC.

In 2006, he received the Presidential Rank Award for Meritorious Executive, the highest honor in the federal civil service. Shea also is a recipient of the Federal Excellence in Health Leadership Award from the American College of Health Care Executives.



Joseph M. Dalpiaz, VA North Texas HCS director, assumed VA Heart of Texas Health Care Network director duties Jan. 3, 2010.

I began my VA career in 1985 as a social worker at the Lebanon VAMC and have held leadership positions in Pennsylvania, West Virginia and South Dakota. In 2007, I was appointed director of the VA North Texas HCS. I hold undergraduate business degrees from Williamsport Area Community College and Lock Haven State University in Pennsylvania, and a Master's degree from Temple University in Philadelphia.

It is both a privilege and an honor to serve the Veterans and employees of the VA Heart of Texas Health Care Network's four health care systems, which in recent years have made remarkable gains in performance metrics that matter most to Veterans.

I am a strong believer that an organization's vitality is directly linked to its employees' satisfaction, and I am fully committed to ensuring that our Veterans receive the best care available anywhere in the world. 

Snapshot of the VA Heart of Texas Health Care Network

Veteran Population:	1,097, 126
Health Care Systems:	4
Enrollees:	377,222
Employees:	11,948
Budget:	\$2 billion
Square miles:	132,000
States:	2
Active beds:	2,343

VA Expands HEALTH CARE ENROLLMENT



The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), which has nearly eight million Veterans enrolled in its award-winning health care system, is poised to welcome nearly 266,000 more Veterans into its medical centers and clinics across the country by expanding access to health care enrollment for certain Veterans who had been excluded due to their income.

There is no income limit for Veterans with compensable service-connected disabilities or for Veterans being seen for their service-connected disabilities.

Veterans who have applied for VA health care but were rejected due to income at any point in 2009 will have their applications reconsidered under the new income threshold formula. Those who applied before 2009, but were rejected due to income, must reapply.

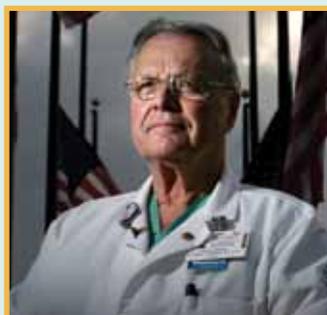
Information about enrollment and an income and assets calculator are available at www.va.gov/healtheligibility. The calculator provides a format in which Veterans enter their household income, number of dependents, and zip codes to see if they may qualify for VA health care enrollment.

Under a new regulation effective June 15, 2009, VA will enroll Veterans whose income exceeds current means-tested thresholds by up to 10 percent. These Veterans were excluded from VA health care enrollment when income limits were imposed in 2003 on Veterans with no service-connected disabilities or other special eligibility for care.

In addition to applying online, Veterans may also contact VA's Health Benefits Service Center at 1-877-222 VETS (1-877-222-8387). 

Veteran Surgeon puts 40 Years of Expertise TO WORK FOR VA PATIENTS

Dr. Cliff Buckley's curriculum vitae (a scientist's resume) runs to 30 pages, and reflects his contributions to medical science over more than four decades. Currently the executive vice chair of the Department of Surgery and director of the Division of Vascular Surgery at Scott & White Clinic in Temple, Texas, Buckley also serves as the VA Heart of Texas Health Care Network's chief surgical consultant and associate chief of staff for surgical service at the Temple VA Medical Center (VAMC).



Dr. Clifford Buckley was one of many surgeons and other medical personnel who treated the wounded after the Nov. 5, 2009, shooting at Fort Hood. (Photo by Courtney Perry/Used by permission of Dallas Morning News)

A professor at the Texas A&M University Health Science Center, Buckley recently received that institution's

Presidential Award for Excellence in Health Care Services and Delivery.

Buckley's surgical residency was interrupted by the Vietnam War, and he went on to serve as an elite Air Force para-rescueman in that conflict. Buckley was named the U.S. Air Force Flight Surgeon of the Year in 1966, and left the Air Force as a colonel in 1978.

"Dr. Buckley has transformed the Department of Surgery at Temple VAMC, improving productivity in the department by nearly 50 percent while gaining national notoriety by consistently excelling in quality," said Wendell E. Jones, M.D., VA Heart of Texas Health Care Network chief medical officer. "Veterans in Texas are very fortunate to have him on the team."

In addition to his local affiliations with the VA in Texas, Buckley is Vascular Surgery Consultant to the VA Central Office, Vice Chair of the National VA Surgical Advisory Board and a Vascular Surgery Representative to the National VA Field Advisory Committee. 

Welcome HOME and Thank You for your service!

VA is ready to provide health care and more to our newest veterans returning from the armed services. Here are some of the benefits VA provides that you need to know about:

Health Care Eligibility for 5 years — Enroll for health care at any VA Medical Center (VAMC) or clinic for five years following your military separation date. When you enroll, you may start receiving your health care at the VA right away, or not - the choice is yours! Once you enroll, the VA will be available to help serve your health care needs for years to come - but you must enroll within five years from separation!

Dental Benefits — VA facilities provide dental examinations and benefits to veterans with service related dental conditions. You may be eligible for one-time dental care, but you must apply for a dental exam within the first 180 days of your separation date.

Operation Enduring Freedom/Operation Iraqi Freedom (OEF/OIF) Programs — Every VAMC has a team ready to welcome OEF/OIF service members and help coordinate their care.

Federal Recovery Coordination Program — Assists seriously wounded, ill or injured and be referred by a member of your multi-disciplinary team, your commander, wounded warrior program or through self-referral.

The criteria include the following:

- Receiving acute care in military treatment facility;
- Diagnosed or referred with one or more of the following;
 - Spinal cord injury
 - Burns
 - Amputation
 - Visual Impairment
 - Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)
 - Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)
 - Considered at risk for psychosocial complication

An assigned Federal Recovery Coordinator will develop a Federal Individualized Recovery Plan with input from the service member or veteran's multidisciplinary health care team, the service member or veteran, and their family or caregiver. They track the care, management and transition of a recovering service member or veteran through recovery, rehabilitation, and reintegration.

Primary Health Care for Veterans (Post-Deployment Health Clinic) — These services include mental health, primary care, women's health, polytrauma, and spinal cord injury to name a few.

Additional Benefits — Non-health related benefits include: financial benefits, home loans, vocational rehabilitation, education, and more.

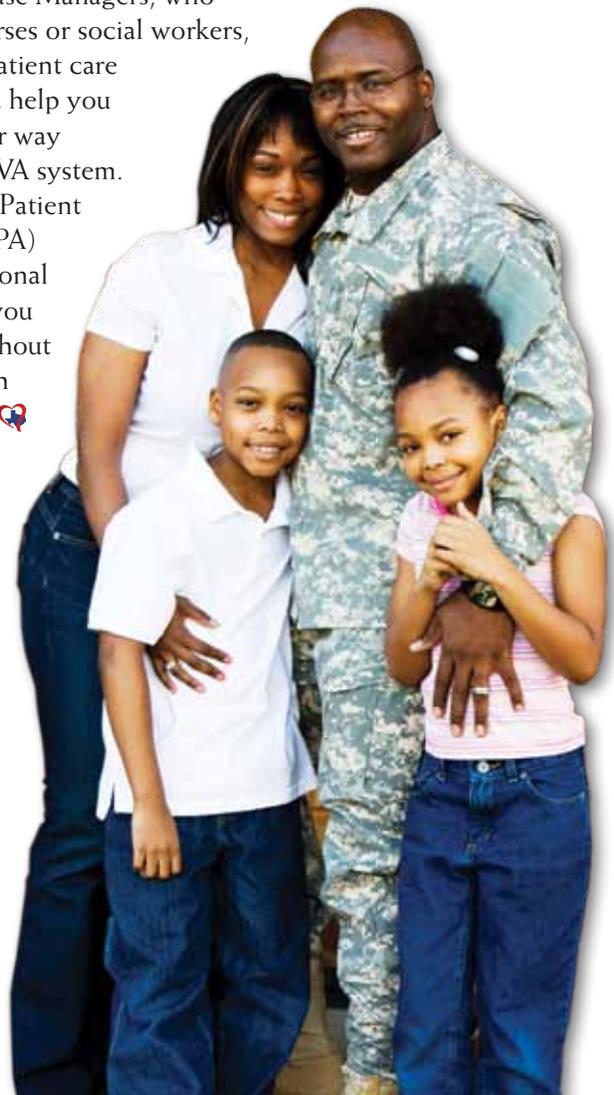
Am I Eligible?

You may be eligible for VA benefits if you are:

- A veteran
- A veteran's dependent
- A surviving spouse, child or parent of a deceased veteran
- An active duty military service member
- A member of the Reserve or National Guard

Care Management

Every VAMC has an OEF/OIF Care Management Team ready to welcome OEF/OIF veterans and help coordinate your care. Case Managers, who are either nurses or social workers, coordinate patient care activities and help you navigate your way through the VA system. A Transition Patient Advocate (TPA) acts as a personal advocate as you move throughout the VA health care system. ❤️



Yellow Ribbon PROGRAM



The Yellow Ribbon program, a provision of the new Post-9/11 GI Bill, funds tuition expenses that exceed the highest public in-state undergraduate tuition rate. Institutions can contribute up to 50 percent of those expenses, and VA will match this additional funding for eligible students.

Do you qualify? The Yellow Ribbon program is reserved for Veterans eligible for the Post-9/11 GI Bill at the 100 percent benefit level. This includes those who served at least 36 months on active duty or served at least 30 continuous days and were discharged due to a service-related injury.



Provisions of the program include payments for tuition and fees, housing, and a books and supplies stipend. Benefits are payable for training pursued on or after August 1, 2009. The tuition and fee benefit is paid directly to the school.

For information on specific schools participating in the Yellow Ribbon program, go to www.gibill.va.gov/GI_Bill_Info/CH33/YRP/YRP_List.htm. Additional information about the Post-9/11 GI Bill and Yellow Ribbon program, as well as VA's other educational benefits, can be obtained by visiting VA's Web site www.gibill.va.gov or by calling 1-888-GIBILL-1 (1-888-442-4551). 

VA Launches 10-Year Health Study of 60,000 New Veterans

WASHINGTON – The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has initiated a large, long-term study to look carefully at a broad array of health issues that may affect Operation Enduring Freedom/Operation Iraqi Freedom (OEF/OIF) Veterans and their counterparts who served during the same time period.

VA's "National Health Study for a New Generation of U.S. Veterans" will begin with 30,000 Veterans deployed to OEF/OIF and 30,000 comparison Veterans who were not deployed.

"This study will help us fulfill President Obama's pledge to 'stand with our Veterans as they face new challenges' by enabling us to understand the health problems of our newest generation of combat Veterans," Dr. Gerald M. Cross, VA's acting under secretary for health, said. "The study's findings will help us plan more effectively to provide the best care possible for these deserving Veterans."

The study will include Veterans who served in each branch of service, representing active duty, Reserve, and National Guard members. Women will be over-sampled to make sure they are represented and will comprise 20 percent of the study, or 12,000 women. A combination of mail surveys, online surveys, telephone interviews, and in-person physical evaluations will be used to collect data from the Veterans.

The study will compare the deployed and non-deployed Veterans in terms of chronic medical conditions, traumatic brain injury (TBI), post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and other psychological conditions, general health perceptions, reproductive health, pregnancy outcomes, functional status, use of health care, behavioral risk factors (smoking, drinking, seatbelt use, speeding, motorcycle helmet use, and sexual behavior), and VA disability compensation. VA has contracted with an independent Veteran-owned research firm, HMS Technologies Inc., to collect the data.

Patriotism Knows NO GENDER

Since the birth of this nation, women have played key roles serving our country, whether it was tending to manpower shortages on the home front or dressing wounds on the battlefield.

Women have served in this nation's military since the Revolutionary War. Did you know that Deborah Sampson disguised herself as a man and joined the Continental Army to fight in the Revolutionary War? She was wounded three times. The first two times she was wounded, she treated herself and the third time she was treated by a physician who discovered her secret. She was then sent home.

Women have served in every conflict and in every war in the history of this country. Approximately 16 percent of the current military force and approximately 15 percent of the force in Operation Enduring Freedom are women.

In 1973, only 2.5 percent of individuals in the U.S. armed forces were women.

As more and more women enter the military, it is important to understand that this means that more women will be discharged from the military.

Many people may still think of the VA as being only for men but more women are using VA services. VA facilities have a Women Veterans Health Program that addresses the



U.S. Marine Corps Cpl. Stacey Blackburn-Hoelscher, of Marine Expeditionary Brigade-Afghanistan Female Engagement Team, gives a beverage to an elderly Afghan man during a patrol in the Helmand province of Afghanistan Nov. 18, 2009. (DoD photo by Sgt. Evan Barragan, U.S. Marine Corps/Released)

Women Veterans CONTACTS



Kimberly R. Booker, BSN, MHA/INF, is the VA Heart of Texas Health Care Network Women Veterans Program Liaison. Contact her at 817-385-5943 or kimberly.booker@va.gov.



Barbara J. Hector, BSN, MSN, MHCA, WHNP-BC, is the Women Veterans Program Manager for the South Texas Veterans HCS. Hector is a 30-year Veteran of the U.S. Army. Contact her at 210-616-8181 or Barbara.hector@va.gov.



Mary Sweeney, MSN, FNP-C, is the Women Veterans Program Manager for VA North Texas HCS. Sweeney is a U.S. Air Force Veteran and is currently serving in the USAF Reserve. She has 24 years of total military service. Contact her at 214-857-1938 or mary.sweeney3@va.gov.



Jana M. O'Leary, LCSW, ACSW, BCD, is the Women Veterans Program Manager for the Central Texas Veterans HCS. O'Leary is a Veteran of the U.S. Army and Texas Army National Guard. Contact her at 254-743-2956 or jana.oleary@va.gov.

health care needs of eligible women Veterans, providing appropriate, timely and compassionate health care.

There are six areas of the program, which include patient education, mental health, medical services, provider education, research, and special initiatives.

Patient education is available for a variety of women's health concerns such as breast self-exam, cardiac fitness, nutrition and weight loss, family planning, and menopause management.

Mental health services are available to eligible women including sexual trauma counseling, substance abuse treatment, evaluation and treatment for post-traumatic stress disorder, programs for homeless women veterans, and vocational rehabilitation programs.

Medical services are available such as primary care, preventive health screening, gender-specific care, reproductive health care including maternity care and infertility evaluation, and osteoporosis evaluation and treatment.

Provider education is an important part of the Women Veterans Health Program and the VA offers women's health fellowship programs, resident training, allied health academic training, video/satellite training, mini-residencies, sensitivity training, and customer service.



An Afghan girl talks to fellow students as U.S. Marines with Lima Company, 3rd Battalion, 4th Marine Regiment and the unit's female engagement team (FET) attend a class in Now Zad, Afghanistan, Jan. 2, 2010. (U.S. Marine Corps photo by Cpl. Albert F. Hunt/Released)

Another area of importance is research. The VA continues to conduct research on such topics as aging, breast and other cancers, chronic diseases, reproductive health, mental health, substance abuse, and women's health services and systems.

Finally, the program includes special initiatives such as women veterans comprehensive health centers, clinical centers of excellence, women's health software, military sexual trauma software, and a women Veterans health program intranet web page. 

VA's Suicide Prevention Program ADDS CHAT SERVICE

The Suicide Prevention campaign of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is expanding its outreach to all Veterans by piloting an online, one-to-one "chat service" for Veterans who prefer reaching out for assistance using the Internet.

Called "Veterans Chat," the new service enables Veterans, their families and friends to go online where they can anonymously chat with a trained VA counselor. If a "chatter" is determined to be in a crisis, the counselor can take immediate steps to transfer the person to the VA Suicide Prevention Hotline, where further counseling and referral services are provided and crisis intervention steps can be taken.



Veterans, family members or friends can access Veterans Chat through the suicide prevention Web site www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org. There is a Veterans tab on the left-hand side of the website that will take them directly to Veteran resource information. On this page, they can see the Hotline number 1-800-273-TALK and click on the Veterans Chat tab on the right side of the Web page to enter.

Veterans retain anonymity by entering whatever names they choose once they enter the one-on-one chat. They are then joined by a counselor who is trained to provide information and respond to the requests and concerns of the caller. 



Justice-involved Veterans get ANOTHER CHANCE

A slightly nervous, bearded man in a cable-knit sweater and khakis stands behind a podium in a packed meeting room. Before him, ranged around tightly packed tables, are judges and sheriffs, social workers and psychologists, lawyers and others who had come to hear his story and how it might be replicated.

It's a story of a life fraught with difficulty, challenges that at times seemed insurmountable. "Because I'm a convicted felon, nobody would rent me an apartment," says Marc Harris. Then he breaks into a grin: "So I used my VA benefits and bought a house."

The revelation brings a laugh – partly of relief, because the part of Harris' story that came before, the part before now, is anything but funny.

The Good Soldier

Before he was convicted on a felony drug charge, before the drinking, the sleepless nights and the isolation, Marc Harris was a soldier. A good soldier by all accounts, an infantryman of the 82nd Airborne Division's 3rd Battalion, 504th Parachute Infantry Regiment.

In five years, Harris fought on two continents and was awarded two Combat Infantry Badges. Already a noncommissioned officer in his early 20s, he was marked for quick advancement.

But Harris' combat deployments, to Panama and to Iraq, had hurt him in ways few could see.

"After we came back from Desert Shield/Desert Storm, the drinking resumed," he says. "Now it was progressing to rage, and I was isolating myself more and more. I could never calm down. I couldn't sleep. It came to the point I didn't want to go out anymore. I didn't want to do anything anymore."

Harris changed his MOS (military occupational specialty), thinking that if he got out of the infantry maybe it would get better. Instead, he said, it was like leaving the nest.

Sleepless nights were taking a toll, and Harris started using cocaine so he would be alert for duty. Inevitably, he got caught on a drug test. In lieu of a court martial, he accepted a general discharge under other than honorable conditions.

"Until I got to Waco, I felt like I was the worst person in the world," Harris says. Then he points to his right shoulder, and his voice grows husky: "It was the shame, and the guilt. I was an 82nd soldier! I set the standard!"

Harris' discharge was official Feb. 24, 1994. By then he had been arrested for possession and given deferred adjudication. An Air Force doctor (Harris was then still a military spouse) diagnosed him with depression. Divorce followed, and a new psychiatrist diagnosed Harris as bipolar.

Harris continued to use drugs and alcohol in an attempt to deal with his feelings. Another arrest landed him behind bars for 11 months. A Texas Department of Corrections doctor finally identified the root of Harris' problems: post-traumatic stress disorder, or PTSD.

Out of prison and back in college, where he was studying mechanical engineering, one bad (and by now isolated) episode led to Harris' third arrest. While awaiting trial, he started getting help at the Temple VA Medical Center (VAMC), and then at the Waco VAMC.

Another Chance

The prosecutor in his case was pushing for a six-year term in the state prison; Harris' court-appointed attorney went to bat for him, and by the time he stood in front of the judge, he was stunned to hear the black-robed figure greeted him with these words: "Thank you for your service."

"He told me to keep doing what I was doing, and gave me a 15-month suspended sentence and two year's probation," Harris says.

It was a turning point – not so much for Harris, who had already hit bottom and was on his way back up – but for a criminal justice system that recognized it was dealing not with a hardened criminal but a human being with underlying issues that could be addressed.

Harris has so far repaid that judge's optimism in a big way. A long-time peer counselor at the Waco VAMC, he recently applied for admission to Baylor University's social work program. His goal? To work with Veterans.

“Since I dealt with the PTSD, there really haven't been any other problems in my life. I don't even remember when the desire to drink or drug left. I just don't need it anymore.”

“Since I dealt with the PTSD, there really haven't been any other problems in my life,” Harris says. “I don't even remember when the desire to drink or drug left. I just don't need it anymore.”

Veterans Justice Outreach Initiative

Several wide-ranging initiatives, some originating with the VA at the national level and others that have cropped-up in local courts, are coming together in what's called the Veterans Justice Outreach initiative.

The goal is to give justice-involved Veterans the opportunity Marc Harris received through a series of fortunate accidents.

The underlying idea is simple: Veterans who have been charged with or convicted of (primarily) non-violent offenses may, instead of being incarcerated and treated at county or state expense, receive effective treatment – benefits they are entitled to – from the VA.

One way to do that is by creating special Veterans courts or dockets, much like the specialized mental health or drug courts already operating in many jurisdictions. The goal is treatment and rehabilitation, not punishment.

“We're making very good progress in the Texas courts in the VA Heart of Texas Health Care Network,” says Steve Holliday, Ph.D., chief of mental health services for the network. “It is now state law that every district court can establish a Veterans court. We've got active groups working in Austin, San Antonio, Dallas, Fort Worth, and in Central Texas.”

In addition to establishing special dockets, Holliday says, much of the work in the early stages of the initiative is simply educating law enforcement agencies and prosecutors about identifying Veterans they may encounter and how to recognize emergent mental health and substance abuse issues as well as the treatment options and other benefits available for Veterans.

Veterans Intervention Project

In Austin, VJO outreach specialists and staff from the Austin Vet Center are involved in an aggressive program

spearheaded by two Travis County constables.

The Veterans Intervention Project completed a study in July 2009 that showed an average of 153 Veterans are arrested each month in Travis

County, 73 percent on misdemeanor charges. Of the arrested Veterans, an estimated three-quarters were eligible for VA services, but only a little more than one-third have received any services from the VA.

“Due to physical and emotional injuries suffered while on active duty, Veterans' reintegration back into civilian life can be extremely challenging,” the report concludes. “Many Veterans return home to lost jobs, terminated leases, foreclosures and severed relationships. Some turn to alcohol or drugs to ease their pain and others act out in violent ways.”

A majority of arrested Veterans surveyed have not obtained VA or other services, the report says, “services that can help support reintegration, intervene in substance abuse and mental health issues, and prevent repeated arrests.” Breaking the cycle of arrests – and of homelessness in which many justice-involved Veterans find themselves – is part of the VAs stated goal.

“If these programs work like we hope they will, we'll have a win-win-win situation,” Holliday says. “Veterans get an opportunity to make real, positive changes in their lives; the criminal justice system is relieved of the requirement to incarcerate or treat a Veteran, both of which cost taxpayers' money; and society at large gets a contributing member back.” 🇺🇸

Serving Justice-Involved Veterans

Warren Pearson
Waco, Texas
254-297-3699
warren.pearson@va.gov

Latisha Gaten
Dallas, Texas
214-857-0837
latisha.gaten@va.gov

Eileen Callejas
San Antonio, Texas
210-694-6222
eileen.callejas@va.gov

Karen Janda
Austin, Texas
512 433-2017
karen.janda@va.gov

Frank Ferrigno
San Antonio, Texas
830-370-6946
frank.ferrigno@va.gov

Clifford McGlotten
San Antonio, Texas
210-616-8138
clifford.mcglotten@va.gov

Center of Excellence for Research on RETURNING WAR VETERANS

The VA Heart of Texas Health Care Network's Center of Excellence for Research on Returning War Veterans' (COE) primary mission is to identify common factors and characteristics that influence veterans' response to war-related stress and also to track the course of veteran's war-related stress.

The Center aims to improve the quality of life for current and future generations of veterans returning from conflict and their families by addressing issues in research such as: 1) the patterns and course of post-deployment adjustment; 2) the development of models predicting risk, resilience, recovery and relapse to the sequelae of conflict in war theaters; 3) the adaption and evaluation of existing and as yet undeveloped treatments for veterans (and the families of veterans) with pathological response to war in order to facilitate rehabilitation; 4) information security and bioethics, and 5) dissemination and education on the results of the center's efforts.

The COE utilizes many shared resources of the Central Texas Veterans Health Care System and many scientist-practitioners, as well as select faculty from Texas A&M University Health Science Center College of Medicine, University of Texas and Baylor University. Collaborations with Boston University,



The Center of Excellence's permanent quarters are expected to be completed in December 2011.

Brown University, Dartmouth University, George Washington University, Harvard University, Indiana University, University of Maryland, and University of Pennsylvania all support the activities of the Center.

Suzy Bird Gulliver, Ph.D., is the Director of the Center and a number of staff have multiple studies underway, some of which include:

The Firefighter Risk and Resilience study by Gulliver follows firefighter recruits after they graduate from the Academy and into their first three years on the job. Firefighters are regularly exposed to potentially-traumatic events which allow this study to focus on the pathways of risk and resilience to the development of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), substance-use disorder (SUD) or co-occurring psychopathology (PTSD-SUD) in these recruits in order to better understand these pathways and their effects on recovery and relapse.

Project S.E.R.V.E. (Study Evaluating Returning Veterans' Experiences) by Sandra Morissette, Ph.D., is the flagship study of the COE and is geared towards identifying pathways of development and the patterns of expression in PTSD, major depressive disorder (MDD), and alcohol and SUD. This study measures environmental and individual variables that may promote or protect against the development of trauma-related symptoms in the Operation Enduring Freedom/Operation Iraqi Freedom (OEF/OIF) returning veterans for a period of five years.

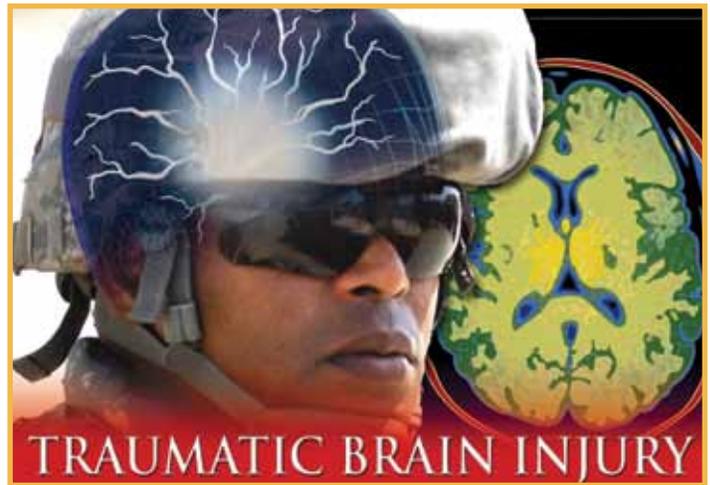
Genetics of Brain Anatomy (GOBA) studies by Keith Young, Ph.D., are aimed at determining if genetic variation



Suzy B. Gulliver, Ph.D., is a nationally recognized researcher and director of the Center of Excellence.

and developmental trauma contribute to a brain anatomical phenotype that is susceptible to the development of PTSD and depression. This study will examine behavioral traits, serotonin genes and thalamic volume in the veteran and active duty populations over intervals of two to three months.

For use in this study is the COE's 3T mobile MRI (mMRI), to perform brain scans at Waco and Temple VA facilities as well as at Fort Hood's Carl R. Darnall Army Medical Center. A custom-built research Mobile Support Vehicle (MSV) is accompanying the mMRI to facilitate interviewing, recruiting and testing of MRI research participants. Plans are being made to use the support vehicle as an emergency research and support platform in a rapid response mode, in the case of regional disasters.



awarded by the Federal Emergency Management Agency designed to assess the current state of behavioral health in Fire Service and develop an implementation plan for state-of-the-art behavioral health services.

Project RESPECT-P is a health care management project that is investigating the efficacy of the collaborative care model for PTSD management in primary care. The study is lead by researchers from the National Center for PTSD and is being performed in Dallas, Fort Worth and Waco VA outpatient facilities with assistance from COE faculty.

In 2011, a 53,000 square foot building on the Waco campus will be the headquarters of the Center of Excellence. The building, designed with input from COE staff, will feature individual and group outpatient treatment and assessment areas, telemental and teleresearch facilities, patient and staff education areas, data management facilities, dry and wet labs, and meeting spaces and offices.

The building is designed to facilitate work on the family recovery and rehabilitation models, with elements that will allow a focus on individual patient rehabilitation. The building will greatly improve both inpatient and outpatient mental health research and treatment capacity. ❤️



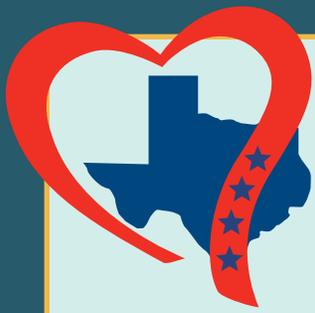
A mobile Magnetic Resonance Imaging (mMRI) device allows researchers to investigate the possible biological causes of post-traumatic stress and developmental stress disorders.

Predictors of Treatment Response to Fluoxetine in PTSD following a recent history of war zone stress exposure by Paul Hicks M.D., Ph.D., will study selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs) to determine the efficacy as an early intervention method for chronic PTSD. This study aims to differentiate risk factors that may predict the treatments responses of soldiers with PTSD in order to treat them more effectively.

Hicks' team is looking specifically at the SSRI fluoxetine: (1) it's effectiveness of managing combat-related PTSD; (2) its effects on co-morbid PTSD symptoms (i.e. anxiety and depression); (3) aims to identify evidence-based risk factors that decrease its effectiveness in patients.

Project PREVENT (Pulling Rescue Emergency Volunteer & Employee Needs Together) by Gulliver is a one-year grant





Around the NETWORK...



Fort Worth Health Care Center under construction

Veterans of Tarrant County and other surrounding counties will soon have a new VA clinic. The 238,000 gross square feet facility located on a 24-acre site at Interstate 20 and Campus Drive is scheduled to open in the fall of 2010.



Artist Rendering

Veterans can expect a substantially larger clinic that will not only increase space, staff, available services and access, but in many cases will prevent a trip to the Dallas VA Medical Center (VAMC) except for certain specialty care. Existing services will continue at the new clinic and specialty clinics may include GI, colonoscopy, tele-dermatology, methadone clinic, women's clinic, expanded

mental health, audiology, rheumatology, Computerized Tomography (CT), and Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI).

Construction can be monitored by web cam at <http://oxblue.com/pro/open/duke/ftworthva>.

Dallas VAMC operates largest active PV system in VA

VA North Texas Health Care System's (HSC) recent achievement has them leading the nation among other VAMCs in the use of solar power.

A 337 KW_p active Photovoltaic (PV) system mounted on the roof of the clinical addition changed the skyline at the Dallas VAMC. The PV system includes 1,728 solar panels that tie directly into the hospital's electrical system and absorbs a portion of the electrical utility consumption for that building.

The PV system takes up approximately 47,000 square feet of roof space at a price tag of approximately \$2.24 million that was funded through the VA Energy Management Task Force under a Renewable Energy Initiative.



Meet the Associate Director Shirley M. Bealer



Shirley M. Bealer, MS, RN, CNAA, BC, CPHQ was appointed Associate Director at the VA North

Texas HCS, Dallas, effective July 5, 2009. Prior to this appointment, she was the Associate Director for Patient Care Services of Central Alabama Veterans HCS, in Montgomery.

In 2003, Bealer became the Associate Director for Patient/Nursing Services for Central Texas Veterans HCS, Temple. She was responsible for all chaplains, nursing, nutrition and food, and patient education, social work, and voluntary service. Bealer also served as Quality Management Officer for the VA Heart of Texas Health Care Network, Arlington, from October 1998 until October 2003.

Bealer joined the VA in January 1979 as a staff nurse in the Surgical Intensive Care Unit at the Dallas VAMC.

Bealer is a graduate of Dallas County Community College District, the University of Texas at Tyler, and Texas Woman's University. She is a member of the Nursing Organization of Veteran Affairs, the American College of Healthcare Executives and the Texas Nurses Association.



Austin Outpatient Clinic site announced

A new, larger Austin Outpatient Clinic is set to open in 2012 and will be located in southwest Austin off Highway 183 on land near the intersection of Metropolis and Metlink commonly called MetCenter.

When it opens, the building will more than triple the current space,

replacing the existing Austin VA Outpatient Clinic located at 2901 Montopolis. The replacement clinic will be the largest leased VA-staffed outpatient clinic in the nation and will have 240,000 gross square feet of usable space.

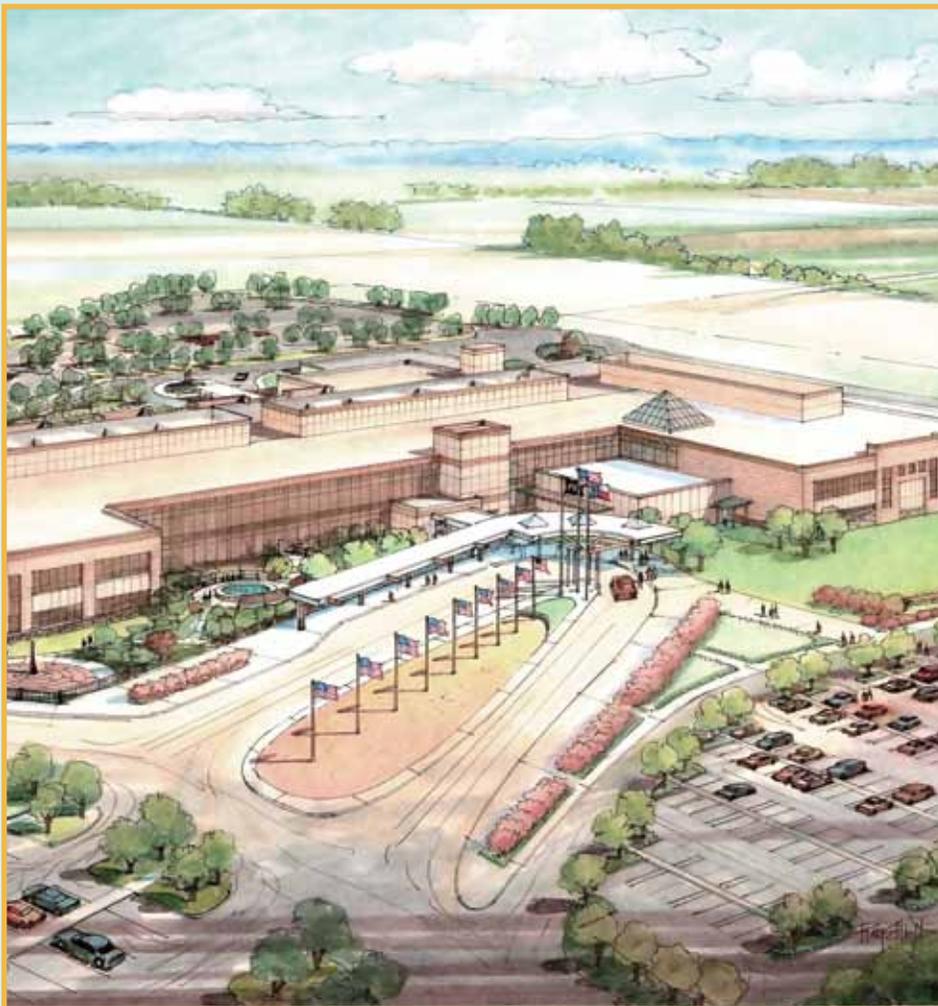
"We are excited to see the site selected for our new, expanded Austin Outpatient Clinic," said Thomas C. Smith III, Director of the Central Texas Veterans Health Care System, who oversees the Austin Outpatient Clinic. "The location is very close to the existing VA Outpatient Clinic, so Veterans are already familiar with the area."

Smith said the existing outpatient clinic opened in 1990, with an additional 12,000 square feet of

space added to the facility in 1997. In 2008, the VA leased 15,000 additional square feet in the Southgate Building to serve the growing number of patients.

The Austin area is the fastest growing market for Veterans seeking health care in Central Texas. The Austin Outpatient Clinic is projected to provide health care to almost 30,000 unique Veterans by 2025.

Expanded services include oncology, chemotherapy, cardiac rehabilitation, ENT, orthopedic services, minor surgeries, urology, and gastroenterology. The facility includes space for an endoscopy suite, a CT scanner, and an MRI, as well as more space for all services provided at the current Austin VA locations.



Austin Outpatient Clinic, Artist Rendering

La Grange VA Outreach Clinic Up and Running

The La Grange VA Outreach Clinic began seeing patients in August 2009 and is projected to see more than 800 Veterans for primary care and women's health service by the clinic staff during the first year of operation.

The clinic is part of the Central Texas Veterans HCS and is operated for the VA through a contract with Sterling Medical Associates Incorporated.

The clinic is part of the VA's program to expand health care to the nation's Veterans and is funded by a grant awarded by the VA's Office of Rural Health.

The La Grange VA Outreach Clinic is located at 890 East Travis in La Grange. Veterans may call the clinic at (979) 968-5878.

South Texas Veterans He I

Department of Veterans Aff I



Meet the Director Marie L. Weldon



Marie L. Weldon was appointed Director, South Texas Veterans Health Care System (STVHCS)

Aug. 10, 2009. With an FY10 budget for STVHCS of \$552.7 million and for Valley Coastal Bend (VCB) \$103.6 million and over 3,400 employees, Weldon oversees health care services for 92,000 enrolled Veterans.

From January 2007 until August 2009, Weldon was the Director for the VA Eastern Kansas HCS. Weldon also served as Associate Director of the Columbia VAMC.

Weldon began her career with VA in 1989 as a Quality Improvement Coordinator at the Iowa City VAMC. She was the Strategic Planner at the San Antonio VAMC from 2000-2001.

Additionally, Weldon was the Clinical Support Manager at the VA Heart of Texas Health Care Network office in Arlington, Texas, from 2001 to 2004.

She trained as an associate director at the Dallas VAMC.

Weldon received her Bachelor's degree in Nursing from University of Iowa and her MHA from the University of St. Francis, Joliet, Illinois. She is a Fellow of the American College of Healthcare Executives.

Weldon is a Veteran of the U.S. Army.

Polytrauma Rehabilitation Center Coming to San Antonio

In late February, Department of Veterans Affairs Secretary Eric Shinseki announced the award of a \$37.2 million contract for the construction of the new Polytrauma Rehabilitation Center in San Antonio.

"Polytrauma" refers to Veterans who have more than one severe, life-threatening medical problem. Many of VA's polytrauma patients are recent combat Veterans injured by roadside

bombs and other explosives in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The project is one of only five such centers in the United States and is expected to be completed in late 2011.

The center will provide multiple levels of rehabilitation services, 12 inpatient beds, clinic spaces and administrative suites. The Polytrauma Rehabilitation Center will work in conjunction with Brooke Army Medical Center, The Center for the Intrepid, Wilford Hall USAF Medical Center, the University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio, and the U.S. Army Institute of Surgical Research.

The architects, SmithGroup and Marmon Mok, were charged with designing a new image for this campus, one that instills pride of service, boosts morale, appeals to all generations of Veterans and embodies the VA's Veteran Centered Care



Artist Rendering

program, which focuses on the mental, physical, and spiritual wellness of the Veteran being served.

The three-story, 84,000-square-foot building is oriented and designed in a way that maximizes environmental sustainability and optimizes the best use of land available.



Ambulatory Surgery and Outpatient Specialty Center at Harlingen Opening January 2011

The Harlingen Ambulatory Surgery and Specialty Outpatient Center is a three-story building totaling 120,000 sq. ft. scheduled to open in January 2011.



Artist Rendering

The facility is the newest addition to the VA Texas Valley Coastal Bend Health Care System's fleet of health care facilities in Corpus Christi, Harlingen, Laredo, and McAllen.

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 will be offered. The design includes a 750 vehicle parking garage adjacent to the center.

Meet the Director Jeff Milligan



Jeff Milligan, Director, VA Texas Valley Coastal Bend HCS, was appointed to his position in October 2008 after

serving as acting director for the South Texas Veterans HCS.

From 2005 - 2008, Milligan served as associate director of the VA North Texas HCS. Prior to this appointment, he served as acting deputy director for the Central Texas Veterans HCS.

Milligan began his VA career in 1989 at the Nashville VAMC as a general engineer. From 1990-1993, he served as a project engineer and assistant chief engineer at the Carl Vinson VAMC in Dublin, Georgia.

In 1994, he was selected as the assistant chief engineer at the Ralph H. Johnson VAMC in Charleston, South Carolina, and subsequently became the chief engineer.

He also was the administrator of the Austin Outpatient Clinic from 1999 to 2001.

Milligan holds a M.S. in Health Care Administration from Baylor University and a B.S. in Electrical Engineering from the University of Memphis.

Mobile Medical Unit Serves Rural Veterans



The VA Texas Valley Coastal Bend HCS Mobile Medical Unit completed its first round of visits to rural communities in deep South Texas late in 2009.

The mobile clinic provides primary care, mental health care, immunizations, and education services to veterans in Rio Grande City (Starr County); Roma (Starr County); Zapata (Zapata County); Falfurrias (Brooks County); Hebbronville (Jim Hogg County); and Port Isabel (Cameron County).

The mobile clinic is based in McAllen and Laredo and visits the designated cities every other week.

A satellite unit is installed on the vehicle for use in emergency preparedness and disasters.



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
Acton Medical Clinic
2006 Fall Creek Hwy.
Granbury, TX 76049
(817) 326-3440

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

Victoria 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