

## Bay Pines VAHCS Recognized for Efforts to Improve Care for Older Patients

**BAY PINES, FL** – The [Bay Pines VA Healthcare System \(VAHCS\)](#) achieved “Exemplar” status for its NICHE (Nurses Improving Care for Healthsystem Elders) program earlier this month. NICHE is the premier designation indicating a hospital's commitment to excellence in the care of patients 65-years-and-older. The “Exemplar” status recognizes the Bay Pines VAHCS's ongoing, dedication to geriatric care and system wide interventions and initiatives that demonstrate organizational commitment to the care of older adults.

The “Exemplar” status — the highest of four possible program levels — was assigned following a rigorous program evaluation of the current state and future goals of the NICHE program at the healthcare system's C.W. Bill Young VA Medical Center and VA community clinics located across southwest Florida. The requirements include implementation of the NICHE Geriatric Resource Nurse (GRN) model and evidence-based protocols on all applicable units, including specialty units; implementation of systemic aging-sensitive policies; inclusion of the input of patient, families, and community-based providers in planning and implementation of NICHE initiatives; and assuming regional and national leadership roles.

“The NICHE designation and the “Exemplar” status signal our resolve to provide personalized, proactive, patient-driven care for our older Veterans,” said Suzanne M. Klinker, Director, Bay Pines VAHCS.

“Through participation in the NICHE program we are able to offer evidence-based, interdisciplinary approaches that promote better outcomes, positive experiences, and improved care for our geriatric patients. This ultimately leads to greater satisfaction for our Veterans, their families and our staff,” she said.

Currently, there are a total of 524 NICHE designated hospitals – 29 are in Canada and one is in Bermuda. Of these, only 38 have Exemplar status. Six VA facilities have the NICHE designation. Out of the VA facilities, the Bay Pines VAHCS is the only one with Exemplar status.

“The Bay Pines VA Healthcare System's evaluation demonstrated a tremendous ability to meet the needs of the older adult patient,” said Barbara Bricoli, MPA, Executive Director – NICHE. “The hospital's high intensity level in marshalling geriatric nursing resources and support to enhance care marks it as a leader in the field.”

### **About NICHE**

NICHE is an international program designed to help improve the care of older adults. The vision of NICHE is for all patients 65-and-over to be given sensitive and exemplary care. The mission of NICHE is to provide principles and tools to stimulate a change in the culture of healthcare facilities to achieve patient-centered care for older adults. NICHE, based at NYU College of Nursing, has over 550 hospitals and healthcare organizations from the U.S., Canada, Bermuda and Singapore in the network. For more information visit [www.nicheprogram.org](http://www.nicheprogram.org)

### **About the Bay Pines VA Healthcare System**

The Bay Pines VAHCS is one of the nation's leading VA healthcare systems, employing more than 3,800 medical professionals and support staff dedicated to providing the very best care to Veterans residing in southwest Florida. The organization is the fourth busiest VA health care system in the country in terms of patients served and is accredited by The Joint Commission, Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities, and several other nationally recognized accrediting organizations. The Bay Pines VAHCS operates nine facilities to include the main medical center located in Bay Pines and outpatient clinics located in Bradenton, Cape Coral, Naples, Palm Harbor, Port Charlotte, Sarasota, St. Petersburg, and Sebring.