

Summer 2016

Bay VISIONS

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Honoring America's Fallen Heroes
More than 4,000 turnout for annual
Bay Pines VA Memorial Day Ceremony

The Healing Journey
Cancer support group uses art to express impact
of cancer diagnosis, treatment and recovery

Husband and Wife Team Help Veterans Lose Weight
U.S. Air Force Veteran David Krebs and wife
Danielle are helping Vets shed the pounds with MOVE!





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Bay Visions is a quarterly publication designed for Bay Pines VA Healthcare System (VAHCS) stakeholders. Its purpose is to inform and educate. Contents of Bay Visions are not necessarily the official views of, or endorsed by the U.S. Government, Department of Veterans Affairs, the Veterans Health Administration or the Bay Pines VAHCS.

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From the Director

Welcome to the Summer issue of Bay Visions. There are several articles in this issue which I hope you find informative and engaging to include a summary of our annual Memorial Day Ceremony, a special activity conducted by our cancer support group, and a husband and wife team who volunteer their time to help Veterans achieve healthy living goals. There is also important information for Veterans who travel in

and out of Florida and for those who are eligible for and who have opted into the Veterans Choice Program.

This issue is noteworthy as it has been one year since we launched a new and improved version of the publication. During this time, we have worked diligently to improve the content and value of Bay Visions for Veterans and their loved ones, VA employees, volunteers and other valuable stakeholders. With each new issue, we reach more and more readers. Over the last year, our issues of Bay Visions have reached more than 100,000 individuals through both electronic and print distribution. In addition, the publication has given rise to *Bay Visions News Brief* - a highly successful video news product line available online at www.baypines.va.gov/news/bvnb.asp. If you have not had an opportunity to watch the videos, I encourage you to do so today.

Please enjoy this issue of Bay Visions and thank you for making the Bay Pines VA Healthcare System your health care provider of choice, employer of choice, or both.

Sincerely,

SUZANNE M. KLINKER
Director, Bay Pines VA Healthcare System

Contents

News

- 4 More than 4,000 turnout to honor fallen heroes on Memorial Day at the Bay Pines National Cemetery
- 6 Cancer support group uses art to express impact of cancer diagnosis, treatment and recovery
- 8 Husband and Wife Team Help Veterans Achieve Weight Loss Goals with MOVE! program

To Your Health

- 10 **Frequently Asked Questions:** Seamless and accessible VA health care for traveling Veterans
- 11 **It's your Choice:** Important information about the Veterans Choice Program



Do you have a story to share?
If so, send an email with your story idea to vhabaypublicaffairs@va.gov or call (727) 398-6661 extension 15031.

More than 4,000 turnout to honor fallen heroes on Memorial Day

More than 4,000 members of the Tampa Bay community gathered at the Bay Pines National Cemetery to pay tribute to America's fallen heroes during the annual Bay Pines VA Memorial Day Ceremony on May 30.

Tens of thousands of American flags decorating the headstones of departed servicemen and women provided the backdrop for the largest ceremony in Pinellas and Hillsborough counties where spectators enjoyed music, ceremonial tributes and remarks from guest speakers.

Speakers included U.S. Representative David W. Jolly and local VA leaders from the Bay Pines VA Healthcare System (VAHCS), St. Petersburg VA Regional Office and Bay Pines National Cemetery. Bay News 9 Senior

Reporter, Melissa Eichman, was master of ceremonies.

Keynote speaker was U.S. Marine Corps Lieutenant General (Ret.) Martin R. Steele. Steele rose from the rank of private to three-star general, serving three tours of duty on two continents. He culminated his nearly 35-year military career as the Deputy Chief of Staff for Plans, Policies, and Operations at Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps, in Washington, D.C. in 1999.

This year's ceremony saw record attendance – a sign that Tampa Bay will always remember the brave men and women who gave their last breath in the name of freedom.

To learn more about the Bay Pines VAHCS and upcoming events, please visit: www.baypines.va.gov. While you are there, subscribe to receive email updates.



(Top) U.S. Marine Corps Lt. General (Ret.) Martin R. Steele addresses a crowd of more than 4,000 during the annual Bay Pines VA Memorial Day Ceremony on May 30. Steele's 20-minute speech evoked emotion as he spoke about his military service, loss of friends and mentors, and service and sacrifice of all those who served and continue to serve in uniform.

(Left) A Vietnam Veteran quietly observes the annual Bay Pines VA Memorial Ceremony at the Bay Pines National Cemetery on May 30. Vietnam Veterans who attended the ceremony received a special lapel pin as part of the Bay Pines VA's continued commemoration of the 50th Anniversary of the Vietnam War.



Did You Know?

If you did not have an opportunity to attend this event, you can watch a short video online.

To watch this video and others, visit:
www.baypines.va.gov/news/BVNB.asp.

To watch this video directly on YouTube, visit:
www.youtube.com/watch?v=0YqM-EQVTeY

For questions, email the Bay Pines VAHCS Office of Public Affairs at vhabaypublicaffairs@va.gov



The Healing Journey

By Cindy Bowman, RN, MSN, OCN, Oncology Nurse Navigator, Bay Pines VAHCS

Cancer support group uses art to express impact of cancer diagnosis, treatment and recovery

Bay Pines VA Healthcare System (VAHCS) provides services to approximately 4,500 Veterans with cancer annually and is the only VA cancer program in Florida accredited by the Commission on Cancer. Many Veterans reside at the Bay View Community Living Center (CLC) during the acute phase of cancer treatment. Located at the C.W. Bill Young VA Medical Center, the CLC provides an avenue for physical, psychosocial, emotional, and spiritual support. The weekly CLC cancer support group is an important element in providing patient-centered care for Veterans suffering from cancer. Cancer support groups provide emotional support, resource sharing, education, and have been shown to help individuals improve the quality of their lives. Survivorship is a focus of cancer treatment and part of the philosophy of support groups. In the CLC, support group activities allow Veterans to connect with others facing similar challenges.

The Veterans in the CLC cancer support group come from a variety of military backgrounds, both combat and non-combat experiences. They express appreciation for the bond of belonging to an all Veterans support group. They become instant friends within this military brotherhood and believe that "once a soldier, always a soldier." When asked why they belong to a cancer support group there is a common response among them all. One Vietnam Veteran explained: "Better than being alone. To fight a battle you need an army, together we can overcome any obstacle." Another explained: "I reached down deep within myself and found the courage, not to surrender to the inevitable, but to strengthen my resolve." Others describe conquering and facing fear through collective encouragement. One

member of the group said: "I am able to manage and deal with the symptoms of cancer and its side effects of treatment better as part of the support group."

Recently, the CLC group chose to venture outside of their comfort zone and to articulate their inner-most feelings through creation of a visual piece of art. Their painting reflects the Veterans' personal relationships with cancer. It is a portrait that expresses how cancer has impacted their lives and an illustration of the journey individuals experience when battling cancer. The art is presented in three phases; diagnosis, treatment and support, and the road to recovery.

A local artist, Sandra Holden, assisted the Veterans in creating their art. She is a talented young woman who suffered a diving injury at fifteen years of age. Though a quadriplegic, she has an amazing ability to teach others to express their emotions through art and communicate through painting. She is extremely passionate about her volunteer service for the Veterans. She is funny, loving, and inspirational. When asked what this project did for her personally, she stated: "it gave me a renewed purpose. It brought so much joy to see the emotional healing that took place within this group."

The individuals were asked what they learned from the group process of painting. The experiences were different for each Veteran.

John Healy, U.S. Army Veteran

"My faith was overwhelming. I am currently in remission. The process was emotionally draining, although I felt empowered because I knew I could help other people through their challenges with cancer. I enjoy helping other people."

Andreas Manz, U.S. Army Veteran

"I was very enthusiastic about the project. Hearing what other group members are going through was helpful to me. You forget about your problems and you get inspired looking at the portrait. I liked the technical aspects of painting and it took my mind off the cancer."

Wendell Wilder, U.S. Army Veteran

"Art is a therapeutic process and an excellent medium in communicating a message. I learned that as confusing and chaotic as everything was at first, it all fell into place and everything worked out great. The portrait tells a story worth telling. I will treasure this painting the rest of my life. We accomplished this quite well."

Donald Murphy, U.S. Navy Veteran

"Being part of this group process gave me the opportunity to look into the hearts, minds, and souls of others dealing with cancer. My strong faith makes a

difference always with me holding me up. I am very blessed to have strong faith. This painting is a collective reflection of our thoughts and feelings."

Through this project, the Veterans received education, emotional support, an improved sense of belonging, and formed lasting friendships. The Veterans gave the original painting to the CLC to depict the journey of individuals as cancer survivors on the healing path to recovery. The art is framed and hung in CLC on the wall opposite the main entrance off the pedestrian walkway, between the hospital and CLC.

For questions about the cancer support group or the Bay Pines VAHCS cancer program, contact Cindy Bowman, RN, MSN, OCN, Oncology Nurse Navigator, at 727-398-6661 extension 17052.



(From left) Cindy Bowman, RN, MSN, OCN, Oncology Nurse Navigator; John Healy (VA volunteer and Veteran); Denis Ray Sanders (Veteran); Sandra Holden (VA volunteer and artist); Andreas Manz (Veteran); Wendell Wilder (Veteran); and Stuart Sidell, Lead Recreation Therapist, pose for a photo with a recently completed painting on display in the Bay View Community Living Center located at the C.W. Bill Young VA Medical Center.

Husband and wife team help Veterans achieve weight loss goals



After retiring from the U.S. Air Force in 1986, Veteran David Krebs slowly began to gain weight. A few pounds here a few pounds there until eventually his weight peaked at nearly 300 pounds. A normal day for David was difficult. His blood pressure and cholesterol were dangerously high; he had trouble breathing, had to stop for rest when walking short distances, and even had trouble bending over to tie his shoes.

"I felt like a human wall," David said reflecting on his weight gain. "I was extremely self-conscious and did not want to be around other people."

According to his wife Danielle, he was always a very proud and confident man, but noticed a gradual change in his outlook and self-esteem when he started gaining weight.

Overtime, there were obvious physical changes with David, but, the most concerning part for me was the emotional changes," Danielle said. "Most of this was

related to his weight and related health issues. At that point, I think we both knew that we had to work towards a positive change."

In early 2012 while looking for affordable hearing aid options, David decided to enroll for care with the Bay Pines VA Healthcare System. He had no intention of making VA his provider of choice for all his health care needs – he was simply looking for a good deal.

"I had always just stayed away from the VA due to what I heard in the news and false information," he said. "Plus, as a military retiree I had always just used my TriCare benefit (lifetime health insurance benefit afforded to retired members of the U.S. Armed Forces). I decided to give VA a try in an effort to save money."

He was quickly scheduled for his first appointment with a primary care provider at the C.W. Bill Young VA Medical Center, and never turned back. In addition to receiving needed audiology services, he enthusiastically

agreed to participate in the MOVE! program after discussing his weight concerns with his doctor.

MOVE! is VA's national weight management program developed for Veterans by the National Center for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention (NCP). The program is available at all VA medical centers and most outpatient clinics for Veterans interested in losing weight. The Bay Pines VA Healthcare System (VAHCS) offers classes for Veterans of all ability levels at the C.W. Bill Young VA Medical Center and all outpatient clinics.

With Danielle by his side, David committed to the program and lost nearly 30 pounds in just a few months.

"Because of all the care I was receiving and success I realized from the MOVE! Program, my opinion of VA quickly transformed," he said. "I was and still am very impressed with the VA."

Due to his success, both David and his wife were approached by Dr. Roma Palcan, Health Behavior

Coordinator and MOVE! Program Co-Coordinator, about volunteering to facilitate MOVE! classes at the medical center for other Veterans. They happily agreed and now teach MOVE! classes at the C.W. Bill Young VA Medical Center every Tuesday morning.

"An important aspect of MOVE! is to show Veterans how successful they can be if they establish weight loss goals and commit to those goals. Our volunteers, like David and his wife Danielle, do that for us."

Roma Palcan, PhD, Health Psychologist
Health Behavior Coordinator, Bay Pines VAHCS

"An important aspect of MOVE! is to show Veterans how successful they can be if they establish weight loss goals and commit to those goals," said Palcan.

"Our volunteers, like David and his wife Danielle, do that for us. They are real life examples of how

success can be achieved by committing to the program. They've been there, done that, and now they are giving back to others and serving as positive role models," she said.

To learn more about MOVE!, please visit www.move.va.gov. To get involved in the program at the Bay Pines VAHCS, please call 727-398-6661, extension 14922.



U.S. Air Force Veteran David Krebs and wife Danielle (pictured top left) teach a MOVE! class at the C.W. Bill Young VA Medical Center. MOVE! is VA's national weight management program developed for Veterans by the National Center for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention (NCP). The Bay Pines VA Healthcare System (VAHCS) offers classes for Veterans of all ability levels at the C.W. Bill Young VA Medical Center and all outpatient clinics. David and his wife were asked to volunteer to teach the class after realizing positive results from the program. (VA Photo by Timothy Westmorland, Medical Media Service)



Strive for a Healthy Weight

Strive for a healthy weight. If you need to lose weight, losing even a little will help. The MOVE! program can help! If you are of normal weight, maintain it. Staying in control of your weight helps you be healthy now and in the future. Maintaining a healthy weight means balancing the number of calories you eat with the calories your body uses or burns. If you maintain your weight, you are "in balance." You are eating close to the same number of calories that your body is using. Your weight will remain stable.

If you are gaining weight, you are eating more calories than your body is using. These extra calories will be stored as fat, and you will gain weight. If you are losing weight, you are eating fewer calories than you are using. Your body is using its fat storage cells for energy, so your weight is decreasing. A simple way to know if you are at a healthy weight is to know your body mass index (BMI). You can access a BMI calculator at: www.prevention.va.gov/Healthy_Living/Strive_for_a_Healthy_Weight.asp. Being a healthy, normal weight is good for you and will help you prevent and control many diseases and conditions. Being overweight or obese increases your risk for

diabetes, high blood pressure, cholesterol problems, heart disease, gallbladder disease, female health disorders, arthritis, some types of cancer, and sleep apnea. Eat wisely and choose a variety of low-calorie, high-nutrition foods and beverages in the basic food groups. Select foods that limit your intake of fats, cholesterol, added sugars, salt, and alcohol.

Be as physically active as possible. To maintain a healthy weight, adults should do at least 2½ hours (150 minutes) a week of moderate-intensity or 1¼ hours a week (75 minutes) of vigorous intensity aerobic physical activity or an equivalent combination of both. You'll see a difference in your weight and your health. Lifestyle changes that include healthy eating, regular physical activity, and maintaining a healthy weight are the keys to good health. If you need to lose weight, losing even a little will help.

A reasonable and safe weight loss is 1-2 lbs per week. It might take 6 months to reach your ultimate goal, but making gradual lifestyle changes can help you maintain a healthier weight for life.

If you have questions or interest in making a healthy living change, please see your primary care team at the VA facility in which you receive health care.

-Information provided by the VA National Center for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention, www.prevention.va.gov



FAQs: Seamless care for traveling Veterans

By Randi Milne, RN, Nurse Manager, Telephone Triage, Home Telehealth and Case Management, Bay Pines VAHCS

If you are enrolled and receive your health care with VA, you will receive the same, consistent care, whether at your local VA treatment site or an alternate VA site of care. To help ensure that you are provided with the best care when traveling, please reference the important information on this page.

1. How does VA coordinate care if I am traveling or living at a temporary address?

Generally, your VA Patient Aligned Care Team (PACT) - located within your primary care clinic - is responsible for your health care even when you travel or are residing temporarily at another address, such as living in one state during the winter and another during summer. If you see a VA provider at a different facility while traveling, care received at that facility will be documented in your electronic medical record and will be available for your local VA PACT to review and follow up with treatment options for you, if necessary. The majority of your routine care should be obtained at your home facility (not while you are traveling), and medication refills should also come from your home VA while you are gone.

2. What can I do to prepare for travel and make sure there is no gap in my medical care?

There are many ways you can help:

- Notify your PACT team and specialty clinics that you will be traveling at least a month in advance if possible.
- Provide a temporary address and contact telephone number for while you are gone, and ask that this information be placed in your medical record.
- Provide the approximate dates you will leave from and return to Florida.
- Discuss any specific care concerns or needs with your providers.

3. Why is it important to discuss my travel plans with the VA? VA's goal is to keep your quality of health care consistent across medical facilities. When you inform your PACT of your extended travel plans, VA can prepare the alternate site for your arrival if care coordination is needed, helping to prevent any disruption in your care. Providing your temporary address and travel dates ensures that VA correspondence and medication refills will go to the correct place while you are gone.

4. What kinds of care can be coordinated ahead of time?

Many care needs can be addressed in advance including: Lab tests or other diagnostic testing needed for your specific medical conditions, specialty consults, injections or infusions you receive regularly, anticoagulation monitoring, and other medical needs.

5. How is this care coordinated? There is a nationwide VA network of Traveling Veteran Coordinators (TVCs) at all VA medical centers who will work together to assure that care is coordinated at the closest facility to where you will be staying. You do not have to be assigned to PACT at the alternate facility to receive care there! Your PACT or specialty care team will send a consult to the receiving facility's TVC to request assistance in setting up the care you need at another facility.

6. What should I do if I unexpectedly have a medical problem and need treatment at another VA while I am away from home? You may go to any VA facility to request acute or urgent medical care, even if you have not been seen there before and have no PACT provider assigned there. If you do not know where the closest facility is, you may call your local TVC who can locate the facility and give you contact information for the TVC in your area. In the event of an emergency, always dial 911 or go to the closest emergency room (VA or Non-VA)!

7. What do I do if I lose or run out of my medications while I am gone? You can go to any VA medical center pharmacy and request a temporary supply of medications (usually 10-14 days) until you can have a refill sent from your home VA.

8. Who is my local TVC?

C.W. Bill Young VA Medical Center and northern CBOCs (Palm Harbor, St. Petersburg, Sarasota, and Bradenton):
Mary Kiso-Afentakis, RN
(727) 398-6661 Ext. 14172

Lee County Healthcare Center and southern CBOCs (Sebring, Naples and Port Charlotte):
Jan Eckel, RN
(239) 652-1800 Ext. 20123

It's your CHOICE

Important information about the Veterans Choice Program

By Brittany Pesak, Group Practice Manager, Bay Pines VAHCS

When you have a VA appointment that is scheduled beyond 30 days from when your provider would like for you to be seen, you will become eligible for the Veterans Choice Program. This will give and will have the option to see a community provider. If you choose to "opt-in" for Choice, you will be referred to a Bay Pines VA Healthcare System (BPVAHCS) community health care partner, Health Net. Health Net is independent of the VA health care system. Health Net will call you within 7 days. They will tell you about the Veterans Choice Program and make your appointment for you. Be sure to ask them any questions or concerns you have. In some cases, the appointment they make may not be sooner than your scheduled VA appointment. This is due to the community provider's availability. If this is the case, you can keep your VA appointment; just tell Health Net your decision. If you take the Health Net community provider appointment, your VA appointment will be cancelled. This will allow another Veteran to be seen during that time.

Important things you need to know:

- Health Net will have all the medical records and paperwork they need for this appointment and will send them to the community provider. You do not need to request your medical records to be sent to anyone.
- Bring your community provider's prescription to the Bay Pines VAHCS Pharmacy and/or Prosthetic Department for all medications and prosthetic items including wheelchairs, walkers, etc. You may also have

your prescriptions faxed to the VA.

- If you are eligible for VA travel benefits when traveling to the VA, you will still qualify for the same travel reimbursement rate for the distance from your home to the location of your community provider.
- Health Net will need information on any other health insurance (except Medicare, Medicaid, or TRICARE) you may have. They may bill your insurance for non-service connected conditions. If the community provider wants you to be seen by another provider or have diagnostic tests such as labs or imaging services it will need to be arranged through Health Net. Your community provider will need to let Health Net know to make these arrangements.
- If you do not attend your community appointment or Health Net is unable to contact you; you will no longer be eligible for the Veterans Choice Program for this episode of care.

For information or questions, call Health Net (1-877-696-8192) or go to:

www.va.gov/opa/choiceact. There is a link for a "chat live" on the main page.

For any issues with the Veterans Choice Program that Health Net is unable to resolve, you may contact the Non-VA Care Coordination Office at 727-398-3525 or 888-820-0230, ext. 19752. They can help arrange services for eligible Veterans within set guidelines and will work to ensure you receive care.

Veterans Choice Program

The Veterans Choice Program (VCP) is a temporary program to improve Veterans' access to health care by allowing eligible Veterans to use approved health care providers outside of VA.



U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs

To find out if you are eligible and to make an appointment call:

866-606-8198

For more information visit: www.va.gov/opa/choiceact

Palm Harbor VA Community Clinic

35209 U.S. Highway 19 North
Palm Harbor, Florida 34684
(727) 734-5276

Pinellas

C.W. Bill Young VA Medical Center

10000 Bay Pines Blvd.
Bay Pines, FL 33744
(727) 398-6661 or 1-888-820-0230

St. Petersburg VA Community Clinic

840 Dr. MLK Jr. St. N.
St. Petersburg, Florida 33705
(727) 502-1700

Bradenton VA Community Clinic

5520 State Road 64, Suite 101
Bradenton, Florida 34208
(941) 721-0649

Sarasota VA Community Clinic

5682 Bee Ridge Rd., Suite 100
Sarasota, Florida 34233
(941) 371-3349

Port Charlotte VA Community Clinic

4161 Tamiami Trail, Suite 401
Port Charlotte, Florida 33952
(941) 235-2710

Manatee

Hardee

Highlands

Sarasota

Desoto

Charlotte

Lee

Collier

Sebring VA Community Clinic

5901 U.S. Highway 27 S.
Sebring, FL 33870
(863) 471-6227

Lee County VA Healthcare Center

2489 Diplomat Parkway E.
Cape Coral, FL 33909
(239) 652-1800 or 1-888-513-0045

Naples VA Community Clinic

2685 Horseshoe Drive S.
Naples, Florida 34104
(239) 659-9188



VA HEALTH CARE Defining EXCELLENCE in the 21st Century

Visit us online at:
www.baypines.va.gov or scan the QR Code with a smart phone app.



Important VA Phone Numbers

Bay Pines VA Healthcare System

(727) 398-6661 or toll-free 1-888-820-0230

Lee County Healthcare Center

(239) 652-1800 or toll-free (888) 513-0045

Veterans Crisis Line

1-800-273-8255 press 1
The Veterans Crisis Line connects Veterans in crisis and their families and friends with qualified, caring Department of Veterans Affairs responders through a confidential toll-free hotline.

Scheduling an Appointment

(727) 398-6661 or toll-free 1-888-820-0230, press 2
Veterans who need to schedule, cancel or reschedule appointments can call Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Prescriptions

(727) 398-6661 or toll-free 1-888-820-0230, press 1
Veterans who need to request a prescription refill or check the status of refills can call Monday through Friday 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Billing Questions

1-866-793-4591
Veterans who have questions about a bill received from the Bay Pines VAHCS can call the VA Revenue Center.

Patient Advocate

(727) 398-6661 or toll-free 1-888-820-0230 ext. 15024
Patient Advocates serve as liaisons between patients and the healthcare system, act on the patient's behalf, and help patients understand their rights and responsibilities.

My HealtheVet

www.myhealth.va.gov
Veterans can manage their health by logging onto My HealtheVet, which offers access to Veteran health benefits and services

VA Benefits (other than health care)

1-800-827-1000
Veterans who need information on VA benefits including VA compensation and pension, home loans, and education can call the VA Regional Office.