

Fall 2015

Bay VISIONS

A Quarterly Publication of the Bay Pines VA Healthcare System

Navy Veteran finds hope, recovery and employment

57 year-old Jeffrey McLaughlin credits Bay Pines for turning his life around

Neurosurgeon hired to lead spine care program

New surgeon expects to begin performing surgeries soon for patients suffering from degenerative disc disease





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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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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.



From the Director

Nearly five years ago, the President of the United States and VA Secretary issued a plan to end Veteran homelessness by the end of 2015. That same year, VA launched the End Veteran Homelessness initiative, which sought to provide permanent housing to homeless Veterans and supportive services to those at risk for homelessness. The Bay Pines VA Healthcare System has made significant progress in the local

effort to end Veteran homelessness across the communities we serve. This year alone, more than 1,300 Veterans have been housed by Bay Pines and our partners across southwest Florida. That is 1,300 heroes who have a safe place to sleep at night and ability to access to high quality health care and supportive services available through VA. On page four, you will read about a U.S. Navy Veteran who overcame homelessness and struggles with addiction through our Domiciliary Residential Rehabilitation Treatment Program available at the C.W. Bill Young VA Medical Center. Today, he is a proud Bay Pines employee at the medical center and maintains his own home.

As we approach the end of the calendar year, we will continue to make VA's goal to end Veteran homelessness a priority across the communities we serve through innovative agency and interdepartmental partnership programs and Veteran outreach in the community. The bottom line is that America's Veterans should never be without a place to call home, living without care.

To conclude, if you know a Veteran at risk or you yourself are struggling with homelessness, I encourage you to reach out to VA for help.

Sincerely,

SUZANNE M. KLINKER
Director, Bay Pines VA Healthcare System

Navy Veteran finds hope, recovery, housing and employment through VA

Story by Lindsey Sides, LCSW, Social Work Service

Photos by Jason Dangel, Public Affairs Officer

U.S. Navy Veteran Jeff McLaughlin is often seen on the C.W. Bill Young VA Medical Center campus smiling as he rides his bike to work each day.

Just a short jaunt from his apartment in St. Petersburg, Fla., the medical center is not only his place of employment, but a place where he was able to recover from lifelong addiction and personal struggles.

Jeff recently graduated from the Domiciliary Residential Rehabilitation Treatment Program (DRRTP), a

two phase, recovery-focused program tailored for homeless Veterans. The program is housed in the Bay Pines VA Healthcare System's domiciliary located in building 102 at the C.W. Bill Young VA Medical Center.

In phase I, Veterans begin to address psychosocial issues and other medical needs through evaluations with a multidisciplinary healthcare team. Working with the team, Veterans formulate an individualized wellness plan and attend classes and group sessions focused on developing self-awareness, skill building and recovery.



Formerly homeless U.S. Navy Veteran Jeff McLaughlin records customer work orders at the C.W. Bill Young VA Medical Center. Now employed as a housekeeper at the medical center, Jeff used the healthcare system's Domiciliary Residential Rehabilitation Treatment Program (DRRTP) to recover from addiction, gain permanent employment and obtain stable housing.

By phase II, Veterans begin actively seeking stable housing and community employment. Generally, Veterans admitted to the program stay for about four months.

"I was 100 percent committed to the program, and they helped me get my life back," Jeff said.

Although humble and soft spoken, the 57 year-old St. Petersburg native often shares his story of recovery with his peers in an effort to support personal growth.

"I got my first DUI when I was 19 years old," he said. I was a binge drinker back then and didn't think anything of it. By 1998, he received his fourth DUI and thought he had lost his driver's license for life. From there, things only got worse.

He increasingly struggled with addiction and was divorced from his wife in 2003. Later, Jeff was sentenced to prison after violating probation.

While incarcerated in Bushnell, Fla. he reflected on his life decisions and had an epiphany. "I needed to get sober and find God," he said.

Because of this moment of self-reflection, Jeff completed substance abuse treatment and reengaged with the church during this time, which inspired him to remain clean, sober and help others.

He continued his journey of self-development and earned a physical training certification, providing him the credentials to teach a Wellness and Fitness Class in the prison. He also became active in the recovery community, and engaged in the Veterans program at the facility.

"I wanted to come to a VA program that would help with employment when I got out, so I started to prepare," he said.

As he prepared for his March 2014 release date, he met with the regional VA Prison Reentry Social Worker and applied to the Bay Pines DRRTP program. Jeff was formally admitted to the DRRTP program on June 10, 2014.

"I was relieved to have a place to stay," he recalled. "I had been homeless for about a month, and just needed a fresh start after being in prison for 9 years.

It was a great opportunity."

He quickly entered phase I of the program and began attending therapeutic groups and education classes to increase his self-awareness, coping skills, stress management techniques, job skills. He also received support to recover from his addiction to alcohol.

During phase I, he also began working in the Incentive Therapy program as a recreation aid. In this position, Jeff was able to begin earning income while utilizing his skills in physical training.

"I love my job and I'm so grateful for the opportunity. Without Bay Pines, my life would be very different today."

"I felt good," he remembered. "I was giving back again and getting used to being free."

In phase II, he entered the Transitional Work Experience (TWE) Program – a service available through DRRTP that prepares Veterans for independence through supported employment opportunities designed to teach job skills and the art of negotiation and conflict resolution. Through TWE, he was eventually able to secure full time employment with the Bay Pines VA Healthcare System's Environmental Management Service as a housekeeper.

Today, Jeff remains a valued full-time employee at the medical center and maintains his own home. He credits his recovery and success to remaining sober, family, his faith and the Bay Pines DRRTP program.

"I love my job and I'm so grateful for the opportunity," he said. "Without Bay Pines, my life would be very different today."

To learn more about the DRRTP and other programs available to homeless Veterans and those at risk, please visit www.baypines.va.gov/services/homeless or call 727-398-6661 extension 17552.

Did You Know...

The Bay Pines VA Healthcare System served more than 4,600 homeless Veterans in some capacity in 2014? Approximately 130 of these Veterans took part in the Domiciliary Residential Rehabilitation Program (DRRTP).

VA and Community Partners Come Together for Third Annual Mental Health Summit

Story by Ronald Braasch, PhD, Assistant Chief, Mental Health and Behavioral Sciences Services; Photos by Timothy Westmorland, Medical Media Services

The Bay Pines VA Healthcare System (VAHCS) proudly hosted its third annual Community Mental Health Summit on Aug. 5. The event brought together community stakeholders to enhance Veteran access to quality mental health services and address the needs of Veterans and their family members, with a focus on collaboration with community partnerships.

Several VA leaders spoke during the event to include Healthcare System Director Suzanne M. Klinker who provided opening remarks and Dr. Alfonso Carreno, Chief, Mental Health and Behavioral Sciences Service who discussed the Bay Pines VAHCS's mental health continuum of care and services available to Veterans. Healthcare System Associate Director Kris Brown commented on Veterans' access to health care services and Brittany Pesak, Access Coordinator, spoke about the Veterans Access, Choice, and Accountability Act of 2014, which intends to increase Veteran access to mental health care through partnerships with community providers and resources. David Houtler, Ph.D., Program Manager of the Domiciliary Residential Rehabilitation Treatment Program (DRRTP) at Bay Pines, and Stacy Souza, Employment Rehabilitation Services (ERS) Manager, discussed Veteran well-being and employment programs offered at the C.W. Bill Young VA Medical Center Campus. Marine Corps Veteran Michael Dunlap shared how his DRRTP and ERS participation contributed to his personal recovery, attaining employment and housing, and current success as a role model for Veterans.

Keynote speaker Nicole Johnson, VA National Program Manager, Training and Education, Caregiver Support Program, focused on the needs of Veterans' families and caregivers. Johnson's presentation included a detailed overview of various caregiver programs, such as in-home and community-based care, respite care, family support services, and caregiver education. She also described caregiver eligibility for stipends, insurance, mental health services, and the national VA caregiver training program.



There were also small interactive breakout sessions throughout the day. Dr. Gregory Capriotti, Bay Pines VAHCS Local Recovery Coordinator, facilitated sessions entitled Bridging the Gap of Understanding with Peer Support Specialists. These meetings were punctuated by the presence of local Peer Support Specialists Robert Booth, Mario Ferri, John Lyon, Kevin Walker, and Larry White, and who eloquently and passionately described their personal roads to recovery and roles in various mental health programs.

Robert Larson, Assistant Chief, Social Work Service, facilitated a breakout session on various VA initiatives to include the National Resource Directory (NRD), the Community Provider Toolkit, and VA smartphone applications. NRD is an online resource developed by VA and the U.S. Department of Defense to connect wounded warriors, their families, and caregivers with community agencies and providers who have the knowledge and skills to support them. The Community Provider Toolkit is a VA mental health internet site with an array of links to resources to include benefits, education, mental health program locaters, and the Veteran's support line. The discussion on mobile computer applications (apps) generated extensive interest. Veterans may download apps to their smart phones to use in conjunction with a course of evidence based psychotherapy, such as the Post-traumatic Stress Disorder Coach, the Cognitive Processing Therapy Coach, and the Mindfulness Coach. The apps may be individualized to include pictures or voices of friends and families, motivational phrases, and contact telephone numbers for support.

Visit the websites below to learn more about resources discussed in this article.

Caregiver Support Program - www.caregiver.va.gov

National Resource Directory - www.ebenefits.va.gov/ebenefits/nrd

Community Provider Toolkit - www.mentalhealth.va.gov/communityproviders

VA Smartphone Apps - mobile.va.gov/appstore

Neurosurgeon selected to lead Spine Care Program

Story and Photos by Jason Dangel, Public Affairs Officer

The Bay Pines VA Healthcare System (VAHCS) remains focused on providing accessible, high quality healthcare to Veterans residing across southwest Florida by hiring more doctors and nurses and expanding existing facilities and services. Spine surgery will soon be added to the list of expanded services.

In early July, Dr. Anthony Jabre was selected to lead and grow the Bay Pines VAHCS's new spine surgery program at the C.W. Bill Young VA Medical Center. Jabre is a neurosurgeon with nearly 30 years of experience in the public and private sectors.

Prior to coming to Bay Pines, Jabre was the attending neurosurgeon for the VA Boston Healthcare System. He received his medical degree in 1978 from Saint Joseph University in Lebanon and completed his neurosurgical residency at the University of Cincinnati Hospitals in 1985. Jabre also completed neurosurgical fellowships at the National Hospital in London, England and University Hospital in Zurich, Switzerland and is also a Fellow of the American College of Surgeons.

In addition to seeing patients routinely for outpatient appointments, Jabre said he expects to begin performing surgical interventions by the end of the calendar year for patients suffering from degenerative disc disease - a condition in which pain is caused from a damaged disc in the spine.

"I view my role as part of a larger, multidisciplinary team focused on providing treatment options for Veterans ex-

periencing neck and back pain," Jabre said. "The option of spine surgery will soon be added to the variety of services offered at the medical center."

Dr. Dominique A. Thuriere, the healthcare system's Chief of Staff, noted that Jabre will help enrich the range of treatment options for Veterans experiencing back pain with a focus on improved physical function. "I really see our spine surgery program as icing on the cake for our pain program here at Bay Pines," Thuriere said. "While we have always been able to provide this level of care for Veterans through community providers, the establishment of an in-house program improves health care continuity and access to pain management services."



Dr. Anthony Jabre (center), Neurosurgery Section Chief, Bay Pines VA Healthcare System and Martha Beach (right), Advanced Registered Nurse Practitioner, meet with Marine Corps Veteran Bruce Guerin during an appointment at the C.W. Bill Young VA Medical Center on August 17.



Veteran Viewpoint: "The VA Set Me Free"

Story by Jason Dangel, Public Affairs Officer &
Tom Cole, Team Lead, Medical Media Services

U.S. Army Vietnam Veteran John Brouwer sits outside the Community Living Center (CLC) located at the C.W. Bill Young VA Medical Center in Bay Pines, Fla. Nearly two years ago, he contracted an aggressive bacterial infection in his legs that ultimately resulted in a double leg amputation at a hospital in the community. With help from VA and self-determination, John is now strong enough to wear prosthetic legs and is getting closer to his goal of walking again.

Nearly two years ago, U.S. Army Vietnam Veteran John Brouwer contracted an aggressive bacterial infection in his legs that ultimately resulted in a double leg amputation at a hospital in the community. Following his surgery, medical professionals at the hospital told John he would never walk again and would forever be confined to a wheelchair.

"The end result was not satisfactory," John said referring to the surgery. "I would never walk again or be able to have weight bearing again on my legs."

At the time, he was not enrolled in the VA health care system, but was informed about his potential health care benefits by a nurse involved with his early rehabilitation

activities at the hospital.

"I heard about the VA from a nurse," he said. "And since it was almost 50 years since I had served, I decided, well, I'll try this. I just didn't think of it on my own."

After being assessed by clinicians at the C.W. Bill Young VA Medical Center, it was determined that a surgical revision was needed to correct his residual limbs. Following a successful surgery at the James A. Haley Veterans' Hospital in Tampa on February 14, 2015, he returned to the C.W. Bill Young VA Medical Center to start the lengthy process of rehabilitation. The turning point in John's care was his involvement in the healthcare system's Recreation Therapy program – a program tailored



U.S. Army Vietnam Veteran John Brouwer participates in adaptive water skiing during a Recreation Therapy outing in Seminole, Fla.

to help Veterans overcome illnesses, disabilities and other conditions through treatment, education, and recreation services. The ultimate goal of the program is to enhance Veterans' health, function, independence, and quality of life.

"The first thing that woke me up here at Bay Pines was Recreation Therapy," John said. "My first excursion was to a local restaurant for a fish fry. After the dinner was over these ladies were lining up wanting to dance with me. I couldn't believe it. I spent about an hour on the dance floor being twirled around in a wheelchair. I thought, you know, I may just fit in this world again."

From that point forward, John never looked back as he got involved in adaptive biking, kayaking, balloon volleyball, water skiing – almost anything and everything the program offered.

Today, John is strong enough to wear prosthetic legs and is getting closer to his goal of walking without support by the minute.

"Before, I was relegated to living a life in a wheelchair in a nursing home or assisted living facility. I came here (Bay Pines), and the VA set me free."

Watch John's full video story and previous Veteran Viewpoint episodes at:
www.baypines.va.gov/news/viewpoint.asp

About Veteran Viewpoint



Veteran Viewpoint is an ongoing video series developed by the Bay Pines VA Healthcare System that highlights personal VA health care stories from Veterans residing in southwest Florida. Through personal, one-on-one interviews these heroes share detailed and private accounts of their experiences as users of VA health care – a system dedicated to providing Veterans with timely, accessible, high quality care that is personalized, proactive and patient driven.

Do you have a story to share? If so, please email the Bay Pines VAHCS Office of Public Affairs at vhabaypublicaffairs@va.gov.



U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs



1 CONVERSATION

can open the door to support.

Confidential chat at VeteransCrisisLine.net
or text to **838255**



The Power of 1: Once Click, one call, one text - one life

Story and Photos by the Bay Pines VAHCS Suicide Prevention Team

One small act can make a big difference in the life of a Veteran or Service member in crisis. The Veterans Crisis Line is asking you to think about The Power of 1 and how a single act can encourage Veterans to access confidential support and resources. Everyone can be the person who makes a difference in a Veteran's life, and connecting with support doesn't have to be hard. The Veterans Crisis Line can help.

Free, Confidential Resources

The Veterans Crisis Line is a free, confidential resource that Veterans, their families, and their friends can access every day at any time. Trained responders are ready to listen, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. Since launching in 2007, the Veterans Crisis Line has answered more than 1.6 million calls and made more than 45,000 lifesaving rescues. Locally, the Bay Pines VA Healthcare System (VAHCS) has responded to more than 4,000 calls since 2009. In 2015 alone, Bay Pines initiated more than 400 rescues through collaboration with local law enforcement agencies.

Identifying Signs of Crisis

VA urges groups and individuals nationwide to stay alert for signs of suicide risk. The first step in preventing suicide is understanding the warning signs; people may show signs of risk before considering harming themselves.

Warning signs include:

- Hopelessness, feeling as if there's no way out
- Anxiety, agitation, sleeplessness, or mood swings
- Feeling as if there's no reason to live
- Rage or anger
- Engaging in risky activities without thinking
- Increasing alcohol or drug abuse
- Withdrawing from family and friends

The presence of the following signs requires immediate attention:

- Thinking about hurting or killing yourself
- Looking for ways to kill yourself
- Talking about death, dying or suicide
- Self-destructive behavior (drug abuse, weapons, etc.)

If you notice these warning signs in a Veteran, tell him or her about the Veterans Crisis Line, or make the call yourself. Call 1-800-273-8255 and Press 1, chat online at VeteransCrisisLine.net/Chat, or text to 838255 for free, confidential support, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year.

Spread the Word

Help Veterans Crisis Line show how the Power of 1 single act can save a life. Visit VeteransCrisisLine.net/SpreadTheWord to download free outreach materials, including flyers to print and distribute, digital ads and more. For additional information, please visit VeteransCrisisLine.net or call the Bay Pines VAHCS Suicide Prevention Team at 727-398-6661 extension 10433.



Veterans, employees and community partners participate in the Bay Pines VA Healthcare System's Suicide Awareness Walk at the C.W. Bill Young VA Medical Center on Sept. 10. The walk was hosted by the healthcare system during Suicide Prevention Month which is recognized each September.

Mark your calendars...

for these upcoming events



Event: Veterans Town Hall Meeting

Date/Time: Monday, November 9, 2015 | 5:30 p.m. - 7:30 p.m.

Location: St. Petersburg VA Regional Office, St. Petersburg, Fla.

Description: VA officials will provide updates on VA operations and improvement initiatives regarding VA health care and benefits. Veterans and their families will have an opportunity to comment publicly about VA programs and services. VA Outreach services and special program representatives will also be available prior to the event, from 4:00 p.m. - 6:00 p.m., to assist Veterans. Services available will include VA health care enrollment and eligibility; VA benefits and claims assistance; patient advocate services and more. A Claims Clinic will also be available. The Claims Clinic will offer Veterans the opportunity to get real-time assistance with VA disability claims. This event is open to the public. For more information, please call (727) 398-6661 ext. 15031 or visit www.baypines.va.gov.



Event: Annual Veterans Day Ceremony

Date/Time: Wednesday, November 11, 2015 | 11:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

Location: C.W. Bill Young VA Medical Center

Description: The Bay Pines VA Healthcare System will host its annual Veterans Day Ceremony on November 11, 2015 at 11:00 a.m. The event will take place at the C.W. Bill Young VA Medical Center courtyard located between buildings 2 and 37. The event is open to all Veterans, their family and friends, and the general public. Highlights of the ceremony will include guest speakers from VA and MacDill Air Force Base; musical performances by the Keswick Christian School Choir; a special parade of colors provided by local Veteran Service Organizations; and traditional military presentations to include the posting and retiring of the U.S. Flag, a firing salute, a taps performance and more. For questions call 727-398-6661 extension 15031.



Event: Free Flu Shots for Veterans, VA employees and VA Volunteers

Date/Time: Throughout Flu Season (visit www.baypines.va.gov/seasonal/ for more info)

Location: C.W. Bill Young VA Medical Center and all Bay Pines VA Healthcare System outpatient clinics

Description: The Bay Pines VA Health Care System is offering FREE FLU SHOTS at our primary medical center and community clinics. You can receive a flu shot at any scheduled appointment, if you are admitted to our facility as an inpatient, or at one of the special walk-in flu shot (see schedule below) stations set up for your convenience. VA employees and volunteers are also eligible for free flu shots and can utilize walk-in flu stations, patient care areas or contact occupational health.

Note: All events listed on this page are subject change. For the most up-to-date information, please visit www.baypines.va.gov. While your there, sign-up for our free E-News service!

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Email Updates

Email Address

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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 medical center, 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.