VA Secretary Wilkie Salutes Vietnam Veterans during National VVA Convention in Spokane

VA Secretary Robert Wilkie received a standing ovation while saluting more than 600 delegates representing their local and state Vietnam Veterans of America chapters during the VVA’s first-ever national convention in Spokane last week. A trip to Alaska immediately followed his Spokane stop, thus preventing a return by the Secretary to Mann-Grandstaff VAMC.

“People today don’t question in this political climate, that Veterans have earned their care and benefits, and our respect. On behalf of the President and I, thank you for everything you’ve done in the true Spirit of America and for serving those who’ve served after you with the wall [Vietnam Memorial],” he told the audience. “But as long as we still see Veterans struggle, we must help them see their way back home.”

Secretary Wilkie shared his commitment to suicide prevention by promoting the new DOD/VA Task Force meeting in August to create a national strategy “beyond that last tragic event of a Veterans life... because if we don’t look at addiction and homelessness, we will fail our Veterans again.” The brief 15 minute speech also allowed the Secretary to support an even larger VA budget for FY20... promising to secure more care and benefits for Veterans and families.

Spokane VVA Chapter Grateful for VA Support at National Convention

Spokane’s VVA member John Cooper, was all smiles upon seeing the VA Secretary and MGVAMC staff and resources for Veterans at the Convention Center for the VSO’s annual convention.

“You made it,” he smiled, adding—”I’m so happy to see you all here,” as Cooper shook Bob Sonderman’s hand at the door of MGVAMC’s Mobile Medical Unit, which was staged outside the convention for Veterans to see and explore. In fact, at least six Veterans expressed interest in enrolling and seeing the MMU come to them!

Inside the convention, MGVAMC’s Alan McArthur promoted MyHealtheVet, telehealth, Vet Text and VA Video Connect as options for rural Veterans interested in VA care.

Another highlight for VA leadership and staff, was welcoming Medal of Honor recipient and U.S. Army Veteran Allen Lynch (MoH—Vietnam War ‘67) onboard the MMU for a look at VA modernization and outreach capabilities!
All VA Campuses to Be Smoke Free Oct. 1st

VA Secretary Robert Wilkie has announced all VA health care facilities will be smoke free this Fall, when a new policy takes effect October 1st restricting smoking by patients, visitors, volunteers, contractors and vendors.

“We are not alone in recognizing the importance of creating a smoke free campus,” said SECVA Wilkie. “As of 2014, 4,000 health care facilities and four national health care systems in the U.S. have implemented smoke-free grounds. This policy change coincides with additional VHA efforts to help us become the provider of choice for Veterans and the reason why Veterans will Choose VA.”

Although VA has historically permitted smoking in designated areas, there is growing evidence that smoking and exposure to secondhand and thirdhand smoke creates significant medical risks, and risks to safety and direct patient care that are inconsistent with medical requirements and limitations. Accordingly, VA’s Veterans Health Administration (VHA) has collaborated with key stakeholders to update and recertify the policy to be consistent with the department’s commitment to Veterans and the community.

A recent VA survey revealed that approximately 85% of responding facility leadership support smoke-free campuses, and this new policy... allows to ensure the health and wellbeing of VA staff, patients, and the public.

VHA’s new smoke-free policy applies to cigarettes, cigars, pipes, any other combustion of tobacco and non-Federal Drug Administration approved electronic nicotine delivery systems (ENDS), including but not limited to electronic or e-cigarettes, vape pens or e-cigars.

VHA offers extensive resources and programs to assist Veterans in their smoke-free journey at [https://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/quit-tobacco/](https://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/quit-tobacco/)

Veterans Offering to Help others become Smoke Free

Local graduates and supporters of VA Healthy Living’s Veterans Smoking Cessation group say they’re prepared to welcome and encourage more Veterans who understand the health benefits of living a smoke and tobacco-free lifestyle!

Classes and group discussion are already underway and Veterans can learn more by contacting Mary Hoenecke, ARNP, Health Promotion Disease Prevention coordinator at MGVAMC at 434-7634 or please print/post/share this pamphlet.
American Legion WA State Convention Brings City, State, MGVAMC and Volunteers together

Spokane Mayor David Condon (US Army Veteran) followed WA State Dept. of Veterans Affairs Director “Alfy” Alvarado and MGVAMC Director, Dr. Robert Fischer in a motivational testimony honoring the efforts of Spokane and the supporting communities who continue the long tradition of supporting Veterans and active military and their families in the Inland Northwest. All three were welcomed as featured speakers during opening ceremonies of the American Legion’s annual WA State Convention—back in Spokane as part of the 100th Anniversary of the organization that helped in the founding and creation of VA.

“Your tradition dates back generations and we are honored to join you in serving your fellow Veterans and your communities,” said the Mayor as he smoothly entertained the crowd from “working” the stage instead of speaking from the podium.

Dr. Fischer expressed his honor as opening speaker and complimented local and State VA partners and the benefits created by the cadre of VA volunteers—including the American Legion and its annual Santa’s gift shop for Veterans held every December at MGVAMC. Clarkston, WA American Legion Auxiliary member and VA Volunteer Sarah Lee was recognized and escorted to the stage to share positive news for Women Veterans. Lee volunteers by driving Veterans from the Lewiston-Clarkston Valley to Spokane’s VAMC.

Engineering Team Honored for Environmental Stewardship for MGVAMC facilities and programs

Medical Center Director Dr. Robert J. Fischer paused during morning report on two occasions recently, recognizing Environmental Chief, Brian Henneman and his team for achieving awards from supporting Public Utilities and the organizations evaluating MGVAMC’s environmental polices and practices on campus.

Henneman accepted the award on behalf of Richard Fries, instrumental in VA’s cost-savings work with Avista Utilities and the WA Dept. of Ecology in the use of energy credits from a new solar energy farm in Eastern Washington.

Above, Director Fischer is shown with Laura Sliger, recognizing her for the successful practices she’s promoted through MGVAMC’s Green Environmental Management System (GEMS) with Avista Corp. and Spokane Transit Auth.

August-Sept. Events

- VA’s “HR Bootcamp” training 8/6-7 Mandatory for Supervisors B40-225
- Moral Injury & Spirituality Workshop 8/15-10/31 click here for info
- Veterans Town Hall mtg, 4:30pm 8/20 American Legion 143 - Post Falls, ID
- Employee Town Hall meeting 8/21 Noon-1:00p.m. (Picnic area)
- Employee Appreciation Picnic 8/27 11am-1pm (picnic area)
- 10th Annual AIVAC Memorial & Honoring Ceremony 9/14
- Veterans Stand Down 9/14 Wenatchee Armory 8am-2pm
- VA Emergency Preparedness Fair 9/19

Click Here to share suggestions or ideas for improving services or operations at MGVAMC.

MGVAMC Annual All Employee Picnic Set for August 27th

Tetrad, Service Chiefs, and Supervisors at MGVAMC are volunteering to serve lunch and support at the upcoming All Employee Appreciation Picnic scheduled for 11:00a.m.-1:00p.m. in the picnic area behind the main hospital building on campus on Tues. Aug. 27th.

The popular employee “cook-off” events—for desserts (bake off) and homemade chili (cooking) are open to any VA Staff member interested in submitting their favorite recipe. Judges will select category winners, with gift certificates to the VCS Patriot Store up for grabs—and bragging rights!

Additional events are planned for evening shifts and staff at our two CBOC clinics. More details to come!
Annual Systems Redesign Poster Fair Showcases Talents & Ingenuity of VA Staff

By Denise Tolliver, Systems Redesign Coordinator

Quality, Safety, and Value
The FY18/19 Improvement Poster Fair is currently on display in the main hospital building, exhibiting a great sample of the numerous process improvements our staff worked diligently through teams and collaboration across service lines - and with external stakeholders.

Over 32 teams utilized multiple improvement tools to include Lean, VA TAMMCS and Plan-Do-Study-Act methodologies to identify potential opportunities for improvement. The Systems Redesign Coordinator provides quarterly Lean training to staff and teams to facilitate a standard approach to improvement work.

On May 16, 2018, Dr. Ricard A. Stone, Executive in Charge, Office of the Under Secretary for Health, designated Lean methodology as the common process improvement methodology for VHA. The Mann-Grandstaff VAMC adopted Lean in 2012 and continues the journey towards a more Highly Reliable Organization.

Staff trained in Lean methodologies: FY18 227; FY19 Qtr 2 88 (total 315)
Service-Level Improvement Projects: FY18 39; FY19 Qtr 2 34 (total 73)
Staff Participating in improvement work: FY18 240; FY19 198 (total 438)
Diffusion of Excellence:
FY18 – 10 Improvement projects submitted to the VHA Shark Tank Competition with one advancing to the semi-finals and one advancing to the finals.
Semi-Finals: Optimizing Pharmacy Driven Direct Oral Anticoagulant (DOAC) Management – Dickson/Galloway/Wadhwani
Finals: Nursing Electronic Boarding – Calkins/McCorgary

FY19: 9 Improvement projects submitted to the VHA's National Shark Tank competition with one project selected among 500 entries to advance to the semi-finals. Electronic versions will soon be available to view—watch for link!

HR Offering Training for VA Supervisors in August

Human Resources is offering the HR Bootcamp / Refresher Training for supervisors 2019 on August 6th and August 7th, 2019. The trainings will take place in Building 40 Room 225. Seats are limited to 35, so please be sure to register early. You can click here to review the training agenda.

This 2-day training has replaced the biannual training which has been conducted in the past. Classes are mandatory for new supervisors. Supervisors must attend the first scheduled training upon becoming a supervisor. Attendance is an ECF performance measure at the fully successful level for new supervisors.

All supervisors are invited to attend.

To register you may call the Rebecca Hanson at (509) 434-7389 or email her at Rebecca.Hanson2@va.gov.

MGVAMC Nutrition & Food Service Welcomes 2nd Harvest back to VA

For the third time in recent years, 2nd Harvest of Spokane, a not-for-profit VA Community Partner brought food, enthusiasm, and good will to Veterans last week.

The event was 2nd Harvest of Spokane’s “Mobile Market” where they offer grains, fruits, vegetables, juices, even meat to freely share with Veterans. A volunteer made fresh fruit smoothies for 85 Veterans waiting their turn to receive as much food as they could carry.

“We’re always happy to welcome 2nd Harvest back to the VA. We enjoy it, and the Veterans love it. This is another great example of a dear VA community partner assisting us in caring for our nation’s Veterans,” said Cheryl Bales, RD, VA Nutrition & Food Service.
Cerner Corporation and MGVAMC Continue to Achieve Critical Milestones for EHRM

MGVAMC completed another very busy, successful month of July between National Workshop 6 (week of 7/8) and Local Workshop 6 at Gonzaga University (week of 7/29). The newest National Workshop Fact Sheets will be distributed soon, with the Local Workshop Summaries forthcoming.

VA is also proud to announce news release a successful records transfer that is, “setting the stage for the records to be processed this summer in support of VA’s and Department of Defense’s (DoD) common electronic health record solution... an important milestone reflecting the decision to replace Veterans Information Systems and Technology Architecture (VistA) with the Cerner Millennium EHR solution that powers DoD’s Military Health System (MHS Genesis).”

“For decades, VA and DoD have been struggling to achieve interoperability and seamlessly share patient records between our health systems—placing an unfair burden on our Veterans and their families,” said Secretary Robert Wilkie. “No Veteran, family member or caregiver should have to carry boxes of paper, medical and service records around. This data migration is the first step to solving that problem for good.”

To date, over 78 billion records have been compiled from all VA medical centers, accounting for 50 terabytes (equivalent to about 850,000 hours of music) of data storage across 21 clinical areas of patient health records, which includes lab results; pharmacy prescriptions; inpatient and outpatient diagnoses and procedures; and other medical data of both living and deceased Veterans. New data will move into the Cerner system automatically from VistA in near real time, and then make its way to the Cerner Millennium EHR, which will provide shared access with VA, DoD and community care providers. As future phases are completed, service members’ medical records from their years of active duty will reside in one comprehensive EHR. At right, MGVAMC staff at Cerner Corp in Kansas City, MO with Dr. Richard Stone, Executive in Charge - VHA.

MGVAMC leadership are asking staff helping create EHR solutions to engage with Cerner at this critical time to ensure full development of the software solutions package to make transformation and modernization successful.

Next up: National Workshop 7 (week of August 19th). Contact MGVAMC’s Change Mgmt. team Eddie Steetle, RN, at (509) 828-9199 or Donna Vreeland at (509) 434-7578 for more info!

MGVAMC Employee Town Hall Mtg Dates Set

Medical Center Director, Dr. Robert J. Fischer and his Executive Leadership team hosted a one-hour Employee Town Hall meeting July 24th - in the picnic area behind the main hospital building. The effort to share information and hear directly from employees with their questions or concerns is also happening in August! They get-togethers are informal and employees are encouraged to attend/participate and share ideas!

🌟 Aug. 19 🌟 Teleconference Employee Town Hall: Noon - 1:00p.m.
🌟 Aug. 21 🌟 Face to Face Employee Town Hall - Picnic Area: Noon-1:00p.m.
Safety First… for Patients, Employees, and VA Volunteers

If you are a Federal Employee, contractor, volunteer, or student and have sustained a work-related injury or illness, you must take the following steps within 24-hours of the incident:

Step 1 - Complete a Safety Incident Report and forward it through your supervisor to Safety at the SPO Safety email group. Then, please provide complete details of the incident, to include who, what, where, when, why, and how. This will provide the framework for completing a safety investigation and help prevent future incidents.

Step 2 - Initiate an OSHA Form 301 at ECOMP. (Note: First time users of ECOMP must register an account).

Forms and links to ECOMP can be found on the MGVAMC Safety SharePoint page at this link:

For more information, please contact Mark Hodge, (ANG. Ret.) Occupational Safety and Health Manager at 434-7625.
Selected as Program Management Fellow, MGVAMC’s Tony Farrow

Graduates from National VA Acquisition Academy

Anthony Farrow, U.S. Army Veteran and an IT Specialist with IT Operations and Services (ITOPS), Office of Information and Technology has been recognized by VA leadership for his recent graduation from VA’s Acquisition Academy held in Fredrick, Maryland.

Back in 2018, Farrow was selected from a national pool of candidates to attend the Federal Acquisition Certification for Program and Project Managers program. After months of hard work, Tony graduated last month and was honored during a special ceremony by VA leadership.

The Federal Acquisition Certification for Program and Project Managers (FAC-P/PM) program is for acquisition professionals in the Federal Government performing program and project management activities and functions. Program and Project Managers (P/PMs) are critical in developing accurate government requirements, defining measurable performance standards, and managing life-cycle activities to ensure that intended outcomes are achieved.

The FAC-P/PM focuses on essential functional and technical competencies needed for P/PMs. The purpose of this program is to establish general education, training, and experience requirements for those acquisition professionals. The FAC-P/PM applies to all executive agencies, except the Department of Defense (DoD). Congratulations Tony!

A step back in time; Rhonda Mager among tenured group retiring

She began serving VA and Veterans as a teenager. She endured the aftermath of the eruption of Mt. Saint Helens with ash blanketing Eastern Washington and Spokane’s VA Medical Center back in 1980. Years later, she would be a VA employee volunteer for DEMPS—rendering aid during hurricanes in the Gulf and Puerto Rico.

After a combined 40-plus years at VA including three separate Federal Government furloughs, Rhonda Mager is planning the next stages of her life as she joins two other beloved employees whose time at VA is ending after decades of VA service! While Mager is leaving Pharmacy Services, she is joined by Robin Van Bommel (30-years), Social Work and VA Medical Lab Technician Michelle Moore, (40-years). Please join us in congratulating all three!

For Mager, a step back in time prompts some amazing memories of a time and place, “where we were all one big family, just having a great time caring for Veterans—before computers, when everything was paper, including the log books,” she smiled. She literally grew up at VA, rising from a teenage time-keeper, to health unit coordinator, a service secretary, and ultimately earning her Pharmacy Technician certification. For more on Rhonda and her time at MGVAMC, please click here.

IT installs new EHRM Technology Upgrades for team at Office of Community Care

Val Moon, an Advanced MSA at MGVAMC’s Office of Community Care was all smiles upon receiving two new 22” monitors required for VA’s Electronic Health Record Modernization project. The new screens compliment the new systems being created by the Cerner Corp.

Earlier this summer, Moon celebrated her retirement from the US Naval Reserves after 40 years! She’s part of our expansion of Office of Community Care and will be featured in an upcoming edition of the VA Voice!
VA Volunteer Sally Keef, US Army Veteran Helping Promote VA Modernization with Helpful Hints and Tips for VA Video Connect

Sally Keef wore a weapon every day as a Military Police officer serving in the US Army from 1974—88. Nowadays, her “post” is in Primary Care, where she’s willing to talk about all things related to connecting Veterans with their VA providers and health care information - through VA Video Connect! We are proud to have Sally helping and for many reasons in part, because of her colorful and artistic cane.

“My grand daughter gave me the idea to decorate during the holidays or the change in seasons. I love Veterans and it’s a good use of my time to help them obtain the care and benefits we have earned.”

MGVAMC’s campaign to help more Veterans get connected with VA electronically, when it’s most convenient with smartphone technology will increase access and health care options for Veterans. To learn more, please say hi to Sally, call (509) 434-7641, or Click here for video introduction!

Introducing… VA Video Connect!

You can access your VA Healthcare team with your Smart Device!

Smart Phones

Tablets

Lap Tops

Learn more:
www.mobile.va.gov/app store
866-651-3180 - Toll Free
509-434-7641 - Local support

Proudly offered to Veterans by Mann-Grandstaff VAMC - Spokane, WA
VA Chaplain Will Wise-Gendusa and VA Mental Health professional Dawn Gray, who both are based at Spokane’s Mann-Grandstaff VA Medical Center are wanting to help Veterans overcome their deeply-rooted “moral injuries” from the aftermath of their military service and combat in war.

The workshop, titled “Moral Injury & Spirituality” will begin hosting interested Veterans once-a-week starting August 15th. They will meet for approximately 90 minutes, with the course scheduled through October 31st at the VA medical center. Chaplain Wise-Gendusa understands the spiritual needs and moral injury impacts that follow Veterans after war. Both he and Gray (LTC, Idaho Army National Guard) are hosting the workshops and want Veterans to participate and be prepared to share their personal experiences.

Wise-Gendusa defines Moral Injury as “harm caused by perpetrating, failing to prevent, witnessing, or learning about actions that violate (Veteran’s) deeply held moral beliefs and expectations.”

He points to a comprehensive, but matter of fact article which makes the case that moral injury, “is the pain that results from damage to a person’s moral function. In contrast to Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) which springs from fear, moral injury is a violation of what each of us considers right or wrong.”

The article’s author, David Wood, describes how PTSD has been formally recognized by the health care industry since the 1980’s but “moral injury” isn’t recognized by the Department of Defense to this day. “Moral injury, not PTSD is increasingly acknowledged as the signature wound of this generation of Veterans.”

In his article, “The Grunts: Damned if they Kill / Damned if they Don’t” Wood also cites a 2001-12 Armed Forces Health Surveillance Center study showing all U.S. personnel medically evacuated from the war zones in the middle east, the most frequent diagnosis was not “physical” battle wounds, but “adjustment reaction”.

Woods interviewed several Veterans for his article, including Nick Rudolph, who was a 22-year old Marine who shared his personal struggles of killing enemy combatants, regardless of their age. Many suicide bombers have been children. At times, critical decisions are made in seconds, in order to live or die.

The workshop is free for Veterans. For more information, click here for the workshop feature – or call Chaplain Wise-Gendusa at (509) 434-7762 or Dawn Gray at 434-7281 to sign up for this helpful insight for Veterans.