

AUGUST 2013 EDITION 6

Pulse

Clinic Updates:
Fort Worth
Polk Street
Bonham

**Therapies for
a better *you***

COVER STORY:

Changing Veterans' Lives *every single day*

*Scarred by the effects of Military Sexual
Trauma, Air Force Veteran Lisa Mauk
sought therapy that changed her life.*

PHOTO BY BRUCE MORRIS

Standing On Our Promises

At a recent meeting I attended, I had the opportunity to hear a young Veteran speak about his experience with the VA health care system. As he approached the podium, I wondered what this young man could share with this group of senior VA leaders. To my surprise, this Veteran captivated my attention, not so much for what he said, but for what he represented. He not only shared with us his experience with the VA health care system, but also how, at the age of nineteen, he is meeting a challenge head-on. He lost his right arm in combat and is tackling the task of learning life's basic skills (i.e. brushing teeth, eating) all over again, and doing so with a courage and commitment that is inspiring.



This young Veteran reminded me of how fortunate we are to serve the 113,000 plus Veterans at VA North Texas Health Care System. Those moments we have to spend with Veterans should be cherished. I want each and every Veteran, employee and stakeholder to know that VA North Texas would not be the health care system it is today without the men and women who served our Nation.

We have the honor and privilege of working in an organization where we have the opportunity to make a difference in someone's life every day. Our number one priority is to provide Veterans with the high quality health care benefits they've earned and deserve. Our motto, **Changing lives. One Veteran at a time.**, is one that I attempt to live by every day. As the nineteen year old captivated my attention by what he represented, I hope that our mission continues to inspire you to proudly serve those "young" and "seasoned" Veterans who have unselfishly served.

Sincerely,
Jeffery L. Milligan, Director



*Changing lives.
 One Veteran at a time.*

We serve more than 113,000 Veterans and deliver over 1.4 million outpatient visits. In this issue of *Pulse*, you'll hear from a few Veterans who are grateful for the care they receive. They will tell you how we changed their life. You'll read about treatments and therapies available that help get Veterans back to enjoying life. You'll know too how we are changing lives every single day.

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Pulse is published for the staff, volunteers and patients of VA North Texas Health Care System. We welcome your story ideas and suggestions. Send to ntxpublicaffairs@va.gov.



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After overcoming an injury that paralyzed him, Navy Veteran Kenneth Ward no longer needs his wheelchair to move around. PHOTO BY NANCY GRAY

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 One Veteran at a time.

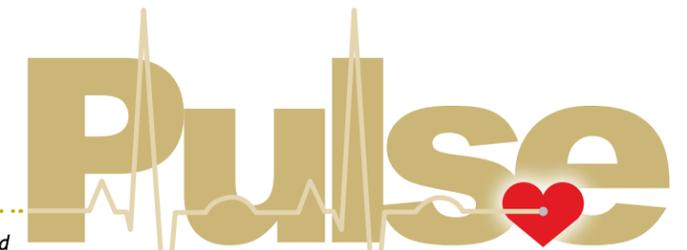


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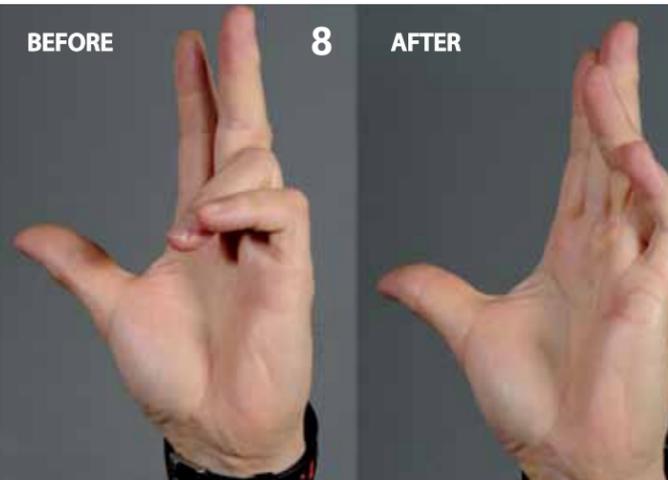


VA NORTH TEXAS HEALTH CARE SYSTEM

**Services expand
 in Bonham**



Patient's hand before and after cutting edge therapy. PHOTOS BY NANCY GRAY



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How do we know when we are accomplishing our mission?

How do we know when we are serving Veterans well?

The answer comes through our ongoing efforts to be more patient-centered. The answer comes from service with a smile, that's affirmed when Veterans smile back. The answer comes when Veterans' lives are changed.

Our eagerness to enhance the high-quality programs and services that already exist proves our ability to serve Veterans better. Our workforce is determined and dedicated to improving the lives of Veterans.

On any given day, at any one of our facilities, not everyone knows who or what they will encounter. Some appointments are scheduled, while others are emergencies or walk-ins. We know one thing for sure – a Veteran will come to us for their health care needs. Veterans come to us for support and we are providing it.

...able to cope and live better...

Air Force Veteran Lisa Mauk
PHOTO BY BRUCE MORRIS

Changing lives. One Veteran at a time.

Air Force Veteran Lisa Mauk's first visit to Dallas VA Medical Center is one she'll never forget; it was the start of a remarkable journey that ultimately changed her life. Mauk struggled with the effects of Military Sexual Trauma (MST) for nearly 20 years after her military discharge.

Military Sexual Trauma (MST) is the term that the Department of Veterans Affairs uses to refer to sexual assault or repeated, threatening sexual harassment that occurred while the Veteran was in the military. It includes any sexual activity where someone is involved against his or her will – he or she may have been pressured into sexual activities.

For Mauk, MST happened twice. Each time it was a different perpetrator. After the incidents, she hid her pain from everyone. "I felt like I had to be strong," she said. "I put all my energy into work...I was avoiding...I didn't realize I was making it worse."

At the advice of her father, a Vietnam Veteran, Mauk started therapy. First it was one-on-one prolonged exposure therapy. Mauk admits difficulty having to relive what happened, but realizes it was best since she suppressed the memories for so many years. She continued with one-on-one therapy, started anger management and is working toward group therapy. Through discussions and activities, such as going to places that reminded her of her trauma, Mauk found it easier to cope daily and to face her fears.

Before therapy, Mauk said she was always irritated and angry and didn't know why. Therapy has helped her understand her feelings and better identify triggers. She's hopeful that one day she can recover.

"I may not be able to change what happened to me in the past, but I can fearlessly take charge of my life in the present and future," she said. "Having support from VA and my family made a huge difference in my life."

One year ago, Navy Veteran Kenneth Ward was visiting a friend. He stepped out on the porch to leave and woke up paralyzed and blind. He had slipped off the porch, broke his neck and crushed his spine. The next few hours were crucial for Ward. He underwent surgery to repair his neck and spine and could see again once the swelling on his brain was reduced. But Ward was still paralyzed.

Days later, he arrived at The Spinal Cord Injury Center at Dallas VA Medical Center to begin rehabilitation. He knew he was in for the fight of his life, but remained optimistic the whole time. Ward gives credit to the providers who helped him, but said he never would have made it without faith. While he was being fitted for a wheelchair, he told everyone he wouldn't need it long.

"I knew I would walk again," Ward said. "I knew if I wanted to walk again I not only had to do therapy, but I had to have faith as well."

Navy Veteran Kenneth Ward
PHOTO BY NANCY GRAY

After the first two weeks in rehabilitation therapy, Ward began having minor movement in his right hand, then his left. A month later, he could lift his legs from the wheelchair footrest. Before long, he was standing and then walking with support. Providers surprised Ward and told him he was ready for the treadmill. After a few weeks on the treadmill, he received another surprise – the therapy pool. "Great!" he thought. "If I can walk in water, then I'm on my way." Shortly after pool therapy, Ward gave up his wheelchair, used a walker for a while and then a cane. Today, he walks completely unassisted.

How was he progressing so fast? Ward was using concepts he learned in therapy while he was away from therapy. In his hospital room he would exercise with his roommate. When he was released to go home, he would exercise there. Ward continues therapy and often encourages other Veterans with spinal cord injuries.

"All of our injuries are different, but we all have something in common...life," he said. "It's something I'll never take for granted, and I thank VA for giving it back to me."

...can walk again...

...maintaining a healthy weight...

For years growing up I was always taught to clean my plate," said Army Veteran Daniel Fisher. "It became a habit that stuck with me well into adulthood." Fisher said before he knew it, he weighed 260 pounds and had constant pain in his rib cage and back. He said it was becoming more and more difficult to breathe and walk. One day he decided to make a change. He talked to his primary care physician about his concerns. His doctor referred him to a weight management program at Dallas VA Medical Center.

MOVE! is a weight management program designed by the Veterans Health Administration National Center for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention, a part of the Office of Patient Care Services, to help Veterans lose weight, keep it off and improve their health.



Army Veteran Daniel Fisher
PHOTO BY BRUCE MORRIS

"On the first day of class, I knew I was in the right place," Fisher said. "The teacher was motivated, other Veterans were motivated and so was I." Fisher learned to count calories by using a daily log. He began making menus and learned to eat right. He gave up fast food, cut down on eating fats, breads and condiments. To satisfy his sweet tooth, he swapped desserts for fruits. Before joining MOVE!, Fisher said he was eating for taste and wouldn't stop even when he was full. He went from eating

8000-9000 calories a day to eating 1800 calories a day. "It was very challenging to eat fewer calories in more meals, but I did it with much support," he said. At the end of the first six weeks, Fisher surpassed the goal of losing 5 percent of his total body weight – he lost 12 percent! Week after week, he continued dropping at least four pounds each week until he lost a total of 85 pounds.

"I have more energy and feel more alive and I never want to cross that bridge again," Fisher said. "I appreciate the support I received from VA that changed my life."

We stand behind our motto of "Changing lives. One Veteran at a time." Veterans can count on VA North Texas Health Care System for their health care needs and beyond.



One Room at a Time. One Veteran at a Time.

In the Veterans Health Administration, patient-centered care is a vital component of the health care delivered. One way to enhance patient-centered care is the “One Room at a Time, One Veteran at a Time” initiative started by Veterans Integrated Service Network (VISN) 17. The initiative focuses on redecorating and transforming a Veteran’s room at a state Veterans home, specifically Veterans who do not have many visitors or family nearby. Veterans choose their own personalized theme for their bedroom and volunteers donate items to enhance the theme chosen.

Themes chosen by Veterans have included fishing, hunting, automobiles, ships, cats and music. Suggested items to donate include pictures or other wall hangings, clocks, bedding, pillows and homemade crafts.

The goal for the initiative is to help transform one Veteran’s room every three months at a state Veterans home in VISN 17. There are five state Veterans homes within VISN 17 in Bonham, Temple, Floresville, McAllen and Tyler. Since the program’s inception in October 2011, seven rooms have been transformed in Temple, four in Bonham, four in Floresville and two in McAllen.

Help make a Veteran’s day brighter! If you would like to volunteer to help redecorate a Veteran’s room at a state Veterans home, contact Jacqueline Dixon, VISN 17 Patient Safety Officer and State Veterans Liaison at Jacqueline.Dixon3@va.gov.

Employees donated items to decorate a Veteran’s room at the Texas State Veterans Home in Bonham. (left to right) Betty Pettway, RN; Jacqueline Dixon and Alfreda Johnson (not pictured Lola Stewart) PHOTO BY BRUCE MORRIS



Navy Veteran Warren Coker was thankful to receive a room makeover to reflect his love for the Dallas Cowboys. PHOTO BY DEANN HICKS



Welcome back, Mr. Joe Dalpiaz!

We are pleased to announce the appointment of Mr. Joseph Dalpiaz as the Network Director of the Heart of Texas Health Care Network. Mr. Dalpiaz has served 29 years in VA and has more than 15 years in health care leadership positions within VA. He most recently served as Director of the VA Medical Center in Philadelphia, Pa. and prior to that he served as the Director of VA North Texas Health Care System. He is a graduate of Leadership VA and the VA/DOD Leadership Institute. He holds a Master’s Degree in Social Work Administration.

The Veterans Integrated Service Network (VISN) 17, located at Arlington, Texas, encompasses four health care systems which include six medical centers, 32 Community Based Outpatient Clinics (CBOCs) and six community living centers. VISN 17 serves Veterans in 134 counties stretching from the Texas-Oklahoma border to the Lower Rio Grande Valley of Texas serving 2,540,000 unique patients.

Mr. Dalpiaz has an exceptional background and possesses the leadership, knowledge and skills necessary to successfully lead the Heart of Texas Health Care Network into the future.

Hope for a cure is now a reality for patients with Hepatitis C

Hepatitis C is a deadly disease, but the good news is, there is a possible cure. An estimated 6,000-10,000 Veterans in North Texas may have Hepatitis C and either don’t know it or are hesitant about receiving education about the disease or initiating therapy.

VA North Texas Health Care System offers comprehensive treatment for Hepatitis C, including education and medication therapy, which can lead to a cure.

To aid in finding a cure, Dallas VA doctors:

- developed a protocol-based approach to manage patients with the disease
- developed strategies to appropriately use FDA-approved drugs for Hepatitis C
- found new possibilities to cure the disease in selected patients

While medication therapy may not cure all patients with Hepatitis C, there’s a strong chance it will. In fact, nearly 80 percent of patients respond positively to treatment in national trials. The Liver Team at VA North Texas has witnessed similar results. Of the 23 Veterans treated for at least 24 weeks, more than 80 percent were clear at the end of treatment.

The Centers for Disease Control recommends anyone between the ages of 45 and 65 be tested for Hepatitis C. VA North Texas Health Care System encourages Veterans to get screened and be evaluated for therapy.

There are several ways to contract Hepatitis C from the blood of someone who has the disease, which include receiving tattoos with needles that were not disinfected properly and by sharing personal items, such as toothbrushes and razors. Other ways include injection of street drugs with shared needles or receipt of an organ transplant or a blood transfusion prior to 1992.

The Liver Team at VA North Texas. (left to right) Front row: Geri Brown, MD; Anjali Patel, PharmD, BCPS; Back row: Michael Limerick, RN, PhD, ACNS-BC; Christopher Burgess, PsyD; Victoria Paschall, PA-C; Anita Boyd, MSN, RN PHOTO BY CONRAD WOLFE



“Hepatitis C patients will begin to have symptoms of their disease 20-30 years after the initial infection. We hope to reach out to our Veterans who have incurred the disease during and after the Vietnam War. Veterans should be proactive and not victims of this deadly disease, especially when there’s a cure available.”

— Geri Brown, MD
Staff Hepatologist (Liver Specialist)

New hand therapy available for Veterans with rare condition

Imagine having your fingers stuck in the same curled position every day. What if you're unable to hold things as you once could? How frustrating would it be to lack the ability to complete simple tasks such as writing or driving? That's the case for anyone affected by a condition known as Dupuytren's (pronounced "doo-puh-trens") contracture. Dupuytren's is a disorder that affects the hands, causing the fingers to bend in toward the palm. This bend is called a contracture. Besides causing contracture, the thickening and shortening of cords in the hand can reduce the finger's range of motion (how much a person can move or straighten them).

Dupuytren's is a non-specific disease; anyone can be affected, but it primarily affects people of Scandinavian or Northern European ancestry. It's also known as The Vikings disease or the curse of the MacCrimmons. Some suspected

contributing factors play a role as well, such as diabetes, alcoholism, epilepsy, some medications and liver disease. Those most likely to contract Dupuytren's are: men, people over the age of 40 and those with a family history.

It can take months, even years for Dupuytren's to progress. Initially, patients may recognize their palm will become abnormally thick, due to the presence of nodules. Hand pain is typically not associated with Dupuytren's, but sometimes the nodules can be uncomfortable. Following the appearance of nodules, patients may begin to notice the fingers curling up. Hand function can be impaired and grasping objects may be difficult. Putting the hand flat on a table, in a pocket or shaking hands can also be difficult. In addition, Dupuytren's can happen in the penis and feet.

Dupuytren's has traditionally been treated with surgery but now it can be treated with injections – up to three, at 30-day intervals. A mixture of enzymes is injected and helps break down the Dupuytren's cord. Twenty-four hours after injection the fingers are manipulated

to break the cords. A hand therapist is involved in post-treatment to keep the fingers from re-curling. The therapist makes splints, designs special hand exercises for the patient, and facilitates hand manipulation and movement to keep the fingers open. Full results can be achieved immediately after injections and manipulation. However, at times reinjections may be required. Follow-up/at-home care involves nighttime splinting and frequent hand motion throughout the day. If left untreated, Dupuytren's can become severe; the hand can be impaired making it impossible to straighten the fingers again.

VA North Texas Health Care System is a leader in treating Dupuytren's.

Bardia Amirlak, MD, a hand surgeon at UT Southwestern and the Chief of Hand Surgery at VA North Texas has set new protocols that streamline the process of injection and therapy.

We have the only certified hand therapist at any VA facility in the Nation.

The hand therapist does the cord manipulation and is closely involved with post-treatment therapy, which means better outcomes for North Texas

This team treats Veterans in the Hand Clinic at Dallas VA Medical Center. (left to right) Jerry Criley, MS, OTR/L, CHT; Bardia Amirlak, MD; Michelle Horan, PharmD, BCPS and Joan Ballard, RN
PHOTO BY NANCY GRAY



Veterans with Dupuytren's. To date, more than 50 Veterans have been treated for Dupuytren's at Dallas VA Medical Center. While all results are not the same, most patients receive ideal relief.

Treatment for Dupuytren's has a positive impact on quality of life. Patients can use their hands again for work and other daily activities. It means they can get back to doing things they enjoy. Hobbies like playing sports or musical instruments can be accomplished. Before the new treatment, surgery would be considered which meant longer recovery and complications associated with surgery. In addition, surgery cannot be done on patients who have health conditions that put them at risk with general anesthesia. Treatment for Dupuytren's can be done in the clinic with no anesthesia needed.



Courtesy photos right: 1. Day one - injection; 2. Next day follow-up; 3. 30-day follow-up

Jerry Criley, certified hand therapist, assists Army Veteran Charles Robbins. PHOTO BY NANCY GRAY

Army Veteran Charles Robbins was diagnosed with diabetes in 1987. Over the years, he noticed his fingers slowly curling downward, but wasn't sure if diabetes was the cause. As time went by, the condition progressively got worse and he could no longer put his hand in his pocket comfortably. It also affected his ability to ride his bike, something he enjoys greatly. As a biker, Robbins depends on his hands for proper grip, movement and safety.

Physicians diagnosed Robbins with Dupuytren's and told him about the new therapy. Within one week after his first injection, Robbins was able to stretch his fingers slightly and completed a 100 mile bike ride with ease.

Robbins appreciates everything the team in the hand clinic did for him. "Without this therapy, I know my recovery from surgery would have been longer," he said. "I'm grateful for the team taking their time and making me feel like more than just a patient; they treated me like family."

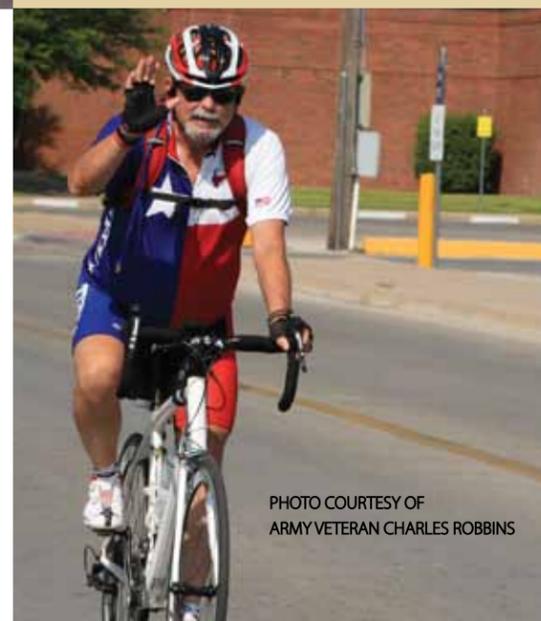


PHOTO COURTESY OF ARMY VETERAN CHARLES ROBBINS

Million Veteran Program: A PARTNERSHIP WITH VETERANS



Do you want to help improve the health of future generations of Veterans and their families? Become a part of the Million Veteran Program (MVP) today. MVP aims to be one of the largest studies of genes and health in the world. The important data collected in this program will be used by researchers to help improve the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of both common and military-related illnesses. MVP is enrolling volunteers and seeking Veterans like you. Volunteering is quick and easy; your participation includes a short study visit (approximately 20 minutes) and filling out health surveys via mail. The study visit can also be scheduled on the same day as your next VA appointment. Let's advance the future of healthcare for Veterans. Join thousands of Veterans who have already become part of MVP. Walk-ins are welcome.

To participate, visit Building 2, Clinical Research located on the 8th Floor at Dallas VA Medical Center to speak to the Research Team: Principle Investigator Padmashri Rastogi, MD and Research Coordinators Cassie Lusk and Teagan Johnson. We honor your service and invite you to learn more about MVP.

Call toll-free 866-441-6075 or visit www.research.va.gov/MVP.

VA Hotline for Women Veterans 1-855-VA-WOMEN (1-855-829-6636)

The Department of Veterans Affairs has a new hotline, 1-855-VA-WOMEN, to receive and respond to questions from Veterans, their families and caregivers about the many VA services and resources available to women Veterans. The hotline is staffed by knowledgeable VA employees who can provide information about benefits including health care services for women. Callers can be linked to information on claims, education or health care appointments as well as information about VA cemeteries and memorial benefits. Staff can answer urgent questions and provide referrals to homeless and mental health services and also provide Vet Center information.

Women Veterans are entitled to apply for the same benefits as male Veterans, which include health care and pharmacy benefits, education benefits, disability compensation, home loans, employment assistance and more. The hotline (1-855-VA-WOMEN) joins numerous other VA hotlines that provide critical information and assistance to Veterans, such as those for Veterans in crisis and in danger of becoming homeless.



There's something special about a warm smile and a caring voice. When you're not feeling well, it's sometimes just what you need to make you feel better.

(pictured right) Army Veteran Charles Brown shares a laugh with Janet Graham, RN. PHOTO BY BRUCE MORRIS

(left to right) Deputy Associate Director for Patient Care Services Julia Roberts and Associate Director for Patient Care Services Alan Bernstein. PHOTO BY BRUCE MORRIS



"It is my vision that we will deliver the highest quality of nursing care in the Nation evidenced by a commitment to superior customer service."

— Alan Bernstein, Associate Director of Patient Care Services
VA North Texas' top nursing executive



VA North Texas Nursing - A Vision of Excellence

No amount of science or technology can replace the confidence you feel when you know there's someone in your corner, pulling for you, thinking of you, working to get you better. Whether it's front line patient care or behind the scenes working with science and technology, that's what patients expect in a health care provider – someone working with them in mind.

That's the driving force behind the vision of excellence in nursing at VA North Texas.

We have more than 1500 nursing personnel who provide care to Veterans throughout our health care system. With established leadership and a set vision, they're ready for the next level.

The vision of excellence is defined in many ways:

- Shared governance: Representation of all levels of staff in decision making processes.
- Purposeful rounding: Hourly interaction with the patient with the focus of meeting the basic needs of the patient.
- Evidence-based practice: Engagement in utilizing current best evidence to make decisions about how to promote health and provide care.
- Accountability: An obligation to accept responsibility for one's practice.
- Visibility: Leadership by walking around.
- Civility: Polite, reasonable and respectful behavior to all customers.
- Most important is patient-centered care.

Alan Bernstein and Julia Roberts are a dynamic duo, but each give full credit to the hard working nurses patients see every day. Even our director, Jeffery Milligan will tell you "Nurses are the most important component to the health care we deliver to patients. Without their hard work and dedication we wouldn't be able to succeed." Nurses will humbly agree and tell you they're just doing their jobs.

Expressions of Gratitude and Humility from a social worker serving Veterans

"The most rewarding part of my job is helping a Veteran achieve success."

That's a broad statement; not only for the woman who said it, but for those she serves as well. Laura Lippin is a social worker at Sam Rayburn Memorial Veterans Center in Bonham. Her idea of helping Veterans achieve success encompasses many things. Lippin said sometimes Veterans don't fully know all a social worker can do, but when they meet her they are glad they did.

As a social worker and case manager in the outpatient clinic, Lippin helps Veterans work out a number of things including homelessness, nursing home placement and even their finances. Most of the Veterans she helps come by way of referrals from providers, but the biggest way Lippin connects with Veterans is through direct phone calls. Sometimes there's more than 20 in one day!

"I can spend anywhere from five minutes to an hour talking with a Veteran to make an initial assessment," she said. "Sometimes it's a quick resolution, but other times it requires much more and I'm happy to do whatever I can." Lippin has been with VA for more than 30 years. She started out in Human Resources, but found a natural fit in Social Work. She considers it a calling to help people - to help those who served is a blessing.

"Veterans come from many different walks of life," she said. "Hearing their stories and helping them through circumstances allows me to look at my life and be thankful."

When asked why she thought she was selected to be featured in *Pulse*, Lippin humbly admits she's just doing her job. "I know I work hard and I'm not big on tooting my own horn, but it's nice to know someone else is watching," she said.

In addition to her own caseload, Lippin trains social work interns and said that's something she takes very seriously. "I want future VA social workers to know and understand what we're here for and why we do what we do," she said. "Veterans always come first."



Prosthetics staff welcomes Veterans to the new clinic. (left to right) Joy Suan, Orthotist Fitter; Brenda Jones, Purchasing Agent; Jackie Brown, Prosthetic Representative
PHOTO BY TERESA BAKER



Fort Worth Outpatient Clinic is not slowing down

Now that all the dust settled and Veterans are excited about the new, larger space, don't think Fort Worth Outpatient Clinic (FWOPC) has been resting on its laurels.

FWOPC was projected to accommodate 1,600 patients in the first year when the clinic moved to Campus Drive. Currently, about 28,000 Veterans are enrolled for care with approximately 350 more being added each month. Many services are being expanded and new ones added to better serve Veterans in Tarrant and surrounding counties which saves them a trip to Dallas VA Medical Center.

Prosthetics is the newest addition and provides:
Aids for the blind • Artificial limbs • Terminal devices, • Stump socks
Hearing aids • Accessories and speech aids • Home dialysis equipment and supplies • Medical equipment and supplies • Oxygen equipment and supplies • Orthopedic braces and supports • Orthopedic footwear and shoe modifications • Power/manual wheelchairs and other mobility aids • Optical supplies • Cosmetic restorations • Ear inserts

Other benefits of prosthetic services are:

- Improved patient safety for patients at high risk for falls and compliance with non-weight bearing status for orthopedic patients
- Improved patient and family education on the use of prosthetic items

It's a win – win, resulting in improved patient outcomes, compliance, satisfaction and customer service.

So what's up next for FWOPC? More Patient Aligned Care Team teamlets in primary care will be added, and an exciting addition to come is Cardiology. Existing specialty care and telehealth services will be expanded and in Nuclear Medicine, a dexa-scan to measure bone density will soon be available. Stay tuned...

Joy Suan fits Army Veteran Gene Bass for a prosthetics device. PHOTO BY TERESA BAKER



"Our challenge is to continue providing the highest quality of care while accommodating our growing population. Our staff is willing and honored to serve Veterans with the high quality services they've earned."

— Deloris Clemons, Operations Manager
Sam Rayburn Memorial Veterans Center



Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation staff in the new clinic for Veterans in the Community Living Center. (left to right) Back row: Sam Finnell, Connie Peters, Frank Bourgeois and Victoria Faulkner; Front row: Diane Hofer, Amy Pratt, Tyra Munson, Becky Moore and Dr. Nole Grandas

Services expand in Bonham

PHOTOS BY ERIKKA D. NEROES

In the usually quiet, small town of Bonham, Texas one might find just what they expect - City Hall, the police station, a local grocery and post office. But tucked away just a couple of blocks northeast of downtown is Bonham's largest employer - Sam Rayburn Memorial Veterans Center (SRMVC). It's the second largest facility of VA North Texas Health Care System. Open since 1950, SRMVC serves more than 22,000 Veterans. In addition, it has a 345 inpatient bed facility which includes a 224 bed domiciliary rehabilitation program, 5 bed Compensated Work Therapy/Transitional Housing program and a 116 bed community living center.

SRMVC proudly boasts a number of services and programs for Veterans in Fannin, Grayson, Lamar and Delta counties in Texas and Bryan and Choctaw counties in Oklahoma. Veterans can be seen for primary care and mental health care. Specialty clinics include spinal cord injury, audiology, dental, optometry, dermatology, gynecology, special exams registry and a women Veterans clinic. The latest service to be added is Clinical Video Technology (CVT), which provides Veterans in rural areas with improved access to health care while reducing travel time. Providers remain at the medical facility while patients use CVT at a community-based outpatient clinic closer to their home.

Amputees and those with acute or chronic pain, polytrauma, traumatic brain injury, or Veterans who need durable medical equipment such as canes, crutches and walkers can use CVT services instead of face-to-face visits. Also, in a pilot project TeleMOVE is available for Veterans who are part of the weight management program.

Nole Grandas, MD and Diana L. Gampper, Telehealth Clinical Technician, demonstrate Clinical Video Technology.

Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation (PM&R) and Recreation Therapy services have been expanded to better serve Veterans. With the addition of the PM&R physician clinic, Veterans now have the opportunity to reduce their appointment wait times and eliminate the need to travel to Dallas VA Medical Center. PM&R and Recreation Therapy serves Veterans in the outpatient program, community living center, domiciliary and Home Based Primary Care. Additionally, Recreation Therapy serves Veterans in the Mental Health program.

While adding and expanding services can be exciting, there can be challenges as well. Veterans at SRMVC have come to know and trust the personal feel of small town health care. VA staff understands Veterans' needs and strives to continue meeting their expectations.

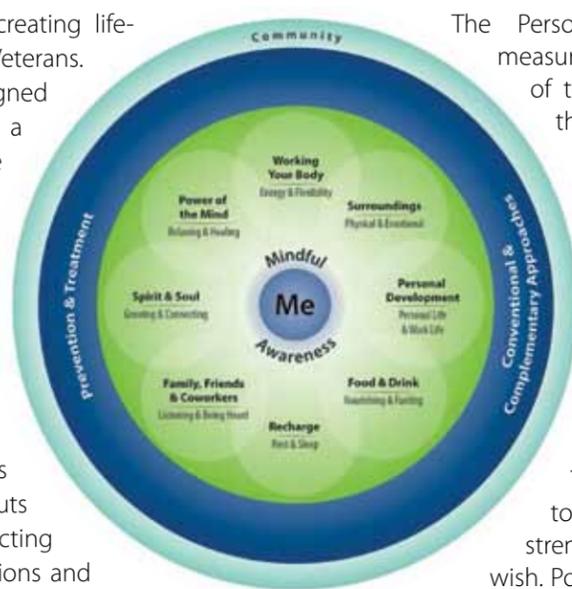
For PM&R services contact your primary care provider for a consultation. For more information on services provided by PM&R in Bonham, call Frank Bourgeois, Program Manager 903-583-6260.



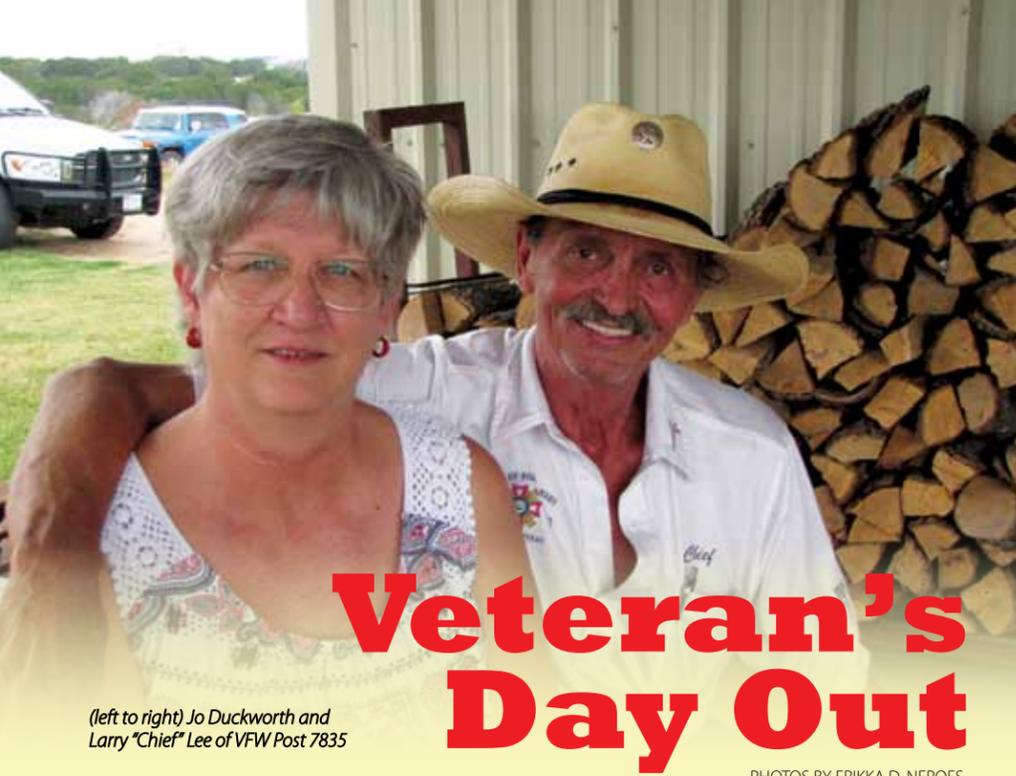
Polk Street, leading the way to patient centered care

The Polk Street VA Annex Clinic is creating life-changing partnerships with Veterans. Collaborating with their Patient Aligned Care Teams, Veterans develop a Personalized Health Plan to achieve individual optimal health and well-being.

A Personalized Health Plan focuses on the whole Veteran – not just their disease or condition. This proactive approach honors Veterans individually, concentrating on his or her ability to heal and inspire changes within themselves. Polk Street staff puts this into daily practice by connecting Veterans with their spoken values, visions and individualized purpose in life.



The Personalized Health Plan helps track measurable health outcomes. Veterans learn of the plan, share what is important to them and what their life goals are in all aspects: biological, psychological, sociological, cultural and spiritual. Staff focuses on the Veteran's achieved goals, move toward health outcome improvements, ultimately improving the Veteran's health and quality of life. For instance, a male Veteran may have a goal to dance with his granddaughter at her wedding. Treatment therapies can be added to his Personalized Health Plan to help strengthen his body to accomplish his wish. Polk Street is a Center of Excellence and leads VA in developing Personalized Health Plans.



Veteran's Day Out

(left to right) Jo Duckworth and Larry "Chief" Lee of VFW Post 7835

PHOTOS BY ERIKKA D. NEROES

A cloudy day might put a fishing trip on hold, but it wouldn't stop Jo Duckworth and Larry "Chief" Lee from hosting Veteran's Day Out for more than 100 Veterans. It's an event VFW Post 7835 in Granbury, TX has been having twice a year for nearly 18 years. Veterans were looking forward to going fishing, but appreciated visiting the VFW Post all the same.

"There is only one reason why we have these events," said Lee. "It's a way to show appreciation, our way of giving back to Veterans."

Lee and Duckworth are co-chairs for the post and with other volunteers they host the bi-annual event. While not all the Veterans who go on the trips are part of various inpatient programs, some are outpatients and go along to hang with their buddies. And when there's room, no one minds a bit. The more, the merrier.

"Recreation outings like these assist Veterans with restoring healthy leisure habits and reconnecting with the community," said Chris Merrell, Assistant Chief of Recreation Therapy. "When the therapy we provide creates an opportunity for Veterans to enhance their quality of life, then we know we're serving them effectively."

On this trip, Veterans enjoyed indoor and outdoor games. After lunch was served, they sang, danced and socialized. The day ended with a drawing in which everyone was a winner. Donations for the drawing included clothing items, small household goods, toiletries and books. All donations come from American Legion, Veterans of Foreign Wars and businesses in the community.

Like the good old days in grade school, taking a field trip with friends... It's a nostalgic memory some keep close to their hearts. But for these Veterans, it's more than just a memory. Thanks to dedicated service organizations, volunteers and staff, it's something they enjoy often.

All recreational activities are coordinated through Recreation Therapy Service. Anyone interested should call 214-857-1270.

Recreation Therapy staff facilitates recreational outings and activities for Veterans. (left to right) Back row: Kaitlyn Moore and Kim Canova-Romans; Front row: Clyde Deere, Raymond Cooper, Chris Merrell, Donna Gerron, Robert Hampton and Jimmy Kelley



(Left to Right) Army Veterans Belinda Guerra and Lonnie Giles



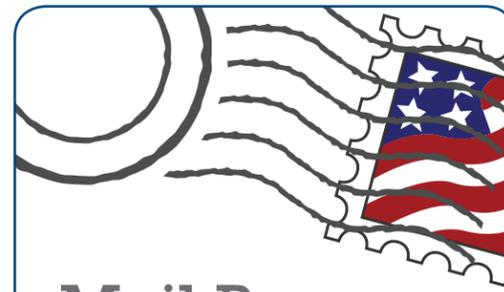
Army Veteran Tommy Neely



Army Veteran Hershel Hill



(Left to Right) Air Force Veteran Meartisa Robinson and Army and Air Force Veteran Roger Robinson



Mail Bag

"All of my visits have been very positive and I am impressed with how smoothly everything functions. Across the board and at every level of treatment, I am very comfortable and convinced that this facility has its act together. Thanks, and please keep up the good work."

Thomas Vahle, Navy Veteran

"I drive 85 miles one way because of the care I get in Bonham. The people I deal with are the best. Everyone is kind, courteous and really cares about me and my health."

George E. Smith, Air Force Veteran

"Debbie Chew, LVN worked expeditiously, efficiently and did an outstanding job. **Kaycee Polite** was very professional. They made my visit to Polk Street a great one."

Raynard Robinson, Army Veteran

"Danielle Young in Social Work took the time to follow up on a referral and she got it done correctly. She was especially courteous."

A.K. Babatu, Army Veteran



Honoring those who served

At VA, we honor Veterans every day. We asked some Veterans how they like to be honored for their service, and asked employees and stakeholders how they honor Veterans.

"I appreciate being honored for my service. I served in Germany, which was my first military experience after I was drafted into the service. I enjoyed interacting with the people of Germany. They remained very hopeful during the time of war, which was something to see!"

Herman H. Broadus, Army and Air Force Veteran

"I believe that all Veterans should be honored for their service due to their willingness to possibly sacrifice their lives for others to live in a great Nation that honors life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. The best way to honor Veterans is to provide health care benefits for health issues, particularly combat-related."

Leslie A. Hurt, Marine Corps Veteran

"During my time in service, I was able to experience great camaraderie. I met people who made sacrifices to serve our country. I am so proud that I was given the opportunity to work as a 646 helicopter mechanic. I was able to help protect those who helped protect our freedom."

David Farr, Marine Corps Veteran

"Remember to give recognition to the small people. I served in administrative duty and ensured that those serving our country were able to provide for their families."

Eugenia Anastasopolos, Army Veteran

"I honor Veterans by remembering the hardships they endured and I'm thankful for their selfless service to our country. I also participate in Veterans Day celebrations to show my support."

Thanh-Nhan Nguyen, MD, Ambulatory Care, Dallas VA Medical Center

"My grandfather was a WWII Veteran. I honor him with the utmost respect for his service to our country. I believe all Veterans are heroes and deserve honor and respect. In my position as a cook, I honor our resident heroes with three great meals a day and the best food and meal service available."

Zachary Taylor, Nutrition and Food, Sam Rayburn Memorial Veterans Center in Bonham

"Working as a patient advocate has brought me joy and humility to serve those who risked their lives for our freedom. I have enjoyed working for Veterans and their families during my 27 years of service and I render my best to ensure their needs are met. We all can honor Veterans by not allowing an opportunity to go by without saying, 'Thank you for your unselfish act of heroism and pride in our expression of democracy. God bless America and thank you for your service.'"

Karen Motin-Landry, Executive Office, Fort Worth Outpatient Clinic

"I have worked at the Tyler clinic for the last 10 years and have enjoyed every day working with the Vets, our heroes. It is an honor to work here. I greet Veterans with a smile, a pat on the back or even a hug at times and to let them know we are here for them."

Geneva Miller, LVN, Nursing, Tyler VA Primary Care Clinic

"I make a point of regularly recognizing Veterans at events, celebrations and church services."

Maurine Dickey, Dallas County Commissioner District 1



Our mail centers provide "First Class Service"

(left to right) Alvin Jimmerson III, Johnny Watts, Michael Wright, Alfred Wilhite, Ricardo Simpson, Randal Payne and Christopher Sims; not pictured: Raymond Mays, Gene Isbon and Ronald Meek.
PHOTO BY BRUCE MORRIS



The members of the VA North Texas Mail Center execute their postal mission with "First Class Service" and a commitment to excellence by serving more than 113,000 Veterans and over 4,700 employees. Although numerically small in comparison to other VA mail centers, this team of professionals manage to support 70 plus services, execute 146 mail stops daily, resulting in over 500,000 pieces of mail processed and generating \$721,000 in shipping costs annually.