Changing lives. One Veteran at a time.

VA North Texas served more than 123,000 Veterans in FY2016 with almost 1.5 million outpatient visits. It is the second most complex VA facility in the nation, and our world-renown clinicians and researchers drive the technical quality of our health care services and programs.

Faces Tell A Million Stories

EDITOR’S NOTE

They come from all corners of the United States and are of various ethnic groups, religions and political persuasions. Some were drafted, others volunteered out of patriotism and family tradition. Some just needed a job with a higher purpose than a small town can offer. They all took an oath, served and sacrificed in times of war and peace. They stood watch from the missile silos in South Dakota, the jungles of Vietnam, onboard a carrier in the Indian Ocean and in the unforgiving terrains of Korea, Iraq and Afghanistan. These heroes eventually take off a uniform, but never relinquish their title earned through blood, sweat and tears: Veteran.

It is said that every picture tells a story, and we at VA North Texas believe that every Veteran has a story worth sharing. This special edition of Pulse was inspired by the faces and experiences of the 133,000 Veterans who visit our facilities 1.5 million times per year. Our Veterans are our Heroes and this issue is but a mere snapshot of brave American’s who answered the call of service. Their faces, their stories, are what inspires our employees and those who call North Texas, home.

We hope you will enjoy our Faces of Service tribute to our patients.

Every day is Veteran’s Day at VA North Texas

Directors Message

Each day I have the honor of serving those who have given so much for our great country. To me, there is no greater profession than that of caring for those few who have borne the battle

As the VA North Texas interim director, and in my usual duties as the associate director, I see many Veterans in our hallways and clinics, daily. These Heroes—the true faces of service—have unique physical and mental needs requiring the very best comprehensive, coordinated, care, and we have the ability, desire and the duty to make these moments of care truly exceptional. Our Veterans have earned the right to enjoy the finest health care our Nation can offer them, and our debt to the 22 million living Veterans across our nation will never fully be repaid.

Here at VA North Texas, we see some 133,000 Veterans over 1.5 million times per year. Where other casual observers might just see scores of faces in a busy hallway, our nearly 6,000 employees see nothing but Heroes. They come from all branches of the military, young and old, battle tested from the bitter cold of Korea and the mountains of Afghanistan, to those that stood watch during the Cold War. Just as these Heroes lived by a mantra of service and core values, so do our employees. Our commitment to Integrity, Commitment, Advocacy, Respect and Excellence is unwavering as we focus on and pay tribute to the Veterans’ needs as inpatients, outpatients, employees and volunteers.

While Veterans Day pays tribute to all who have worn the uniform for our nation, we at VA North Texas realized that this honor requires much more than a single day can offer. Every day is Veterans Day at VA North Texas—it is today and always will be.

Thank you for your service,

Kendrick Brown
Interim Director
**FACES of SERVICE**

### Aloys Menke
**U.S. Navy**
**PIPEFITTER**
**KOREA**

I couldn’t get a job in Minnesota so I went into the Navy in 1952, like my brother. My mother wouldn’t sign for me to go at 17 as she’d lost a son during World War II, but my father did after a long talk. I was on the USS Toledo, a heavy cruiser out of Yokosuka, Japan, forward deployed during the Korean War. I took so many pictures during this time—over 3,000—whenever I had the chance. All five of my brothers were in the military and my daughter is a retired Command Sergeant Major who served 30 years in the Army National Guard.

### Clarese Roberts
**U.S. Marine Corps**
**U.S. Air Force**
**SUPPLY/DISASTER PREPAREDNESS**
**VIETNAM ERA/COLD WAR**

When I joined the Marines in 1969, things were a lot different. I had to leave the Corps in 1970 because I got pregnant. Back then, military bases didn’t have child care facilities. I joined the Air Force in 1973 and traveled the world before I closed out Carswell Air Force Base and retired in 1992. I’m a singer and the highlight of my singing career was when I got to sing the National Anthem at a Sacramento Kings game as part of the Beale Air Force Base choir.
Elijio Reyna  U.S. Army
INFANTRYMAN/VEHICLE OPERATOR
VIETNAM

I grew up in Fort Worth and was drafted into the Army in 1966. When I was serving with the 25th Infantry Division in Cu Chi, Vietnam, I became friends with a guy who I had known of throughout my childhood but never hung out with. We grew up on different sides of the track in Fort Worth, but he did become my best friend. He never made it back. He was killed by an incoming mortar round during our tour.

Christopher Watson  U.S. Army
INFANTRYMAN
OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM

On our very first mission outside the wire in Iraq we got hit. Our unit from Fort Lewis in Washington was field testing the use of motorized infantry known as a Stryker Brigade Combat Team. The concept was supposed to combine the best characteristics of the Army’s heavy and light forces. It did because of the soldiers who made it so. In March of 2007 I caught some shrapnel in my eye from a rocket attack, but I would never trade my experiences.
Cujo Gray  CANINE SERVICE ANIMAL  CANCER SURVIVOR

Ron Gray  U.S. Army  AIRBORNE INFANTRYMAN  COLD WAR

I am a member of the Cherokee Nation. I remember traveling extensively through Europe and training for a potential Soviet invasion during the Cold War. My service animal, Cujo, was diagnosed with cancer five years ago. Six years later he’s still around as my companion and I’m very happy for that.

Robert Scott Hartless  U.S. Air Force  FORWARD AIR CONTROLLER/MAINTENANCE OFFICER  VIETNAM/COLD WAR

I flew the O-1 Bird Dog for 400 combat missions as a Forward Air Controller in Vietnam. We flew day and night in slow-moving aircraft at low altitude performing reconnaissance and supporting embattled ground units. Later I transitioned to the B-52 and KC-135 before serving as a maintenance officer for the F-4 and A-10 before I retired after 28 years as a lieutenant colonel.
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<tr>
<th>Name</th>
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<tr>
<td>Claudette Luster</td>
<td>U.S. Army</td>
<td>Vietnam Era</td>
<td>I joined the Army because my parents didn’t think I’d amount to much. I’m small, but I’m a fighter. I was determined to show them that I could do it. I was trained as a combat medic, but since they weren’t letting a lot of women go to Vietnam, I worked in labor and delivery, stateside, during the Vietnam War. My service was meaningful and I’m very proud of it.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ray Johnson</td>
<td>U.S. Army</td>
<td>Vietnam</td>
<td>When I turned 18 I tried to avoid the Draft, but I ended up volunteering to join the Army and go to Vietnam. I flew as a door gunner on UH-1 helicopters out of Pleiku as fire support for the 1st Cavalry, 101st Airborne and 4th Infantry Divisions. When we could get all the soldiers we dropped off back on the helicopter after a mission, it was a good day. After all of these years, I wouldn’t change a thing.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Marc Cooper</td>
<td>U.S. Air Force</td>
<td>Global War on Terrorism</td>
<td>I was called up to active duty on three-year orders to help bury and honor North Texas Veterans and casualties from Iraq and Afghanistan. As part of the Naval Air Station Fort Worth Joint Reserve Base Honor Guard, I participated in some 5,000 military funerals. I still think about this time in my life every single day.</td>
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<td>Robert Harvey</td>
<td>U.S. Army</td>
<td>Vietnam</td>
<td>I was drafted in 1967. I had prior experience in the medical field so they made me a combat medic. In Vietnam, we saw so much jungle and snakes. I knew it was up to me to help my men. I had to save as many as I could.</td>
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Daniel Domeracki  
U.S. Marine Corps  
AIRCRAFT MAINTENANCE  
CHIEF WARRANT OFFICER  
VIETNAM

I did two tours in Vietnam. The people of that country were nice, but the enemy was not so nice. I remember flying C-117 military transport missions throughout Vietnam, Thailand and Japan during my 21 years in the Marine Corps. I vividly remember evacuating people from the Philippine Islands during a hurricane and a little girl walking right up to hug and thank me for rescuing her and her family.

Elroy Roberson  
U.S. Navy  
AIRCRAFT HANDLER  
COLD WAR  
VA EMPLOYEE

I joined the Navy because I wanted the experience of serving my country. I served on the USS New Orleans and the USS Tripoli from 1986 to 1989 and got to experience some many different cultures in Hong Kong, Thailand, Australia and the Philippines. After I left the Navy I was homeless for a while, struggling to work and get back on my feet. The VA saved me. I had PTSD and didn’t want the stigma of getting help. Because of the way VA helped me, I now work as a VA Peer Support Specialist helping other Veterans like me successfully make changes to achieve their best life.

Robert Caillet  
U.S. Army  
VEHICLE OPERATOR  
VIETNAM

I was drafted in 1966 and sent to Vietnam in 1967. Before I was drafted, I was newly married and working at the Goodyear in Akron, Ohio. My job in Vietnam was to drive stuff like ammunition, food and building supplies from Long Binh to various outposts in-country. I remember one time I was on a detail when I reached my hand into one of the bags I carried and got bit by two venomous scorpions. The medics told me I was lucky I didn’t die. After my time in Vietnam, I returned to Akron and got my old job back at Goodyear.

David Reynolds  
U.S. Marine Corps  
CREW-SERVED WEAPONS  
VIETNAM-ERA

I didn’t want to join the Marine Corps at first. I had dropped out of high school and was working with Job Corps when I finally decided to enlist. I operated the M40 recoilless rifle in Okinawa and was on the standby crew to evacuate people during the capture of Saigon in 1975.
**FACES of SERVICE**

**Yvonne Hicks**  
NURSE  
COLD WAR/  
GLOBAL WAR ON TERRORISM  
VA EMPLOYEE

We were like family during my 26 years in the Army. Everyone was so close. We worked together and played together to build camaraderie. I was originally a patient at VA as I dealt with PTSD. I knew after getting the help I needed, I wanted to give back to my fellow Veterans and help make a difference. This is why I choose to work at VA.

**Don Adams**  
PERSONNELIST  
U.S. Army  
KOREAN-ERA

I grew up in North Texas and was drafted into the Army in 1953. After basic training, I was asked to stay behind and train other new soldiers. Eventually I got to Fort Hood and was the company S1 clerk. I was lucky as I spent my entire time in the Service just 100 miles from my hometown.

**Veterans—our Heroes—are seemingly born out of the best and worst of humanity.**

Most run from publicity and seek to return to the normalcy of their daily lives as soon as they are no longer needed in uniform. Their faces carry the experiences and emotions of service. They have seen and done incredible acts of bravery, pushed past physical and psychological barriers, laughed, cried, gained, lost and faced nearly insurmountable fears. Their faces tell stories that do not come up in daily conversation. Faces tell the stories that shaped their lives as defenders of freedom, as human beings in times of peace and reality of war.
VA Health Care Near You

Dallas VA Medical Center 800-849-3597 or 214-742-8387
Bonham – Sam Rayburn Memorial Veterans Center 800-924-8387 or 903-583-2111

Outpatient Clinics
Bridgeport 940-627-7001
Dallas – Polk Street 214-372-8100
Denton 940-891-6350
Fort Worth 940-443-9672 or 817-730-0000
Granbury 817-326-3902
Greenville 903-450-1143
Plano 972-801-4200
Sherman 903-487-0477
Tyler Primary Care 855-375-6930 or 903-266-5900
Tyler Specialty Care 855-375-6930 or 903-590-3050

Vet Centers
Dallas County Vet Center 972-288-8030 or 972-288-8030
Dallas Vet Center 214-361-5896 or 877-927-8387
Fort Worth Vet Center 817-921-9095 or 817-921-9095
Tarrant County Vet Center 817-274-0981 or 817-274-0981

Telephone Care
Prescription Refills 888-364-5227 or www.myhealth.va.gov
Telecare 800-677-8289
Telenurse 888-252-9970

Outpatient Pharmacies
Dallas 214-857-0556
Bonham 903-583-6255
Fort Worth 817-882-6000
Tyler 903-583-6255
Spinal Cord Injury 214-857-1782

More VA Services
VA Benefits 800-827-1000
Health Care Benefits 877-222-8387
VA Health Resource Center 866-393-9132
Dallas Fisher House 214-857-4401 or 214-854-4400
Chaplain Service
Bonham 903-583-6280
Dallas 214-857-1070
Fort Worth 817-335-2202 (x23330)
Recreation Therapy
Bonham 903-583-6396
Dallas 214-857-1270
Fort Worth 817-730-0000 (x23327)
Social Work 214-857-0388 or 214-857-0367
Women’s Clinic
Dallas 214-857-4800
Fort Worth 817-730-0000 (x23126)
Voluntary Services
Bonham 903-583-6283
Dallas 214-857-1060
Fort Worth 817-730-0078
Comprehensive 214-857-4182
Homeless Center

Crisis Hotlines
Veterans Crisis Line 800-273-TALK (800-273-8255)
Women Veterans Hotline 855-VA-WOMEN (829-6636)
Combat Call Center 877-WAR-VETS (877-927-8387)
National Call Center for Homeless Veterans 877-424-3838

www.northtexas.va.gov

Our patients are our Heroes
Veterans serving Veterans

I’m free of hepatitis C
You can be, too
Tens of thousands of Veterans enrolled in VA care have been cured of hepatitis C.

Ask about hepatitis C testing and treatment. Learn more at www.hepatitis.va.gov