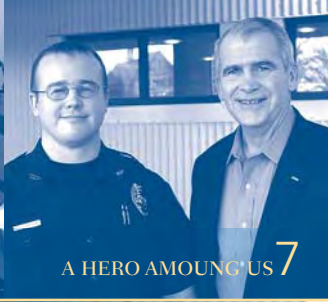




DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE



A HERO AMONG US 7



CHIEF OF THE YEAR

# Vision FOR Excellence



Secretary of Veterans Affairs  
James B. Peake visits  
Philadelphia VAMC

# Director's Message

Vision  
FOR  
Excellence



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Quality Management Officer

VISN 4's *Vision for Excellence* is published for the employees, volunteers, patients and friends of VA Healthcare - VISN 4. To submit articles, editorials, letters or story ideas for possible inclusion, please contact David Cowgill at 412-365-4052 or via email: david.cowgill@va.gov.

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DEAR FELLOW EMPLOYEES, VOLUNTEERS, VETERANS AND FRIENDS OF VISN 4,

VISN 4 continues to charge ahead this year to achieve excellence in all that we do to provide our veterans with the best care possible and to provide our employees with a great place to work and prosper.

Dr. James B. Peake, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, visited Philadelphia VAMC on February 27, 2008 to meet and discuss with leadership the future of VA and VISN 4. Dr. Peake also took time to visit with staff and veterans at Philadelphia VAMC.

In this issue, we have highlighted the astonishing results of the VISN 4 2007 Combined Federal Campaign (CFC) on pages 4-5, our most successful campaign in VISN 4 history! VISN 4 employees contributed more than \$709,285.33 to support eligible non-profit organizations that provide health and human service benefits throughout the world. This is a 41% increase of \$205,448.36 over what was collected throughout VISN 4 during the 2006 campaign.



Mr. Moreland presents a veteran at Lebanon VAMC with a card for Valentine's Day.

Access to care for veterans continues to be a top priority for VISN 4. Recent data shows that 99% of veterans are able to receive primary care appointments within 30 days of their desired date and 98% are able to receive specialty care appointments within 30 days. VISN 4 leadership is striving to ensure that 100% of veterans receive appointments within 30 days of their desired date.

The employees within VISN 4 continue to amaze me with their personal accomplishments and achievements. Turn to page 6 to read an inspiring story about a VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System Police Officer and veteran who is an amputee due to injuries sustained during his tour of duty in Iraq. Page 8 features the first ever VA Police Officer of the Year and an award recipient for the VA Under Secretary's Award for Outstanding Achievement in Health Services Research.

Thank you for taking an interest in VISN 4!

Sincerely,

MICHAEL E. MORELAND, FACHE  
NETWORK DIRECTOR, VISN 4



# Report Card

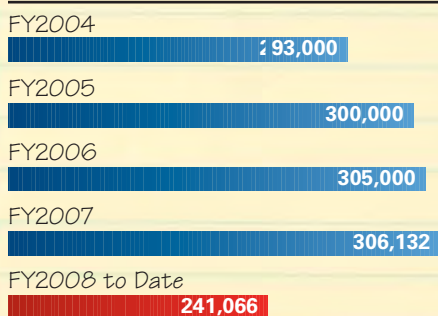
## OUTPATIENT STATISTICS

	Network wide for FY2007:	FY2008 Q1:
outpatient hospital visits	2,736,141	706,555
home and community-based visits	493,408	158,954

## INPATIENT STATISTICS

	Network wide for FY2007:	FY2008 Q1:
hospital admissions	25,881	6,514
nursing home and domiciliary admissions	5,952	1,314

## VISN 4 UNIQUE PATIENT GROWTH (ESTIMATED)

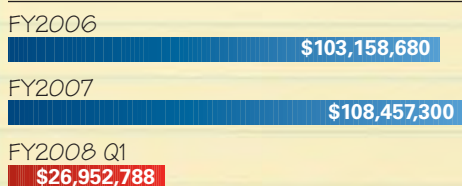


## FY08Q1-VETERAN SATISFACTION (INPATIENT SATISFACTION, OUTPATIENT SATISFACTION AND PROVIDER WAIT TIME)

NOTE: VISN 4 is above the national average

	National	VISN 4 (Overall)
Inpatient Overall Quality (Mean)	79.1	81.4
Outpatient Overall Quality (Mean)	78	82.4
Provider Wait Time (Mean)	75.8	79.2

## MEDICAL CARE COLLECTION FUND COLLECTIONS THRU Q4:



\* All data for statistical information was collected in March 2008

## Forsha appointed Quality Management Officer for VA Healthcare-VISN 4



Barbara Forsha, MSN, RN, ET

BARBARA FORSHA, MSN, RN, ET, has been appointed to serve as the Quality Management Officer for VA Healthcare-VISN 4 by the VISN 4 Director, Michael Moreland.

As the VISN 4 Quality Management Officer, Ms. Forsha is responsible for the oversight of all quality care issues within VISN 4.

Prior to this appointment, Ms. Forsha served as the Quality Manager for VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System since 2006, where she was responsible for the overall operations of the Quality

and Patient Safety Office. Ms. Forsha began her career with VA in 1998 as the Nurse Manager for VAPHS Primary Care Service Line comprised of three outpatient clinics and the Emergency Department and in 2001 she became the Lead Patient Safety Manager responsible for implementation of the VAPHS patient safety program.

Ms. Forsha received her bachelor's degree in nursing from LaRoche College and she received her master's degree in nursing as a Critical Care Clinical Nurse Specialist at the University of Pittsburgh. Ms. Forsha also completed the Enterostomal Therapy program at Albany Medical Center. ★

## Five Years of VA Health Care for Combat Veterans

MILITARY VETERANS who served in combat since Nov. 11, 1998, including veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan, are now eligible for five years of free medical care for most conditions from the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). This measure increases a two-year limit that had been in effect nearly a decade.

"By their service and their sacrifice, America's newest combat veterans have earned this special eligibility period for VA's world-class health care," said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Dr. James B. Peake.

Combat veterans who were discharged between Nov. 11, 1998, and Jan. 16, 2003, and who never took advantage of VA's health care system, have until Jan. 27, 2011, to qualify for free VA health care.

The five-year window is also open to activated Reservists and members of the National Guard, if they served in a theater of combat operations after Nov. 11, 1998, and were discharged under other than dishonorable conditions. Contact your local VA for more information. ★

# VISN 4 contributes \$709,285.33 to charity

THE VISN 4 2007 COMBINED FEDERAL CAMPAIGN (CFC) was the most successful in VISN 4 history! 3,848 VISN 4 staff members (34%) contributed more than \$709,285.33 to support eligible non-profit organizations that provide health and human service benefits throughout the world. This is a 41% increase of \$205,448.36 over what was collected throughout VISN 4 during the 2006 campaign. This year there were 94 Golden Eagle Club members (donation of \$1,000 or more) and 57 Eagle Club members (donation of \$780-\$999).

Most employees chose to allocate their pledge to a charity close to their hearts. Others decided to leave their pledge undesignated; therefore, giving a bit of their support to each and every charity chosen by their co-workers. Even more employees who may not have pledged still participated in CFC by partaking in fundraisers, such as buying a hoagie or sending someone to “jail”, which raised almost \$37,000 for contribution. ★



Margie Franklin, Philadelphia VAMC employee, performs in a talent show for a CFC fundraiser.



Marion Toole, Philadelphia VAMC employee, does her best Tina Turner impersonation.

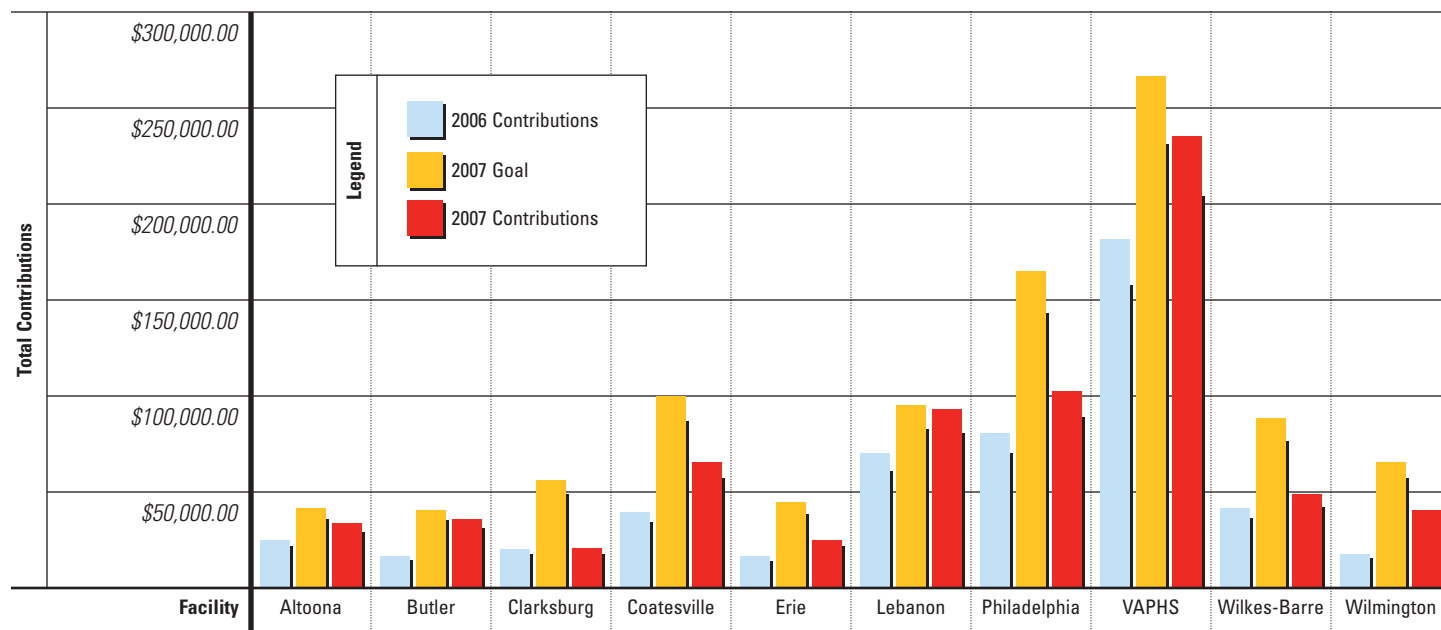
## 2007 Campaign Achievements | Highlights:

- **\$709,285.33 collected**
- **\$205,448.36 more money raised than in 2006 campaign (41% increase)**
- **3,848 pledges**
- **34% participation**
- **94 Golden Eagle Club members (donation of \$1,000 or more)**
- **57 Eagle Club members (donation of \$780-\$999)**
- **4 facilities exceeded 85% of their goal**
- **8 facilities exceeded 30% participation**
- **Almost \$37,000 raised through fundraising efforts!**

## CFC Results Ranked by Per Capita (average dollar amount collected per employee)

Facility	2007 Contributions	2007 Goal	Percentage of Goal (%)	Per Capita (\$ Collected/ Employees)	2006 Contributions	Increase from 2006 (%)	Increase from 2006 (\$)
Lebanon	\$93,150.20	\$95,874.00	97%	\$84.53	\$72,917.67	28%	\$20,332.53
VAPHS	\$231,979.19	\$264,132.00	88%	\$76.41	\$178,282.94	30%	\$53,696.25
Altoona	\$38,249.92	\$44,457.00	86%	\$74.85	\$25,493	50%	\$12,756.82
Butler	\$37,480.40	\$44,022.00	85%	\$74.07	\$18,000	108%	\$19,480.40
Coatesville	\$67,506.89	\$100,920.00	67%	\$58.20	\$33,323	103%	\$34,183.89
Wilmington	\$43,417.00	\$68,382.00	64%	\$55.24	\$17,568.10	147%	\$25,848.90
Wilkes-Barre	\$49,453.04	\$88,740.00	56%	\$48.48	\$43,578.06	14%	\$5,874.98
Philadelphia	\$101,981.45	\$187,746.00	54%	\$47.26	\$79,321.74	29%	\$22,659.71
Erie	\$23,860.60	\$47,415.00	50%	\$43.78	\$15,432	55%	\$8,428.60
Clarksburg	\$22,206.64	\$58,725.00	38%	\$32.90	\$20,020.36	11%	\$2,186.28
<b>VISN 4 Total</b>	<b>\$709,285.33</b>	<b>\$1,000,413.00</b>	<b>71%</b>	<b>\$61.68</b>	<b>\$503,836.87</b>	<b>41%</b>	<b>\$205,448.36</b>

## 2007 VISN 4 Combined Federal Campaign Results



Employees of Wilmington VAMC are sent to Jail and await bail during a CFC fundraiser.

## CFC Results Ranked by Total Amount Collected (most to least)

Facility	2007 Total Contributions	2007 Number of Pledges	(\$ ) from Pledges	(\$ ) from Fundraisers	Eagle Club Members (Donation of \$780 to \$999)	Golden Eagle Club Members (Donation of \$1,000 or more)
VAPHS	\$231,979.19	1,018	\$221,443.19	\$10,536	21	45
Philadelphia	\$101,981.45	531	\$99,647.69	\$2,333.76	8	15
Lebanon	\$93,150.20	490	\$84,502.82	\$8,647.38	3	9
Coatesville	\$67,506.89	424	\$66,257.04	\$1,249.85	2	7
Wilkes-Barre	\$49,453.04	371	\$40,903.04	\$8,550.00	6	4
Wilmington	\$43,417.00	239	\$42,342.00	\$1,075.00	12	5
Altoona	\$38,249.92	228	\$35,334.50	\$2,915.42	0	3
Butler	\$37,480.40	223	\$36,791.00	\$689.40	2	3
Erie	\$23,860.60	172	\$23,860.60	0	1	2
Clarksburg	\$22,206.64	152	\$21,449.00	\$757.64	2	1
<b>VISN 4 Total</b>	<b>\$709,285.33</b>	<b>3,848</b>	<b>\$672,530.88</b>	<b>\$36,754.45</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>94</b>

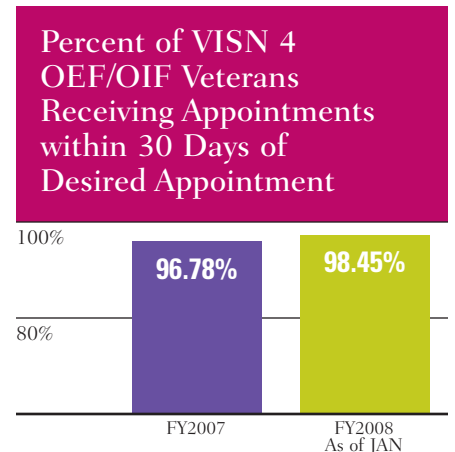
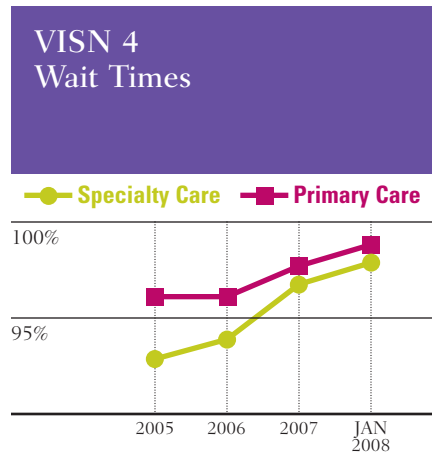
# Access to Care – A Top Priority for VISN 4

ASSURING THAT ALL VETERANS have access to care continues to be a top priority for VISN 4. In addition to maintaining 46 Community-Based Outpatient Clinics, VISN 4 is in the process of opening several additional CBOCs across the network in an effort to assure that every veteran has convenient access to the services we provide. VISN 4 has also hired more staff for our special-need areas to include patient advocates, who are specifically geared to reach out to OEF/OIF veterans, and more resources have also been expended to provide timely access to our mental health services. VISN 4 has allocated additional equipment and resources geared toward meeting the needs of women veterans as well.

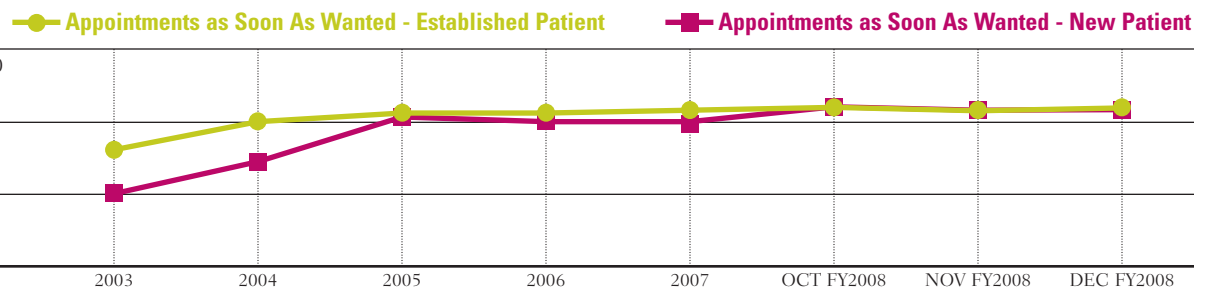
Access to care has been greatly improved by the addition of several non-institutional care programs that allow veterans to remain in the comfort of their homes to include Home-Based Primary Care, Adult Day Health Care, Home Hospice and our Coordination Home Telehealth program which has nearly 1500 veterans enrolled. As of November, each site within VISN 4 has at least six of the available eight non-institutional care programs available.

VISN 4 has multiple performance measures to monitor access to care. The most recent data shows that 99% of veterans are able to receive primary care appointments within 30 days of their desired date and 98% are able to receive specialty care appointments within 30 days. Our veteran satisfaction scores for VISN 4 exceed national benchmarks and in December 2007, 93% of our new and established patients reported getting an appointment as soon as they wanted it. In a special initiative entitled No Veteran Left Behind, geared toward new primary care appointments, VISN 4 increased from a score of 78% one year ago to a score of 94% as of December.

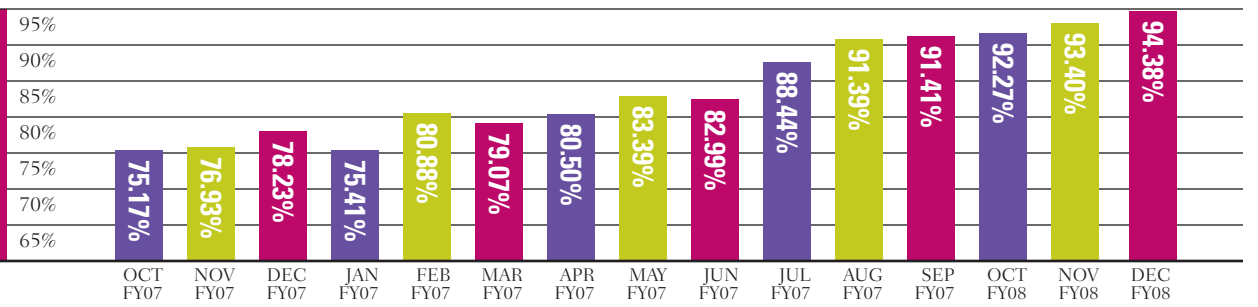
Presently, the biggest challenge for VISN 4 is No Shows (veterans not showing up for appointments) with rates as high as 25% in some departments. No Shows are a concern because veterans are not receiving the care they need and these opportunities could have been used for another veteran's care. The VISN has several initiatives to assist in reducing this issue to include reminder phone calls to veterans. But we need your help! If you find that you are unable to make a scheduled appointment, please call so that we can utilize the appointment for your fellow veterans.



### VISN 4 SHEP (Survey of Health Experiences of Patients)



### VISN 4 No Veteran Left Behind—New Primary Care Wait Times



# A Hero Among Us



VAPHS' Officer Luke Cassidy

IN SEPTEMBER 2004 U.S. Marine Sergeant Luke Cassidy was driving a Humvee in the rear of a convoy in Ramadi, Iraq. An improvised explosive device (IED) detonated underneath the front driver's side wheel destroying the front left axel of the vehicle. Instantly Sgt. Cassidy's legs were broken and his right big toe was amputated. After a brief struggle to keep the vehicle on the road, Sgt. Cassidy crashed into a ravine. He was attempting to free himself when another soldier helped pull him from the driver's side window.

Sgt. Cassidy was driven to Camp Ramadi where he began the evacuation process to Landstuhl, Germany and from there he was transported to Bethesda Naval Medical Hospital in Maryland for treatment. The entire evacuation process took about five days.

After ten surgeries Sgt. Cassidy was faced with the decision of amputation. The doctors told him that if they could save his left leg, he would never have full mobility or be able to run again. It was at this time a Vietnam Marine veteran paid Sgt. Cassidy a visit and told the young sergeant about how active his life was and about his job as an electrician. Then the Vietnam Marine veteran proceeded to share that he had been a below the knee amputee for 30 years. Sgt. Cassidy knew right then and there that he would opt for amputation.

Following the amputation Sgt. Cassidy was transferred to Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington, D.C. where he began the intensive rehabilitation process. He walked for the first time in November 2004 and was running by January 2005. Sgt. Cassidy was able to pass the Marine Corps physical fitness test in March 2005 and made the decision to retire from the Marine Corps Reserve later that year.

Sgt. Cassidy had previously spent six years as a patrolman with the Fairfax County Police Department while serving in the Marine Corps Reserve and missed the career challenge of police work very much. He made the decision to stay with his civilian career of law enforcement and was hired as a civilian police officer in Minneapolis, Minn. by the Department of the Air Force, which sent him to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Law Enforcement Training Center in North Little Rock, Arkansas. While attending the Academy, Sgt. Cassidy learned of the unique nature of the VA police and liked the mission. He began serving VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System as a police officer in September 2007, as the first VA police officer in the country who is an amputee. ★



VAPHS Police Officer Luke Cassidy, the first VA police officer in the country who is an amputee, being interviewed by Oliver North for a FOX News Special entitled "War Stories Iraq: Five Years in the Fight for Freedom", which aired March 23.



U.S. Marine Sergeant Luke Cassidy was driving this Humvee when an improvised explosive device (IED) detonated underneath the front driver's side wheel destroying the front left axel of the vehicle.

## VA Pittsburgh Health Care System's "Jack" Crawford is Chief of Police of the Year

JOHN "JACK" CRAWFORD, CHIEF OF POLICE for VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System, was presented with the first annual award for Chief of Police of the Year by VA Central Office, the Office of Security and Law Enforcement. The award was presented to Chief Crawford during the first annual VA Police Awards Banquet at the VA Chief of Police Training Conference in San Antonio, Texas, on March 5, 2008. VAPHS Director Mrs. Terry Gerigk Wolf attended the awards banquet to participate in the presentation of the Chief of the Year Award to Chief Crawford.

Chief Crawford was nominated based on the outstanding ratings received by VAPHS Police Service during the last two consecutive program inspections conducted by VACO, Office of Security and Law Enforcement. In addition, Chief Crawford's dedication, commitment and innovation at VADHS and within the community



## Dr. Asch Receives Award for Outstanding Achievement in Health Services Research



David A. Asch, MD, MBA, Co-Director of the Center for Health Equity Research and Promotion (CHERP), received the VA Under Secretary's Award for Outstanding Achievement in Health Services Research at the 2008 VA Health Services Research and Development Service's

(HSR&D) Annual Meeting in Baltimore, MD. Joel Kupersmith, MD, VA Chief Research and Development Officer, awarded Dr. Asch with the VA HSR&D's highest research honor during a luncheon presentation February 21.

Asch was recognized as a VA researcher whose work has led to major improvements in the quality of veterans' health care to include key contributions to the future of HSR&D through excellence in training and mentorship and enhancement of the visibility and reputation of VA research through national leadership. Dr. Asch's research aims to understand how physicians and patients behave and make medical choices in clinical, financial and ethically-charged settings. Dr. Asch practices internal medicine at the Philadelphia VAMC, directs the University of Pennsylvania's Leonard David Institute of Health Economics, teaches health policy at the Wharton School and is a Professor of Medicine in the Division of General Internal Medicine at the School of Medicine. ★

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