

# Caring for Veterans of all Generations



**VA**  
HEALTH  
CARE | Defining  
**EXCELLENCE**  
in the 21st Century

## James E. Van Zandt VA Medical Center

Altoona, Pennsylvania  
Annual Report 2011

## I CARE: Values We All Share

As part of the Department of Veterans Affairs, Veterans Health Administration and the Veterans Integrated Service Network (VISN) 4, the James E. Van Zandt VA Medical Center shares a set of values, which were reaffirmed in Fiscal Year 2011 (FY11) by the I CARE theme:



**I**ntegrity: Act with high moral principle. Adhere to the highest professional standards. Maintain the trust and confidence of all with whom I engage.

**C**ommitment: Work diligently to serve Veterans and other beneficiaries. Be driven by an earnest belief in VA's mission. Fulfill my individual responsibilities and organizational responsibilities.

**A**dvocacy: Be truly Veteran-centric by identifying, fully considering, and appropriately advancing the interests of Veterans and other beneficiaries.

**R**espect: Treat all those I serve and with whom I work with dignity and respect. Show respect to earn it.

**E**xcellence: Strive for the highest quality and continuous improvement. Be thoughtful and decisive in leadership, accountable for my actions, willing to admit mistakes, and rigorous in correcting them.

## FY11 Leadership Team



Michael E. Moreland  
FACHE  
Network Director



Tony L. Bennett,  
FACHE  
Director



Charles T. Becker,  
MBA, CPA, CGFM  
Associate Director



Santha Kurian, MD  
Chief of Staff



Joan M. Perove  
Associate Director  
for Patient/Nursing  
Services

# Transformational Changes to VA Health Care

VA health care has undergone significant changes in the last several years, driven by the goal to be patient-centered. A patient-centered approach to health care is one where the health care team of providers, nurses, and all supporting staff create a partnership with the Veteran and his/her family members to focus on the whole person rather than on a condition or disease.

This approach encompasses many new avenues for providing health care including Patient Aligned Care Teams (PACT), new and innovative methods of delivering health care such as telehealth, health promotion and disease prevention initiatives, and the My HealtheVet program.

Here are some of the highlights of our efforts to transform health care for Veterans:

## PACT

- PACT teamlets were established in all primary care clinics.
- All primary care staff were educated on PACT principles and practices.
- Three of our teamlets were recognized as top performers in the Nation.

## Telehealth

- Expansion of existing telehealth clinics to also include Nutrition, Behavioral Health, Dermatology, Nursing Education, and Homeless Clinics.
- Aligned home telehealth Registered Nurse Care Coordinators with PACT.

## Health Promotion & Disease Prevention

- Employees were trained in the TEACH for Success Course and the Motivational Interviewing Course. This course offers new techniques to encourage Veterans to live a healthy lifestyle and solicit the Veteran's commitment to healthier living.
- Nine Healthy Living messages were communicated via multiple methods including, flyers, social media, and outreach events.

## My HealtheVet

- Enrolled and In-Person-Authenticated 722 new Veterans in My HealtheVet.
- All members of PACT teams and many specialty clinics were trained on Secure Messaging.



# Construction/Equipment



The medical center's design and construction budget for Fiscal Year 2011 (FY11) was over \$10 million. This budget was used to enhance and improve the medical center and grounds for the benefit of all of our Veterans, employees, and other stakeholders.



Among the myriad of improvements that were made, two projects stand out as among the most significant improvements for Veterans' health care, and for the future of the medical center.

**Expansion of Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation (PM&R) Service** into a new addition. Phase 1A of this expansion was near completion in FY11. The new building offers 8,500 square feet of new space for patient care. The PM&R service will use this space to treat an ever growing number of Veterans who require physical, occupational, speech, and other forms of therapy. This \$3.6 million building will be

The 8,500 square foot addition provides a bright new space and all new equipment for Veterans who receive supplemented in Fiscal Year 2012 by Phase 1B, which will offer new space for the growing prosthetics section and administrative offices.

**Completed Renovation of Community Living Center (CLC)** on the fifth floor. This project is part of a cultural transformation initiative for residents in our CLC to experience a more home-like environment. Close to \$1.7 million was invested in converting the fifth floor, which was designed for use as a hospital ward in 1950, to a comfortable living space for Veterans who are residents of our CLC for short or long term stays. The warmth of the new building, combined with some of the newest in technology, helps Veterans and staff to achieve the desired outcome of a safe and comfortable place to live.

The sixth floor of the medical center will undergo a similar transformation in Fiscal Year 2012

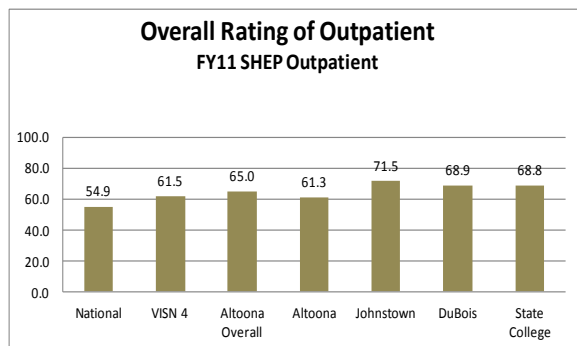
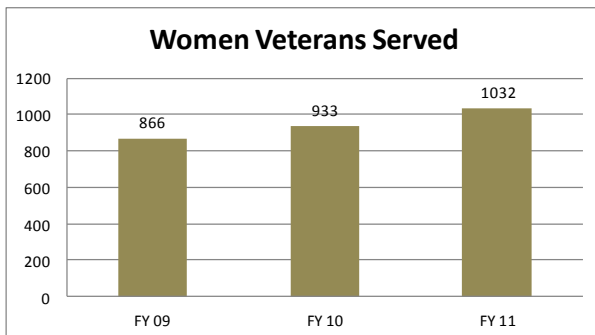
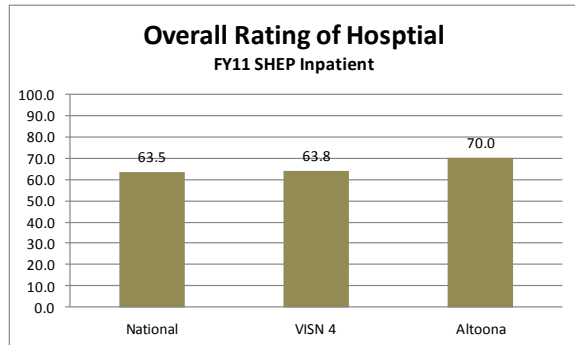
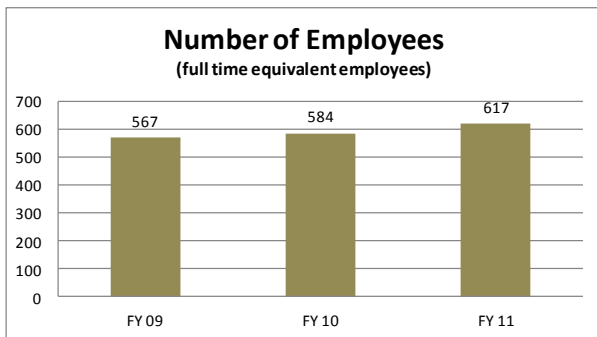
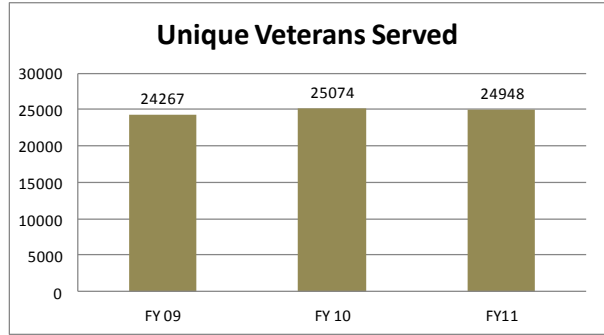
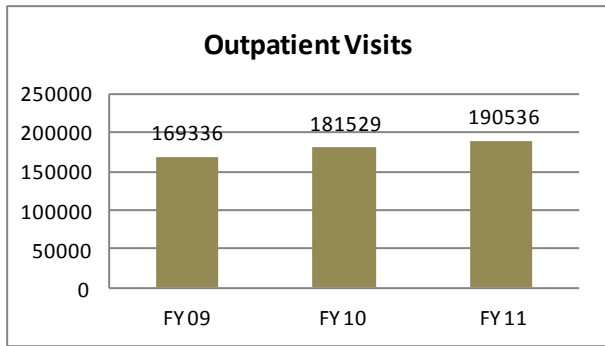
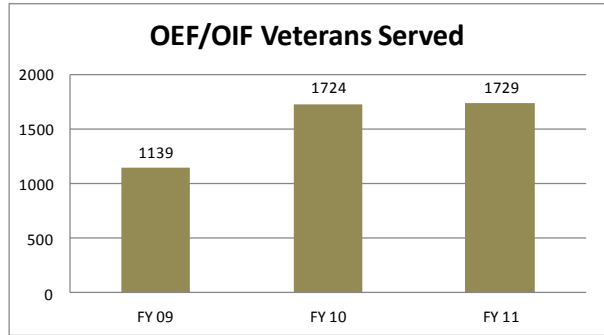
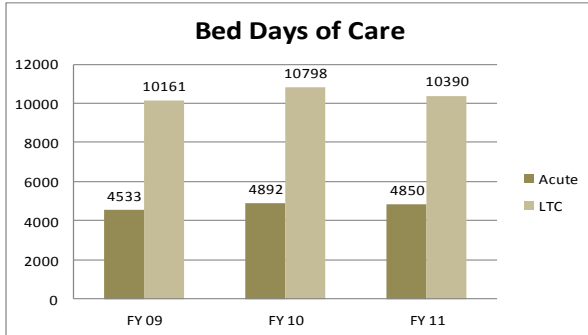


CLC Nurse Manager, Nicole Bukosky, RN, shows Network Director, Michael Moreland a new patient lift system installed in the renovated CLC.



Two new coach class shuttle buses were purchased to make Veterans' trips to and from the VA Pittsburgh Health Care System comfortable and convenient. We offer two round-trips per day for Veterans.

# By the Numbers



# Recognition, Certifications, and Awards

The Veterans, staff, and volunteers at our medical center are high achievers. The recognition noted on these pages is just a small portion of the many accolades and achievements for FY11.

In FY11, we were notified that The Joint Commission recognized our medical center among only twenty VA medical centers nationwide as a "Top Performer." We were noted for the pneumonia accountability measures for the year 2010. We also successfully passed our three-year survey by The Joint Commission.



ED Nurse, Tammy Swope, illustrates hanging an antibiotic IV for fellow-employee, Kelly Musselman. This process is part of the best practice for The Joint Commission pneumonia measures which helped us to achieve the status of "Top Performer."



Social work staff who participated in the CARF survey and achieved a three year CARF accreditation. Bottom, L to R: Lori Mayhue, John Grove, Paula Grassi, Top, L to R: Bill Pounds, Deborah Zeiders, Ginny Vayda, Susan Stiffler, Tom Pipak.

Three programs underwent a vigorous survey by the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF) in FY11, which resulted in a full three-year accreditation from this agency, which evaluates and accredits quality behavioral health programs. The programs that achieved this accreditation were Job Support, Job Development, and Employee Development programs for homeless Veterans.

Four Veterans, Kevin Albright, Gib Gutshall, Bill Lightner, and Randy Moyer, represented us at the National Veterans Wheelchair Games in Pittsburgh and



Volunteer, Bill Lightner, displays the two silver and one bronze medals he won in the National Veteran Wheelchair Games. Other Veterans representing our medical center included: Gib Gutshall two Gold, one Silver, and one Bronze; Kevin Albright won three Bronze; and Randy Moyer won one Bronze, for a total of eleven medals.

brought home a total of eleven medals. Several staff and volunteers assisted with the games.

Volunteer, Sam Quay, was recognized for 7,500 hours of volunteer service and Virginia Greiner achieved 23,272 hours of volunteer service.



Volunteer, Sam Quay, receives recognition from medical center Director, Tony L. Bennett, and Volunteer, Virginia Greiner, is given her award by Public Affairs, Officer, Andrea Young.





# Recognition, Certifications, and Awards

Our Green Environmental Management Services (GEMS) program was honored with a “Partner Recognition” Award by Practice Greenhealth, a national organization for health care facilities committed to environmentally responsible operations. The award is given each year to honor outstanding environmental achievements in health care sector. An article about the program, written by the medical center’s public affairs officer, was printed in *Vanguard*, the national publication for VA employees and stakeholders.



GEMS Coordinator, Tim Blackburn, releases minnows into the retaining pond which receives storm-water run-off from the medical center parking lot and grounds. This project is part of the Chesapeake Bay Preservation movement and prevents water from entering the Chesapeake Bay waterways.



Recipients of the Secretary’s Award for Nursing were Margaret McLucas, RN and Joy Sparks, LPN. Both work in the Specialty Clinic. Joan Perove, RN, Associate Director for Patient Care Services, center.

During National Nurses’ Week, the **Secretary’s Award for Nursing** were given to Joy Sparks, LPN and Margaret McLucas, RN.

We were given the Seven Seals Award by the Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR). Police Chief, Paul Blanchard, was presented an



Charles T. Becker, Associate Director, James E. Van Zandt VA Medical Center, Martin Kuhar, ESGR, VA Police Chief Paul Blanchard.

individual award, the Patriot Award, by the ESGR for supporting his staff in the VA Police Service who serve in the National Guard and Reserves.

Three of the PACT teamlets were recognized as Top Performers nationwide. The three teamlets were led by Dr. Tudor Trifan, Dr. Hailemichael Ghebre, and Physician Assistant, Jennifer Geishouser.



Women Veterans Program Manager, Denice Duman, RN, (left) received the Veterans Community Recognition Award for Cambria County from the Veterans Leadership Program.



Members of the PACT teamlets recognized as Top Performers nationwide were: front row: Melissa Bassler, Laura Vasbinder, Diane Brandt, Candy Pelepesky, Dr. Hailemichael Ghebre, Laura Litzinger, Lisa Gingerich-Shellenberger, Ella Grace Davis, Bethany Farabaugh Back row: Marcy Hoffman, Jennifer Geishouser, P.A., Dianne Jacobs, Dr. Tudor Trifan, Eugene Stewart, Stephen Ford.

## Other Achievements

**Health Administration Service** improved Non-VA Care Coordination to create a more Veteran-centered environment, reduce operational costs, and improve efficiency and effectiveness. Improvements were made to monitor beneficiary travel, and to assure that Veterans are pre-registered for appointments. The Revenue Section began to transition patient billing and collections to the North East Consolidated Patient Accounts Center in Lebanon.

**Human Resources** reports that the All Employee Survey response rate was met, and we had an improvement in the areas of: Promotion Opportunity, Job Control, and Psychological Safety from 2010 to 2011. The Personal Identification Verification (PIV) badge system was implemented and the majority of staff were processed in just five months.

**Nutrition and Food Service** noted all nutrition care to the Community Based Outpatient Clinics (CBOCs) is provided via the use of Clinical Video Telehealth (CVT). MOVE!, the national weight management program for Veterans, provided outreach to Veterans through participation and education displays at several events, including: Women's Heart Health program, Public Safety Health Fair, VA2K Walk and Roll, Annual Health Fair, and Stand Down for Homeless Veterans.

**Behavioral Health** expanded the neuro-psychological testing program and initiated a consult system for neuro-psychological and psychological testing. A psychologist is now serving as neuro-psychological liaison to local universities to ascertain the need for academic classroom accommodations for Veterans. Tele-mental health services to CBOCs have increased.

**Voluntary Services** recruited 121 volunteers in FY11, 45 more than in 2010. There was also an increase of 1,066 total volunteer hours and an increase of \$182,337.50 in total donations to the medical center (monetary, activities, and items donated). We offered five blood drives at the medical center during FY11. The volunteer driver recruitment, training, and orientation process was streamlined, which resulted in new drivers being cleared to drive in less than a month.

**Social Work Service** reports that the program for Homeless Veterans assisted the Houtzdale State Correctional Institution with discharge planning for incarcerated Veterans. A partnership with Blair County Community Action helps us to identify homeless female Veterans, and a partnership with area state parks to identify homeless Veterans. Staff distributed winter back packs to Veteran Affairs offices in the 14 county area. Housing and Urban Development/Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (HUD/VASH) vouchers reached 83% utilization in FY11, assisting many Veterans to secure housing.

**The Caregiver Support Program** currently has 43 caregivers enrolled in the Family Caregiver Program. We are also providing case management and support to another 19 caregivers enrolled in the General Caregiver program which provides support to Caregivers of Veterans of all eras. To date, since the program started on May 9, 2012, there have been 119 caregivers who have been reached by the Caregiver Support Coordinator. Three monthly caregiver support groups are offered to help meet the emotional needs of the caregivers of our Veterans

**The OEF/OIF/OND program** established a Post Deployment Clinic for newly enrolled OEF/OIF/OND Veterans. Staff work closely with the Student Veterans Association at Wyo-tech and participate in all enrollment days at the school. Staff coordinated a successful Welcome Home Event at the Altoona Curve baseball game, attended by Veterans, families, and friends. A collaboration with the Wounded Warrior Program Representative was established. In FY11, the staff made 2,247 patient contacts, provided case management to 151 seriously injured Veterans, and completed 157 poly-trauma exams and follow-up.

**Public Affairs** garnered 26 positive media stories about our medical center and programs. An article about our GEMS program was published in *Vanguard*, our website was improved, and we launched a FaceBook page. Sixty outreach events promoted VA programs. A publication was created to educate all staff on performance measures. The Combined Federal Campaign exceeded its goal by \$6,000,



## Other Achievements

raising \$56,000 from pledges, donations, and fundraisers.

**Quality Management** reports that the Systems Redesign initiative was involved in several projects in FY11 (some continuing in Fiscal Year 2012). These include: PACT Collaborative, VISN 4 Decrease Missed Opportunities and Spread Advanced Clinic Access (ACA) and Systems Redesign Principles, VHA Head & Neck Cancer Care Collaborative (Altoona & Pittsburgh Team), and Clinic Profile Process Team. Quality Management staff coordinated the successful Joint Commission, CARF, and the Long Term Care Institute surveys.

**Women Veterans** program expanded with two additional providers of gynecology services, a clinical pharmacist LDL clinic for women, and nine providers offering comprehensive women's health, including at least one in each CBOC.

The **EEO/Diversity** Committee supported special emphasis program managers who hosted a variety of awareness activities. The medical center hosted an intern through the Hispanic American Colleges and Universities, and in FY11, our employee population included 2% people with disabilities.

**Chaplain Service** offered a community-wide training for spiritual leaders in the community to educate them on the specific needs and characteristics of returning service members.

**Geriatrics & Extended Care Service** created a new Home Based Primary Care (HBPC) team in DuBois to serve Veterans in our northern counties.

**Education Service** offered 28 full-day sessions of Prevention & Management of Disruptive Behaviors and trained 475 staff members.

**Fiscal Service** offered training for all fund control point officials and timekeepers, and a formal purchase card training for all purchase card users and approving officials.

**Informatics Section** implemented the Dragon Dictate software program and supported the Dubois HBPC expansion.

**Logistics** was reorganized as a section under the Associate Director's Service to support the acquisition and materiel management needs of the medical center.

**Occupational Medicine and Care Coordination Service** (formerly C&P) was recognized by VISN 4 as the facility with the greatest growth of Compensation & Pension exams in the past three years. We were the top performer in the VISN in quality and timeliness.

**Pathology and Laboratory Medicine Service** increased workload by 16 percent from Fiscal Year 2010. They created a collaboration with the Behavioral Health Service to improve management of drug screenings for Veterans enrolled in the Suboxone program.

**Pharmacy Service** introduced automatic dispensing machines in the CBOCs and began offering clinical pharmacy services through PACT.

**Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation Service** increased workload by 12% from FY10 to FY11 and improved wait times with scores above 96% for both new and established Veterans.

**Police Service** replaced the closed caption television and duress systems to enhance safety and security and was an integral part of the issuance of PIV cards.

**Surgery Service** initiated specialty audiology, optometry, and podiatry services in all the CBOCs.

**Health Information Management Service (HIMS)** met or exceeded all program requirement for HIMS, Privacy, and Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), and our scanning/indexing of non-VA medical records continues to be identified as a best practice by external reviewers.

**Radiology Service** achieved a drop in no-show rate from 15 percent to less than 5 percent.

# Events and Ceremonies



A former POW examines a traveling display that was featured as part of the POW/MIA recognition ceremony. The display listed the names of Vietnam soldiers from the region who were listed as Missing in Action.



Staff, Veterans, family members, and volunteers participated in the national 2K Walk and Roll event on June 2 on the grounds of the medical center in Altoona. Registration for the event included an item donated to Homeless Veterans.



In honor of Veterans Day 2010, an anonymous donor (also a Veteran) donated a Penn State Football Day for 45 Veterans associated with the medical center. The day included a tail gate party at the Bryce Jordan Center with visits from the many Penn State Nittany Lion sports teams, the Penn State Blue Band and the Nittany Lion mascot. The Veterans were given premium seating at Beaver Stadium to watch the Nittany Lion football team celebrate the 400th victory for the legendary football coach, the late Joe Paterno.



National Salute to Veteran Veterans features visits to our residents and Veterans by local newscasters.



More than 100 children participated in the annual "Take Your Daughters and Sons to Work Day." Children and grandchildren of employees learned about VA careers and programs.

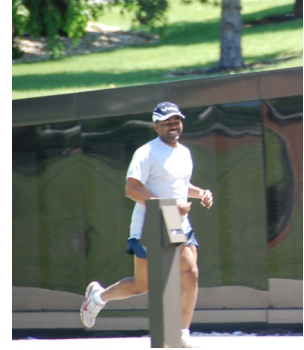
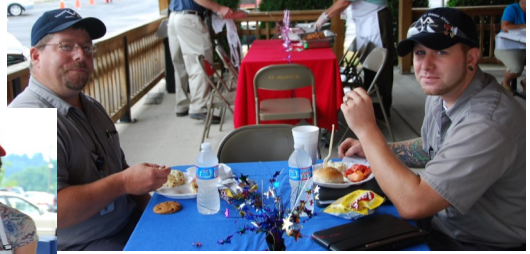


Armed Forces Day activities was held on the grounds of the medical center, and included a keynote speaker, entertainment, and military equipment displays, including a helicopter landing and take-off courtesy of the Pennsylvania National Guard.



A group of Veterans created an art display at the Altoona Curve baseball game for the OEF/OIF/OND Welcome Home event.





It's more than a job!







**VA** Defining  
**HEALTH CARE** **EXCELLENCE**  
in the 21st Century

## James E. Van Zandt VA Medical Center

### VA Medical Center:

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Toll-free: 1-877-626-2500

[www.altoona.va.gov](http://www.altoona.va.gov)

[www.facebook.com/VAAaltoona](http://www.facebook.com/VAAaltoona)

### Community Based Outpatient Clinics:

1425 Scalp Avenue  
Johnstown, PA 15904  
(814) 266-8696

3048 Enterprise Drive  
Ferguson Square  
State College, PA 16801  
(814) 867-5415

Parkview Professional Complex  
190 West Park Avenue, Suite B  
DuBois, PA 15801  
(814) 375-6817

## Tactical Goals for Fiscal Year 2012:

- Implement the centrally funded Veterans transportation service
- Improve admission appropriateness
- Establish an intensive substance abuse management program
- Increase use of virtual medicine, including tele-health and e-consults
- Continue to implement PACT
- Enhance Veteran telephone access in outpatient clinics
- Establish a robust customer service program
- Expand initiatives to eliminate Homelessness among Veterans