

# CAVHS COMPASS

VETERAN FOCUSED NEWS

Fall 2012

## Expanding Services to Hot Springs Veterans

With one snap of the giant gold scissors, the latest Community Based Outpatient Clinic in Central Arkansas officially opened its doors to area Veterans in Hot Springs Aug. 10. The new CBOC serves more than 4,300 enrolled Veterans in the greater Hot Springs area providing everything from primary care to radiology services and much more.

“We have taken another substantial step toward improving health care for our Veterans living in the greater Hot Springs area,” said Michael Winn, Medical Center Director for the Central Arkansas Veterans Healthcare System. “Our goal is now and will continue to be providing exceptional health care that improves the health and well-being of our Veterans. Adding this newest Hot Springs CBOC moves us even closer to realizing that goal across all the rural areas of Central Arkansas”

Mr. Winn’s vision was echoed during the ribbon cutting ceremony by Toby Mathew, CAVHS Deputy Medical Center Director.

“With 43 percent of our Nation’s Veterans living in rural areas, the CBOCs are essential to providing health care for many of our Veterans,” said Mathew. “Now with our expanded medical services [in Hot Springs], we are poised to continue our commitment to the Veterans in this area for many years to come.”

Expanded services include primary care, mental health, digital radiology, routine laboratory, nutritional and health support, pharmacy, women Veterans health services and expanded telehealth to include teleretinal imaging. The new VA staffed facility greatly enhances the Veteran experience while also reducing the need for many Hot Springs Veterans to travel more than 50 miles to Little Rock for many of their health care needs.

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Toby Mathew (right), Deputy Medical Center Director for the Central Arkansas Veterans Healthcare System, and U.S. Army Col. (Ret) Mike Ross cut the ribbon officially opening the Hot Springs Community Based Outpatient Clinic. More than 100 local Veterans, staff and community leaders attended the event. (Photo by Jeff Bowen, CAVHS medical photographer)

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## A Message from the Director

The staff of the Central Arkansas Veterans Healthcare System (CAVHS) continuously strives to provide exceptional care to our Veterans. In the upcoming year, we will be focused on improving the overall experience and practice of care for Veterans through Patient Centered Care (PCC). To that end, we have several plans underway aimed at making every visit to one of our health care facilities personalized, proactive and Veteran driven.

We've started the transition of our primary care clinics from John L. McClellan Memorial Veterans Hospital to the Eugene J. Towbin Healthcare Center in North Little Rock. We will move several Patient Aligned Care Teams (PACT) to North Little Rock in the coming year and, as remodeling is completed, the remaining teams will transition when new clinic areas are ready. This along with the new parking areas in North Little Rock will make it much easier to access primary care services.

By far the biggest changes to our facilities will come in the form of a new signage for both the Little Rock and North Little Rock campuses. We will embark on an extensive project to modernize our interior and exterior signs and create maps so every Veteran, family member and visitor will get to their destination more easily. Over the next several years, our plans also include improvements to our main lobbies, hallways, and waiting areas. A cleaner, more modern appearance will create healing environments and the best experience possible for those we serve. It's all about creating an atmosphere that reflects the exceptional care we provide each Veteran, every day.

Our dedicated staff is constantly improving our practices, procedures and facilities to benefit our Veteran's overall physical, emotional, mental health and well-being. As always, we understand you have many choices for your health care needs...our goal is to be your provider of choice now and in the future. Thank you, Veterans, for choosing us and for your service to our Nation.



**Mr. Michael R. Winn,  
Medical Center Director**



Carolyn Howard, a CAVHS registered nurse, administers a flu vaccination to a Little Rock Veteran at John L. McClellan Memorial Veterans Hospital. The annual flu shot is recommended for every person over the age of six months. The current vaccine will help protect people from contracting the flu for up to 12 months and is effective after just two weeks. (Photo by Jeff Bowen, CAVHS Medical Photographer)

## Flu Shots now available

Central Arkansas Veterans Healthcare System facilities are now providing free flu shots for all enrolled Veterans. Flu shot kiosks are now set-up at John L. McClellan Memorial Veterans Hospital and Eugene J. Towbin Healthcare Center for walk-in vaccinations. The kiosks are open from 7:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Monday through Friday (excluding federal holidays).

Veterans can also receive a flu shot from any of the Community Based Outpatient Clinics across Central Arkansas on a walk-in basis, Monday through Friday, during normal operating hours.

## It's just like riding a bike... You never forget how

For some Veterans, remembering how to ride a bicycle is the easy part – learning how to handle one with the added challenge of limiting disabilities creates obstacles.

That is where the folks from Arkansas Freedom Fund (AFF) and members of Central Arkansas Veterans Healthcare System (CAVHS) step-up and get our Veterans back on the road.

The cooperation between AFF and CAVHS rehabilitation therapists began long before members of AFF formally created the fund in 2010, according to Mark Leonard, AFF chairman of the board of directors and co-founder.

“We started to collect donations and bikes back in 2005 to assist Veterans to participate in the first Wounded Warrior Project’s Soldier Ride when it came to Little Rock,” said Leonard. “As the years passed, we realized that Arkansas Veterans struggling with their rehab would really benefit from riding bikes, so our group started to repair and purchase more bikes and provide them free of charge to Veterans.

“In 2010, we officially formed the Arkansas Freedom Fund to expand our mission and help more Veterans. In addition to providing adaptive bikes, we also coordinate fishing trips and golf outings to assist Veterans with their rehab efforts.”

Leonard and other members of AFF have worked closely with the rehabilitation specialist in the Community Living Center (CLC) in North Little Rock. According to Diann Smith, a CLC recreational therapist, the efforts of AFF have provided Veterans new avenues to test their rehabilitation skills while they pursue a VA provided bike.

“Many of our Veterans had never imagined riding a bike again after losing a limb or other major debilitating injury,” said Smith. “When the possibility of an adaptive bike offered by the folks at AFF is in-turn offered to our rehab Vets, they are apprehensive at first.



Veteran Andy Paxson experiences high-speed bike ride. (Photo by Jeff Bowen, CAVHS medical photographer)

“Once they get fitted and take their first few pedals, they are hooked. It is like Christmas and their birthday all rolled into one the day the bike arrives.”

Part of the goal of rehabilitation is restoring independence and self confidence according to Smith, a therapist with more than 15 years of rehab experience.

“Some of our Veterans have children still living at home and for the entire family to go for a bike ride together – that is something special,” Smith added.

According to Smith, without AFF providing loaner bikes, the VA staff would be challenged when it comes to testing a Veteran’s willingness or adaptability to ride these specialized bikes. Once a Veteran has demonstrated the skill and dedication of riding to their rehabilitation team, they can work with a primary care provider to submit a consult to apply for a VA-provided bike.

**Continued, see “Bikes” page 4**

## Arkansas Freedom Fund

To learn more about AFF, visit [www.ArkansasFreedomFund.org](http://www.ArkansasFreedomFund.org) or send an e-mail to [ArkansasFreedom@sbcglobal.net](mailto:ArkansasFreedom@sbcglobal.net)

The Arkansas Challenge is held in mid-October every year. The 30 mile ride that ends at the Clinton Presidential Center in Little Rock with a barbeque.

To date, 52 Veterans have signed-up for one of the AFF programs – 31 bicycles signed-out so far.

Five Arkansas Veterans now have VA supplied bikes.

## Military Sexual Trauma

Military Sexual Trauma (MST) refers to verbal or physical, sexual harassment and sexual assault such as unwanted sexual attention, uninvited sexual advances, or forced sex that occurs in military settings. Both women and men can experience MST during their service, and the person responsible for the undesired experience can be of the same or opposite gender. MST can negatively impact a person's mental and physical health, even many years later.

Some problems associated with MST include:

- Difficulties sexually
- Difficulty with relationships
- Problems with anger or irritability
- Physical health problems
- Trouble sleeping
- Disturbing memories or nightmares

Many VA medical facilities have a MST Coordinator who serves as a contact person for MST-related issues, and can help you find and access VA services and programs, state and federal benefits, and community resources. To help Veterans recover from MST, VA provides free, confidential counseling and treatment for mental and physical health conditions related to experiences of MST. You do not need to be service-connected and may be able to receive this benefit even if you are not eligible for other VA care. You do not need to have reported the incidents when they happened or have other documentation that they occurred.

### To get help:

- Speak with your VA health care provider
- Contact the MST Coordinator for CAVHS by calling (501) 257-1000 and asking for the MST Coordinator
- Call the Veteran's Crisis Line at 1-800-273-8255, then Press 1

## Women's Health Program receives big donation

Many across the Central Arkansas Veterans Healthcare System (CAVHS) are involved with Women's health care, and now they have some extra cash to make the programs even better.

Thanks to a lot of hard work by the Department of Arkansas Ladies Auxiliary to the Veterans of Foreign Wars, the Woman's Health Program accepted a \$12,300 donation to help promote health and wellness for Central Arkansas' female Veterans. According to Mr. Michael Winn, CAVHS Medical Center Director, the funds will be used to enhance the overall experience for those women enrolled at the VA medical center here.

"I am confident that we will put this generous donation to work right away to make this a more inviting place for women and continue to be the provider of choice for female Veterans across Central Arkansas."



Michael Winn (left), CAVHS Medical Center Director, receives a \$12,300 donation from Hope Gilbert on behalf of the Ladies Auxiliary to the VFW. Gilbert is the former Auxiliary president and spearheaded the fundraising effort to support women's health care for Veterans in Central Arkansas. (Photo by Jeff Bowen, CAVHS medical photographer)

## Bikes (continued from page 3)

Once a Veteran receives a bike from the VA, they return the loaner bike to AFF so they can get it ready for another Veteran to "hit the road." It is all about getting Veterans healthy and involved, said Leonard.

"We started by trying to help Veterans join in the Wounded Warrior bike rides, but it has grown to something much more over the years," said Leonard. "Hopefully, we are helping local Veterans with their mental and physical recovery from the most challenging injury – an injured spirit."

# Former POWs, MIAs Honored During Annual Remembrance

Beginning with our National Anthem and ending with the playing of Taps, the Central Arkansas Veterans Healthcare System’s annual POW/MIA Recognition Ceremony was full of sight, sounds and gratitude for all who carried the burden of war for our Nation.

According to Michael Winn, CAVHS Medical Center Director, we owe former prisoners of war a debt of gratitude that may never be paid in full.

“America's former prisoners of war are among our nation's most revered heroes. They served with dignity and honor under the worst of human conditions – starvation, isolation, torture and the ever-present threat of death. Yet, even during their darkest hour, they demonstrated remarkable personal courage and unwavering devotion to family and country. Their strength is a testament to American character.”

One of the highlight of the day’s event was the keynote address from former Tuskegee Airman Milton Crenchaw. Now 95, Crenchaw praised God for his long and blessed life and the opportunity to be one of the original Tuskegee Airman in 1941.

In addition to the heart-felt remarks, stirring music, and patriotic displays, Mr. Winn and members of the Rolling Thunder motorcycle club presented each former POW

[or family member] with a special recognition gift in appreciation for all their sacrifices.

“While we can never adequately express our gratitude to you – or to your families who lived those times in constant anxiety and anguish – we thank each of you for your selfless service and sacrifice,” said Winn.



**Above:** Milton Crenchaw, former Tuskegee Airman, addresses a crowd of more than 100 Veterans, VA employees and guests during the POW/MIA Recognition ceremony in North Little Rock Sept. 27.

**Far Left:** Members of the local Rolling Thunder motorcycle club stand holding U.S. flags in honor of those former POW attending the ceremony and for all those Veterans still unaccounted for.

**Left:** Geneva Johnson, wife of former POW William Johnson, and MAJ (Ret) Toni Hightower, Chief of Police Service, light the MIA Flame of Hope.

**Below:** Veterans and guest focus on Milton Crenchaw’s key-note address. More than a dozen former POWs and their families attended this year’s ceremony.



# Confidential Help for Veterans, Families

The Veterans Crisis Line is a toll-free, confidential resource that connects Veterans in crisis and their families and friends with qualified, caring Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Responders.

The VA Responders answering the line are specially trained and experienced in helping Veterans of all ages and circumstances – from Veterans coping with mental health issues never addressed; to recent Veterans struggling with relationships or the transition back to civilian life. Responders provide support for these and many other issues like chronic pain, anxiety, depression, sleeplessness, anger and even homelessness.

Since its launch in 2007, the Crisis Line has answered more than 500,000 calls and made more than 18,000 life-saving rescues. The anonymous online chat service, started in 2009, has helped more than 28,000 Veterans. In November 2011, a text messaging service was added to connect mobile Veterans around the clock.

The VA is working to make sure all Veterans and their loved ones are aware of the Veterans Crisis Line. Families need to know that support is available whenever, if ever, they need it.



## Help is just a Call, Click or Text Away!

**Veterans Crisis Line is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year – even if you are not registered with the VA or enrolled in a VA health care system.**

**Call 1-800-273-8255 and press 1 to reach a VA Responder.**

**You can also chat with a Responder online at: [www.VeteransCrisisLine.net](http://www.VeteransCrisisLine.net)**

**Want to send a text message – text to 838255 and a Responder will text back as soon as possible.**

*(Information provided from the Veterans Crisis Line public fact sheet.)*

## Hot Springs (continued from page 1)

“We now have three primary care teams (PACT) in place at Hot Springs to manage the health and wellness of our Veterans,” said Dr. Mathew Jennings, CAVHS Associate Chief of Staff for Primary Care and OIF Veteran. “We will most likely be adding additional staff in the near future as more Veterans enroll and learn more about the Patient-Centered approach we are now using in this CBOC. They [Veterans] really like the idea of talking to the same team member every time they call for an appointment or a med refill.”

The newest CBOCs can be most helpful to the older Veterans living more than 60 minutes drive from the main VA Medical Center in Little Rock – a fact not lost on Col. (U.S. Army retired) Mike Ross.

“We’ve got a population of Veterans from WWII, Korea, and Vietnam and they need us now more than they ever have. And here we’re flooding the VA with our returning Vets from Desert Shield, Desert Storm, Somalia, Bosnia, Kosovo, and I can go on and on. We’ve got to get some relief out here, and someone came up with the great idea of putting these CBOCs out here,” Ross added during his key note address at the ribbon cutting ceremony.

Col. Ross praised the men and women of CAVHS for their selfless dedication to Veterans from all conflicts. He stressed that the latest conflicts will continue to add many more Veterans with yet unseen scars of war.

Mr. Mathew followed the Colonel’s remarks and the ribbon cutting by thanking all those who help make the community-based facility possible and especially the staff at Hot Springs. Adding, “...the staff here at Hot Springs [is] always dedicated to the mission of caring for our Veterans – serving one Veteran at a time.”

# Changes Coming for Beneficiary Travel Pay

Beginning Dec. 3, 2012, Central Arkansas Veterans Healthcare System will transition to a new way of processing travel reimbursement claims.

Apart from rare exceptions, all Veterans will be reimbursed for beneficiary travel using Electronic Funds Transfer/Direct Deposit (EFT) to a checking or savings account. During the transition period, Nov. 1 through Dec. 3, Veterans will still be able to receive cash payments at the Agent Cashier Offices.

To sign-up for EFT, just visit your local Agent Cashier's Office, fill-out the EFT form and provide a voided check. Once the EFT vendor setup process is complete, the form and voided check

you submitted will be destroyed as a measure to protect your privacy. Typically, it takes 3-10 days for EFT payments to be deposited in accounts.

The benefits of the new EFT payment method include:

- Less time standing in lines at VA medical centers
- Safe and secure transfer of funds
- Streamlined claims process
- Improved claims tracking
- Reduced chance of loss due to theft or lost billfolds
- Makes your VA visits more efficient and convenient

For more information about the EFT process, please contact the Accounting offices at (501) 257-1365.



## Frequently asked questions:

### How do I start my EFT Payments?

Complete the EFT form available from the Agent Cashier Offices. Once your EFT has been established, you can expect to receive reimbursement payments 3-10 days from the date your claim is submitted to CAVHS.

### How will EFT affect me?

For your convenience and safety EFT payments are sent directly to your bank – make sure you have enough money for your travel to and from your VA appointment.

### Already have EFT setup through another VA facility?

Your CAVHS payments will be automatically deposited through your current EFT account.

### Who can I call if I have questions or problems with EFT?

For more information or to resolve payment issues, please contact the Accounting offices at (501) 257-1365 or stop by the Agent Cashier Office.

### What if I change banks?

You will need to submit another EFT form to the Agent Cashier office.



## The Bus Stops Here!

Joy Lynn Copeland (left), an LPN at John L. McClellan Memorial Veterans Hospital, and Wendy Cook, an administrative analyst for the University of Arkansas for Medical Science, joined forces to petition the Central Arkansas Transit (CAT) Authority for a new bus stop on 7th Street nearest one of the VA hospital's entrances. Together they convinced VA officials to donate the land for the stop, wrote the justification, and submitted all required documentation resulting in a much needed, covered CAT bus stop. The new stop supports the many Veterans, family members and employees who ride the bus to the medical center. Their efforts paid dividends in just six months with a safer and sometimes drier place to wait for the bus. (Photo by Jeff Bowen, CAVHS medical photographer)

# Events to Keep You in the Know

## October

- October is National Breast Cancer Awareness Month and National Physical Therapy Month
- Oct. 7-13 is National Mental Illness Awareness Week
- Oct. 15-19 is National Health Education Week
- Oct. 21-27 is Respiratory Care Week

## November

- November is American Diabetes Month; Lung Cancer and Alzheimer’s Disease Awareness Month
- Nov. 11 is Veterans Day (Nov. 12 is the Federal Holiday)
- Nov. 15 is the Great American Smokeout
- Nov. 17 is International Survivors of Suicide Day

## December

- Dec. 1 is World AIDS Day
- Dec. 2-8 is National Handwashing Awareness Week



## CAVHS Events

Nov. 1: ALBATROSS golf tournament at The Greens at North Hills, Sherwood, Ark.

Nov. 4: Annual Dad’s Old Car show on the North Little Rock campus.

# CAVHS Contact Information

### Local Contact Numbers

John L. McClellan Memorial Veterans Hospital, Little Rock	501-257-1000
Eugene J. Towbin VA Medical Center, North Little Rock	501-257-1000
Conway Community-Based Outpatient Clinic	501-548-0500
El Dorado Community-Based Outpatient Clinic	870-881-4488
Hot Springs Community-Based Outpatient Clinic	501-881-4112
Mena Community-Based Outpatient Clinic	479-394-4800
Mountain Home Community-Based Outpatient Clinic	870-424-4109
Pine Bluff Community-Based Outpatient Clinic	870-541-9300
Russellville Community-Based Outpatient Clinic	479-880-5100
Searcy Community-Based Outpatient Clinic	501-207-4700
Pharmacy Refills/Helpline	1-888-492-7845
VA Eligibility & Enrollment	1-800-224-8387
Assistance for Returning Troops from Iraq/Afghanistan	501-257-6706
For an Appointment in the OEF/OIF Post-Deployment Clinic	501-257-3984
Little Rock VA Regional Office	1-800-827-1000
Little Rock VA National Cemetery	501-324-6401

### National Hotline Numbers

Veterans Crisis Line	1-800-273-8255
Caregiver Support Hotline	1-855-260-3274
Hotline for Homeless Veterans	1-877-4AID-VET