

Department of Veterans Affairs Salt Lake  
City Health Care System **Annual Report**

2011

ICARE for Veterans **INTEGRITY COMMITMENT ADVOCACY RESPECT EXCELLENCE**





Our inspiration: George E. Wahlen (1924–2009) WWII Medal of Honor recipient October 5, 1945.

It is a privilege to serve thousands of men and women who, at some point in their lives, stepped forward and offered up their futures for the sake of ours. It is these men and women, who work in the cause of freedom that allow us to live the lives we choose. They inspire us every day as evident in the many employee quotes you will read throughout this report.

2011 was a great year for us. We treated over 47,700 Veterans and maintained the highest in quality care. We opened two new clinics—Idaho Falls and Price, and expanded a third in Elko Nevada. We completed and opened a beautiful new outpatient mental health building, finished renovation on four operating rooms and saw the completion of the Fisher House on our campus.



Our broad strategy this year is continuing to grow, fulfilling the Secretary's transformation plans, especially enhancing mental health services, expanding Telehealth services, and improving our Veterans' experience every single time they interact with us.

In 2011, America saw the end of the Iraq war; our mission continues though as we serve those Veterans, and Veterans of all eras with compassion, integrity, respect, and quality beyond reproach.

Best wishes for a great 2012,  
Steve Young DIRECTOR, VA SALT LAKE CITY HEALTH CARE SYSTEM

# Integrity

## Our Leadership Team

### Warren Hill

ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR

As I reflect on 2011, two words instantly come to mind: thank you. Thank you to our Veterans and their families, employees, volunteers, community partners and stakeholders. Each day at the VA Salt Lake City Health Care System we strive to be better, realizing saying “thank you” may not be enough.



### Ronald Gebhart, MD

CHIEF OF STAFF

We are more keenly aware than ever of our rural Veterans. Pushing care out to where they live is a huge focus, integrating Telehealth technology in areas where access to VA healthcare is limited.



### Nena Saunders

ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR FOR QUALITY AND SAFETY

The only constant in healthcare is change. We are on a tidal wave of change (in a good way) which sustains VA as the leader in the healthcare industry. It's challenging, exciting, scary and fulfilling. It truly does take a united team to reach our goals and accomplish our vision.

## Meet our New Chief of Staff

### Karen Gribbin, MD

Dr. Karen Gribbin comes to us from the Jack C. Montgomery VA Medical Center in Muskogee, Oklahoma where she has been the Chief of Staff for the past four years. Prior to that, she was Chief of Medicine Service for ten years and held other clinical positions. She received her undergraduate degree in Medical Microbiology from Stanford University. She attended medical school at the University of Oklahoma and the Medical College of Ohio. She completed her Internal Medicine Residency at the University of Oklahoma in 1989. She's held various faculty appointments at the University of Oklahoma School of Community Medicine for the past 21 years. Dr. Gribbin is married with three children and is thrilled to embark on this new adventure with her family and now, her new VA family!



### Shella Stovall

ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR FOR PATIENT CARE SERVICES

This past year, I recall with great compassion and conviction, the very special work of our employees. I am proud to be a part of our VA team who works each day to create a patient experience we can be proud of.



# Commitment Our Newest Clinics



**2** new **1** expanded

## Telehealth Technology: Touching Our Most Rural Veterans

Telehealth technology continues to grow, closing the gap between Veterans, their providers, and important healthcare information. Clinic-and home-based technologies delivers Primary and Specialty care to Veterans in outlying areas via eleven community clinics. Mental Telehealth is also growing with the addition of our new state-of- the-art Mental Health Outpatient Clinic. Telehealth treatment, education, and follow-up promotes the right care, at the right time, in the right place.

From left to right: Elko Grand Opening, Idaho Falls Grand Opening and Price Grand Opening.



# Advocacy

## Ending Veteran Homelessness

### VALOR HOUSE

Valor House is taking shape and so are the uncertain futures of too many of our Nation's heroes. Once complete, 72 homeless Veterans can begin the transition from homeless to hopeful. The VA Salt Lake City Health Care System in partnership with the Salt Lake City Housing Authority broke ground on the new housing facility in front of many community partners, and dedicated VA Homeless Program staff. Valor House will guide Veterans to independence through clinical case management, peer support groups, life skills education and vocational rehabilitation. We know it takes a community and caring partners within that community to successfully guide and care for our homeless Veterans.

### LEGAL STANDOWN

The VA Salt Lake City Health Care System hosted its first Legal Stand Down on November 4, 2011. The Honorable Judge Paul M. Warner held a session of the United States District Court of Utah Veterans Court during our annual Homeless Stand Down.

The event was designed to give special consideration to Veterans who are having legal troubles as a result of issues related to their service. The VA and the United States District Court believes these Veterans could be better served through treatment rather than caught up in the criminal justice system. The court allows Veterans to atone for what they've done, yet receive the services they need to succeed in the future.

Valor House Groundbreaking, September 2011



Utah is the first state to have a Veterans Court at the Federal, State and City Level. So far over 90 Veterans have gone through the process. The success rate at the Federal and State level is well over 80 percent. "We just want to make sure that they have a safe reasonable environment to resolve those issues and receive recognition and credit for service of their country and through that participation move them into functional roles in society." Judge John Baxter, Salt Lake City Justice Court.

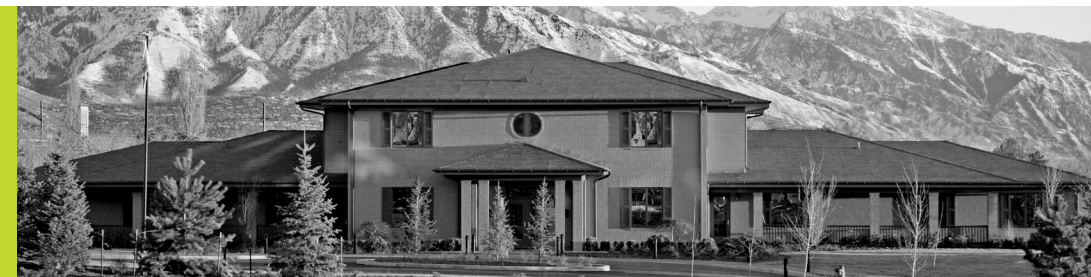
### FISHER HOUSE

The Salt Lake City Fisher House serves a significant need in our highly rural intermountain west region. Our service area alone represents 125,000 square miles to include Utah, Southeast Idaho and East Central Nevada. However, we receive guests from all over the Western United States. Since welcoming our first families on January 9, 2012, we have already made so many close friends and have watched new families bond. We comfort our Veteran families as their loved one endures chemotherapy or awaits heart transplant surgery. We are honored to offer a bit of respite during such difficult times. Our Fisher House staff experiences the hope and hurt right along with them.

The Salt Lake City Fisher House relies on support from our community. Please consider visiting [www.fisherhousesaltlakecity.com](http://www.fisherhousesaltlakecity.com) for a copy of our wish list or for information on how to make a donation.

"We are so grateful to have the Fisher House. We are on a fixed budget and not able to afford any place like this. We felt at home and comfortable right away. It was nice to have people to talk to who were going through the same thing."

Salt Lake City Fisher House, December 2011



# Respect

## New Mental Health Outpatient Building

This beautiful new space is designed for healing, mind, body and spirit. It is a 38,000 square foot facility with 95 offices and seven group rooms. In 2011, our Mental Health staff treated 11,500 Veterans over 125,000 visits, up three percent from the previous year.



### PROGRAMS

The VA Salt Lake City Health Care System is a designated Mental Health “hub” providing Tele-mental health services for Veterans throughout Utah, Colorado, Nevada, Idaho, Wyoming and Montana. Our VA Psychologists use this technology to provide evidence based treatment for Post Traumatic Stress Disorder for rural Veterans using our community clinics. We can even assess a Veteran for PTSD using Telehealth. When fully operational, The VA Salt Lake City Health Care System will provide approximately 120 hours per week of mental health treatment via Tele-mental health throughout the entire intermountain west region.

- PTSD
- Homeless
- Suicide Prevention
- Vocational Rehabilitation
- Substance Abuse Treatment
- Mental Health Case Management
- Integration of Mental Health into Primary Care

## Veterans Re-Connect with Snowbird Retreat

Their combat roles were much different, but the end result was much the same. Veterans struggling with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) and other physical injuries are waging a new battle at home, one within. But that same courage that took them to war is now taking them to a place many thought they would never see again; a place of hope and healing. Whether they are shredding on a snowboard or learning to carve for the first time on skis, these Veterans can breathe easy again, relax and enjoy, and at least for the day they can feel normal again, alive and at peace.

The retreat is staffed by our VA psychologists working in both poly-trauma and PTSD, but would not be possible without the generous efforts and donations made by the dedicated staff of Wasatch Adaptive Sports and Snowbird Ski and Summer Resort.



## Meet Alicia: Our First VA Baby

It took some coaxing for Caleb New to believe his wife ought to go to the George E. Wahlen VA Medical Center for prenatal care. But he quickly figured out times have changed at the VA, especially in our Women’s Clinic. His wife, Veteran Tammy New, delivered her little girl after being induced by Dr. Susan Rose, Our New OB/GYN and only doctor to offer comprehensive prenatal care within VA. Tammy is the first female patient to receive all of her prenatal care from our VA.

Born January 12, 2012 • 7 lbs. 9 ozs. • Mom: Tammy New, OEF/OIF/OND Era Veteran

# Excellence Research



Larry Meyer, PhD, MD  
Associate Chief of Staff for  
Research & Development

Research is one of the four core missions of the Veterans Health Administration, and specifically research which will improve the health of Veterans. The research spans basic laboratory studies, such as ways to improve kidney function, to clinical trials to better treat PTSD, high blood pressure and other conditions common in Veterans. Salt Lake City is home to a major informatics center that can assess health, disease and outcomes of Veterans across all medical centers, and is used by researchers across the country. Our total VA Salt Lake City research budget has more than tripled over the past 5 years. To accommodate this growth, three construction projects are underway to add space to building 2. Additionally, a new floor is under construction on one wing of the building. This will be used for an exciting rehabilitation project developing new methods of attaching prosthetic limbs for amputees.

## The Million Veteran Program (MVP)

The Million Veteran Program (MVP) is an important partnership between VA and Veterans to better understand how genes affect health and illness. The ultimate goal of this research program is to improve health care for Veterans, enrolling one million Veterans over the next five years. MVP is open to participation for all Veterans receiving care in the VA Salt Lake City Health Care System and is entirely voluntary. Participation involves:

- Filling out surveys through the mail and agreeing to future contact
- Completing a one-time study visit to provide a blood sample for genetic analysis
- Allowing on-going access to medical records by authorized MVP staff
- MVP has extensive safeguards in place to keep personal information secure and confidential.

## 2011 Accomplishments

- Health Insight Quality Award
- GOLD Cornerstone Award in Patient Safety
- National Systems Redesign Project Award recipient: Lung Cancer Collaborative
- Opening of 38,000 square foot outpatient Mental Health Building
- Completion of the Salt Lake City Fisher House

### 2011 NUMBERS

- |                          |                   |
|--------------------------|-------------------|
| • Total Operating Budget | \$ 360,805,466.50 |
| • Research Budget        | \$ 18,513,127.29  |
| • Total Unique Patients  | 47,700            |

- |                                       |            |
|---------------------------------------|------------|
| • Total Outpatient Visits             | 638,866    |
| • Employees                           | 2,118      |
| • Volunteers                          | 1,111      |
| • Volunteer Hours                     | 127,720    |
| • Total Community Gifts and Donations | \$ 742,949 |

# Outreach

February 14, 2011

National Salute to Veteran Patients

July 4, 2011

SLC Salutes Veterans Celebration at the Gallivan Center.

September 11, 2011

On the ten year anniversary of September 11th, the VASLCHCS pulls off the biggest outreach event of the year at the Utah State Fair. We enrolled, scheduled and gave wellness exams to 43 Veterans.

November 11, 2011

Annual Unite for Veterans Campaign with KUTV Channel 2

We received over 400 phone calls and mailed out over 200 information packets on claims and enrollment.

“A woman called today to express her gratitude for the care and compassion her husband received at our VA for the last 40 years. One time he was with us for two months, receiving around-the-clock care. She was so happy that he had VA because she said it was obvious how much we cared. The Veteran was in the Army during WWII. He served in the Philippines and also Survived the Bataan Death March as a POW. In November he had a heart attack while raking leaves and passed away.”



Governor Gary Herbert meets with a patient during National Salute Week. Enrolling Veterans on September 11th at the Utah State Fair. Veterans reconnect with Snowbird Ski Retreat.





OIF Veteran Gordy Ewell raises the flags on the Veteran Military Branch of Service Memorial. A Veteran takes advantage of legal services at our first ever Legal Stand Down.

It was our privilege to care for a 93 year-old Pearl Harbor survivor. He had never received care at our facility, but his situation was such that he was no longer able to care for himself. His caregivers brought him in and you could immediately see the relief on their faces. He was their neighbor, and had become a dear part of their own family, but they knew he needed more than they could give. Ross McQueen passed away several months later in our Veterans Nursing Home with the honor, dignity and treatment he deserved.



VA experts take calls from Veterans during our Unite For Veterans Campaign.



Combined Veteran Color Guard, Brigham City VFW Post 1695, Valor House Groundbreaking.

## An Angel in Hospice

His family was not able to make it there in time, but thanks to a caring hospice nurse he was able to hear them through many phone calls placed to his ear. At shift's end, I noticed nurses, doctors and other employees sitting with the Veteran just so he wasn't alone. A phone call was made to Voluntary Service to see if anyone was available to just be with him. The man on the other end of the phone said he didn't know of anyone but he would be right over. This employee had never done anything like this before. He had no formal training or experience in death and dying, only a desire to make sure this Veteran didn't die alone. He read to him, spoke to him, played music, and held his hand.



Our VA Salt Lake City Leadership Team “hamming it up” for Veterans.



**VA**  
HEALTH  
CARE

Defining  
**EXCELLENCE**  
in the 21st Century



Veterans Affairs Salt Lake City Health Care System, 500 Foothill Drive, Salt Lake City, Utah 84148